

Nixon Gets A Quiz on Watergate

Washington

President Nixon was formally asked yesterday why he did not report his knowledge of the Watergate coverup to the proper authorities "as soon as possible," as required by federal law.

Acting under a resolution unanimously adopted by the Senate select Watergate committee at the suggestion of Senator Lowell P. Weicker Jr. (Rep - Conn.), Weicker sent 11 questions to the White House for President Nixon to answer concerning his role in the Watergate affair.

Weicker, the only member of the committee to send questions to Mr. Nixon, relied on Mr. Nixon's own statements as well as sworn testimony as the basis for the questions.

A White House spokesman said he had no comment on Weicker's questions.

"Weicker asked President Nixon why he failed to report — as required by federal law — his knowledge that the offices of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist had been burglarized.

Mr. Nixon stated on Aug. 15, 1973, that he learned of

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the Ellsberg break-in on March 17, 1973. Mr. Nixon also has acknowledged that on April 18, 1973, he ordered

Assistant Attorney General Henry E. Petersen to stay clear of the Ellsberg break-in after Petersen informed the President that federal prosecutors had

learned of the incident.

It was not until April 25, 1973 — more than a month after the President said he learned of the Ellsberg break-in — that Mr. Nixon agreed to allow Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst to report the matter to the federal judge presiding over Ellsberg's trial.

"The law required you to inform a judge 'as soon as possible,'" Weicker stated in his questions. "Under what authority did you withhold that information from appropriate officials until after April 17, 1973?"

In the same vein, Weicker asked President Nixon "which judge or law enforcement official did you contact" after learning of "Watergate crimes on March 21 (1973)?"

Former White House counsel John W. Dean III, testifying last June before the Senate committee, said that he told Mr. Nixon the full story about the Watergate coverup on March 21. Mr. Nixon has also cited that date as being the time when "serious charges ... came to my attention."

According to Mr. Nixon's own public statements and other testimony before the Senate committee, Mr. Nixon's first discussion with any law enforcement authorities about the coverup did not occur until April 15, 1973, when Kleindienst and Petersen came to President Nixon with information about the Watergate coverup.

Another of Weicker's questions deals with a discussion about executive clemency Mr. Nixon held with his top domestic adviser, John D. Ehrlichman, in July, 1972.

Both Ehrlichman and Mr. Nixon have acknowledged discussing the subject, although both have said that Mr. Nixon barred executive clemency. At that time, Weicker noted, presidential Press Secretary Ronald Ziegler was declining to discuss the Watergate break-in with reporters because it was in Ziegler's words a "third" rate burglary.

"When John Ehrlichman discussed executive clemency with you in July 1972, prior to any indictments,

trial or conviction," Weicker asked President Nixon, "why didn't you ask how such a matter could possibly relate to what was being called a 'third-rate burglary'?"

Another question posed by Weicker notes that President Nixon has on several occasions claimed credit for an investigation Dean supposedly conducted for the White House on the Watergate break-in.

On April 5, 1973, Weicker pointed out, Mr. Nixon said that because he had asked Dean to investigate the Watergate affair, Acting FBI Director L. Patrick Gray III "was asked to make FBI reports available to Mr. Dean."

Weicker went on to point out that Dean has pleaded guilty to a charge of conspiracy to obstruct justice. One of the overt acts to which Dean pleaded guilty, as stated in the formal charge against him, was that "in or about July and October 1972 John W. Dean III requested L. Patrick Gray ... to provide him with reports of information obtained during the FBI investigation."

"In light of your statements that you directed the Dean investigation," Weicker asked President Nixon, "what is the difference in your measure of responsibility from that of John Dean?"

Weicker also asked President Nixon if White House aides were "covering up the truth on your instructions or on their own initiative" in October 1972 after stories linking political saboteur Donald Segretti and White House aide Dwight Chapin appeared in the Washington Post and other newspapers.

Weicker asserted that although White House statements at the time characterized the news reports as "hearsay, character assassination, innuendo or guilt by association," White House aides "knew those news reports were substantially correct."

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