

New Hush-Money Revelations

Washington

President Nixon told then White House counsel John W. Dean III on March 21, 1973 that "we should buy time" by making a \$120,000 hush-money payment to convicted Watergate conspirator E. Howard Hunt Jr., according to a memorandum prepared by a House Judiciary Committee staff member.

The memo, which notes that "Hunt's blackmail demand . . . was subsequently paid on the same day," was one of two confidential committee memoranda obtained by the Los Angeles Times yesterday.

The memos were prepared by a staffer for committee members.

Both memos allege discrepancies between the edited transcripts of presidential Watergate conversations released by Mr. Nixon and transcripts of those conversations obtained by the committee.

In the March 21 transcript released by Mr. Nixon to the committee and the public, the President is quoted as saying "we can buy time." But according to the memo, the tape shows he said "we should buy time."

The memo states:

"The public (White House) transcript shows this as follows:

"P. . . . that would be one of the defendants, either Hunt, because he is most vulnerable in my opinion, might blow the whistle and his price is very high, but at least he can (Judiciary tape says "he should" at this point) buy the time on that

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as I pointed out to John."

One of the memos cites various comments from Mr. Nixon as supporting a conclusion that, contrary to his public statements, he was aware of many aspects of the Watergate coverup prior to March 21. The other memo is devoted solely to excerpts of the Nixon-Dean conversation about hush-money payments, with a brief excerpt that includes comments by H.R. Halde- man, then Mr. Nixon's chief of staff, who briefly joined the conversation.

The thrust of the excerpts is that the President approved payment. . . staff attorney, at the request of several Democratic members of the committee.

The first to surface publicly was reported Wednesday.

It was said Mr. Nixon had omitted from his edited transcript script of a March 22, 1973, conversation with John N. Mitchell this instruction to the former attorney general: "I want you to (unintelligible) stonewall it, plead the Fifth Amendment."

The President apparently has been referring to prospective testimony to be given before a grand jury or the Senate Watergate Committee.

The New York Times subsequently published a story yesterday, quoting both that memo and another Dixon memo which, it asserted, together "state that President Nixon took an active part last year in attempts to develop a second Watergate coverup plan when the first one went awry."

Dixon's last memo, written Wednesday, concerns FBI documents saying that Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger and Alexander M. Haig Jr. requested wiretaps

on White House staffers and journalists in 1969 to stop news leaks of national security information.

At the top of that memo, Dixon wrote: "In view of the fact that one of my recent memos appeared in this morning's newspapers, members should understand that this is to be considered highly confidential."

By that night, both ABC-TV and the Washington Post had obtained copies of the memo. Yesterday morning, it was learned, commit-

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tee chairman Peter W. Rodino (Dem-N.J.) ordered that Dixon prepare no more memos.

Eight Dixon memos have yet to surface.

A May 28 memo by Dixon, one of two obtained by the Times yesterday, included excerpts of the March 21, 1973, presidential conversation with Dean and suggested that prior to reading the excerpts the committee members might want to review the President's statements to the nation in a televised speech on April 29.

"He (the President) said the tapes will show persuasively and, he hoped, conclusively, that he did not do anything wrong in connection with the Watergate break-in or its coverup," Dixon wrote. "He also acknowledged that the 'tape of March 21 is one which different meanings could be read into by different people

The memo cites many quotes included in the edited transcript, but stresses the discrepancy between "can" and "should" and the tape in the committee's possession.

Los Angeles Times