

Nixon ex-advisers not eager to talk

By John Hall
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WASHINGTON — President Nixon's ex-advisers are not exactly falling over themselves in a scramble to save him from impeachment.

It is not that the men whom Nixon brought to positions of political power when he entered the White House have turned into ingrates. In fact, H. R. Haldeman, John Ehrlichman and John Mitchell, who formed Nixon's inner circle of political advisers, are still arrayed in a stone wall around the President.

But hunkering down is not sticking your neck in the noose.

Haldeman flatly rejected White House lawyer James St. Clair's request that he testify on Nixon's behalf, declaring he would have to take the Fifth Amendment to avoid jeopardizing his own trial for conspiracy to obstruct justice.

Mitchell, a defendant in the same trial involving the attempted coverup of the Watergate scandal, at first refused to meet with impeachment investigators informally to map out his testimony, then reluctantly agreed to only if the discussion would be limited to his knowledge of what happened on a single day, March 21, 1973. There is now a question whether Mitchell will be

allowed to testify at all under those conditions.

The first witness St. Clair put on the stand in the closed hearings before the judiciary committee was Paul L. O'Brien, former attorney for the Committee to Re-Elect the President.

O'Brien, according to accounts from both proponents and opponents of impeachment, promptly confirmed an essential fact of the scandal: That E. Howard Hunt, the convicted Watergate conspirator, told him on March 16, 1973, that he needed money and that if he didn't get it, he might have to tell about the "seamy things" he had done for the White House.

With O'Brien corroborating and Mitchell and Haldeman balking, that leaves three witnesses on St. Clair's list. Hunt's lawyer, William O. Bittman, and the deputy director of the Committee to Re-Elect the President, Frederick Larue, who testified briefly Wednesday, have no known knowledge of what took place in the White House after Hunt's demands were transmitted.

But they cannot say who authorized the delivery of that money. Only one man is left on St. Clair's list who can testify to that.

That man is John Dean. He was the one who made the first, jolting charge a year ago that Nixon had sanctioned the Watergate coverup.