

Nixon Help To Aides Denied

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President Nixon expressed a willingness to assist his two former close aides, H. R. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman, with their Watergate legal defense fees, but never followed through on the offer, a White House spokesman said yesterday.

Gerald L. Warren, deputy press secretary, told reporters that "there is not now nor was there ever any defense fund set up by the President, or any of his friends," to help Haldeman and Ehrlichman with their legal financial burden.

Warren said that Mr. Nixon discussed helping with the legal costs confronted by Haldeman and Ehrlichman's "as a possibility but nothing came of it."

"It was legitimate, human and natural," Warren said of the offer by the President to his two top advisers.

Both are under indictment in connection with the Watergate cover-up and Ehrlichman also is under separate indictment in the break-in of the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist.

In response to questions, Warren said, "about a year ago, when Haldeman and Ehrlichman left the White House, the President did express his deep personal concern that their sole significant source of income was being closed off at a time when they were facing what could become enormous legal fees."

Warren made the comments in response to questions about a report by The Washington Post that Senate investigators had been given testimony that Mr. Nixon told Haldeman a secret fund would be available for Haldeman to defend himself after he left the White House.

The Post said Lawrence M. Higby, an ex-assistant to Haldeman, gave the information to the Senate Watergate committee last month, saying that Mr. Nixon told Haldeman that as much as \$400,000 for a defense fund was being kept by Mr. Nixon's close friend, Charles G.

(Bebe) Rebozo.

Warren said that when Haldeman and Ehrlichman left the staff April 30, 1973, "in a natural and human way (Mr. Nixon) expressed a desire to assist them in whatever way possible."

Warren earlier had refused to confirm or deny The Post report, saying it was a continuation of a pattern of "contrived and selected leaks" that he said "is becoming outrageous."