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# Burch Optimistic, But Finds Some Tapes Troublesome



DEAN BURCH  
... sees "close call"

By Lou Cannon

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White House Counselor Dean Burch yesterday described as "troublesome" the March 21, 1973, presidential conversations in which Mr. Nixon discussed payment of money to convicted Watergate burglar Howard Hunt.

But Burch insisted that the edited Watergate transcripts released by the White House ultimately will lead the House to defeat the impeachment resolution. He described his own forecast as "a close call" and conceded there may be Republican members of the Judiciary Committee who will vote in favor of impeachment.

In an hour-long breakfast meeting with reporters Burch

vigorously defended White House responses to the House Judiciary Committee on impeachment issues. However, he demonstrated a consistent reluctance to endorse the presidential conduct reflected in the transcripts released last week by the White House.

"The (March) 21st tape is the most troublesome of all," Burch said in discussing the impact of the presidential conversations. Asked what he found troublesome, Burch replied:

"The thing that I find troublesome, obviously, is the discussion of a payment to Mr. Hunt."

Burch also said that the tone of the presidential conversations was "not heroic."

And when Burch was asked whether he thought the conversations had "sullied" or "besmirched" the presidency, he responded:

"I don't think the President is impeachable, let me say that."

Burch said that the situation reflected in the Watergate tapes was not similar to a "normal presidential decision."

"... This was a situation in which the President realized for the first time that not only was he faced with a hell of a political problem, he was faced with a situation where some of his best and closest assistants and indeed friends were in a hell of a lot of trouble," Burch said. "I tend to

temper my analysis a bit by trying to imagine the human problems that were involved."

Burch took issue with one of the objections to Mr. Nixon's procedure for verifying the accuracy of the 1,254 pages of transcripts that he made public last week.

The President said that only Judiciary Committee Chairman Peter W. Rodino (D-N.J.) and ranking minority member Edward Hutchinson (R-Mich.) would be allowed to listen to the actual tapes. There have been some objections based on the fact that neither Rodino nor Hutchinson is an electronics expert who could determine whether the tapes were authentic.

Burch called this objection "a bit of a quibble."

"Nobody is suggesting that if there is serious doubt that a tape has been altered or played with or anything else, things cannot be worked out between Mr. [James] St. Clair and Mr. [John] Doar to verify those tapes," Burch said.

Doar is chief Watergate counsel for the Judiciary Committee and St. Clair the White House Watergate counsel.

Burch said he believes that a majority of Republicans around the country have responded positively to the President's disclosure of his Watergate conversations.

However, Burch declined to predict whether he expected a partisan vote on the House Judiciary Committee on the impeachment resolution. Last week Burch and other White House officials said they were encouraged by the vote on a Judiciary Committee resolution declaring that Mr. Nixon had failed to comply with the committee subpoena when he furnished only transcripts rather than the actual tapes of his Watergate-related conversations.

The vote carried 20 to 13, but only one Republican voted with the majority. When it was suggested by a reporter that such Republicans as Tom Railsback and Robert McClory, both of Illinois, might also vote with the majority on the impeachment vote, Burch said, "and others perhaps."

Burch said he expected Mr. Nixon to remain in office and carry out his duties while any impeachment resolution was pending. He said the President would not resign if impeachment is voted by the House.