

## TV Speech to Nation

# Nixon Offers Edited Transcripts of Tapes

## His Reply To House Subpoena

Washington

President Nixon said last night that he will release 1200 pages of edited transcripts of his Watergate-related conversations to the House Judiciary Committee and to the American people today in an effort to "once and for all" prove his innocence in the Watergate cover-up.

In a 35-minute nationwide television speech, the President conceded that release of the transcripts of his taped conversations would cause him ridicule and embarrassment.

But he also contended that the transcripts would demonstrate that he has been telling the truth in saying that he knew nothing of the cover-up until he was informed of it by his then-White House counsel John W. Dean III on March 21, 1973.

In telling the nation that he was releasing the edited transcripts instead of the 42 tapes the committee had sought, the President was apparently rejecting the committee's subpoena. He is under subpoena to produce the tapes at 10 a.m. today.

"In giving you these — blemishes and all — I am placing my trust in the basic fairness of the American people," Mr. Nixon said.

The President also said he was inviting Representative Peter W. Rodino (Dem-N.J.),

chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, and its ranking minority member Representative Ed-  
Mich.), to come to the White House and "listen to the actual full tapes of the conversations so they can determine for themselves, far beyond question, that the transcripts are accurate . . ."

Hutchinson said that the

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proposal offered by the President sounded acceptable to him. But Rodino, commenting before Mr. Nixon spoke, said, "we will accept no less than the materials specified."

Speaking in calm, deliberate tones, the President said he had been "quite frankly concerned about the political implications" of releasing the transcripts.

He said that he had considered "long and hard" whether he should allow "blackmail" payments to be made to convicted Watergate conspirator E. Howard Hunt Jr., because Hunt was threatening to expose "a potential national security problem of serious proportions." "I said, 'It's wrong, that's for sure.'"

"I pointed out: 'But in the end, we are going to be bled to death. And in the end, it is all going to come out anyway. Then you get the worst of both worlds . . .'"

Mr. Nixon observed that the transcripts might tell a different story to his critics than they do to him. He said they showed "brutal candor" and included "the rough as well as the smooth, the strategy sessions, the exploration of alternatives, the weighing of human and political costs."

But the President said he

expected that the transcripts "if read with an open and a fair mind and read together with records of the actions I took," would show that he had been telling the truth when he said he had no knowledge of the cover-up.

Mr. Nixon's actions in making the edited record of his Watergate conversations public was not limited to the 1200 pages of edited transcripts that he is turning over to the House Judiciary Committee today.

The President said he also would make public "all those portions of the (19) tapes already turned over to the special prosecutor and to the committee that relate to presidential actions or knowledge of the Watergate affair."

Mr. Nixon spoke to the nation one day less than a year after a televised speech in which he dismissed Dean and also accepted the resignations of his two top aides, H. R. Haldeman and John Ehrlichman, whom he called "two of the finest public servants it has been by privilege to know."

In that speech a year ago the President appeared conspicuously nervous, even to many of his supporters, and he changed the subject frequently and talked about his domestic record and about bringing "peace with honor" to Vietnam.

Last night, the President spoke with measured coolness and apparent calm throughout his speech. He stuck entirely to the subject of Watergate except for a brief digression at the end when he talked briefly of the prospects for peace aboard and prosperity at home.

"Every day absorbed by Watergate is a day lost from

the work that must be done . . . in dealing with the great problems that affect your prosperity, affect your security, that could affect your lives," Mr. Nixon said.

The President also reaffirmed that he would continue the course of his foreign policy by meeting with Soviet leaders "in a few weeks" in Moscow to discuss limitations on nuclear arms.

In most of his public statements since the dismissal of Haldeman, Ehrlichman and Dean — and particularly since the existence of the White House tapes became known last July 16 — the President has insisted that the importance of maintaining the confidentiality of his conversations outweighed the importance of giving the public and the Congress a full record of his Watergate actions.

Mr. Nixon abandoned that claim last night, even while maintaining that "the principle of confidentiality is absolutely essential to the conduct of the presidency."

He said he was yielding on the confidentiality issue because it was important that the House "be able to reach an informed judgment about

the President's role in Watergate."

The President said he was also making a major exception to the principle of confidentiality "because I believe such action is now necessary in order to restore the principle itself, by clearing the air of the central question that has brought such pressure upon it . . ."

"Third, in the context of the current impeachment climate," Mr. Nixon added, "I believe all the American people, as well as their rep-



President Nixon pointed to the notebooks containing edited transcripts of White House tapes

representatives in Congress, are entitled to have not only the facts, but also the evidence that demonstrates these facts."

Speaking in solemn tones, the President declared that a House vote of an impeachment resolution "would put the nation through a wrenching ordeal it has endured only once in its lifetime, a century ago, and never since America has become a world power with global responsibilities." President Andrew Johnson, who followed Abraham Lincoln, was impeached by the House but the Senate failed, by one vote, to convict him.

"The impact of such an ordeal would be felt throughout the world, and it would have its effect on the lives of all Americans for many years to come," he continued.

Despite the "confusions and contradictions" of the transcripts, the President

said, what emerges is that Dean was not telling the truth when he told the Senate Watergate Committee that Mr. Nixon was "fully aware of the coverup" on Sept. 15, 1972.

Instead, the President said, the March 21 transcript quotes Dean as saying to him: "I can just tell from our conversation that these are things that you have no knowledge of."

What emerged from the President's speech was an attack on Dean's credibility, more focused than any of the previous attacks which have issued from the White House.

The President said that Dean had "authorized promises of clemency, that he had personally handled money for the Watergate defendants and that he had suborned perjury of a witness."

The President also repeat-

ed a past request that his counsel, James St. Clair, be allowed to cross-examine witnesses and introduce evidence before the Judiciary Committee.

Mr. Nixon concluded by saying that he intended "to go forward, to the best of my ability with the work that you elected me to do."

Quoting Abraham Lincoln, he said: "If the end brings me out all right, what is said against me won't amount to everything. If the end brings me out wrong, ten angels swearing I was right would make no difference."

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