

# Ziegler Says Nixon Actions Refute Words in Tape Talk

By Jules Witcover

Washington Post Staff Writer

White House press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler said yesterday that President Nixon's actions refute his words in taped White House conversations in which he ordered aides to "stonewall" and otherwise continue the Watergate cover-up.

Ziegler noted that the President later waived executive privilege for White House aides to testify before the Senate Watergate committee last year and that none of them invoked the Fifth Amendment privilege against self-incrimination, as a transcript from the House Judiciary committee indicated he favored.

In a White House briefing of more than an hour, Ziegler was reminded that former White House aide Charles W.

Colson did invoke the Fifth Amendment before the committee. Ziegler then amended his position to say the Fifth Amendment was not invoked "in substantial degree."

Nearly the entire briefing was given over to questions on the Judiciary transcripts, and particularly one tape-recorded statement by Mr. Nixon on March 22, 1973, in which he said: "I want you all to stonewall it, let them lead the Fifth Amendment, cover up or anything else, if it'll save it — save the plan. That's the whole point."

The President twice in the Judiciary transcripts talked of a "plan" without elaborating. But in the context of the conversation they were apparent references to keeping the lid on White House involvement in cover-up of presidential aides

faced interrogation by the Senate Watergate committee.

Mr. Nixon in the same transcript is quoted as continuing: "On the other hand, uh, uh, I would prefer as I said to you that you do it the other way. And I would particularly prefer to do it that other way if it's going to come out that way anyhow."

The "other way" apparently referred to limited disclosure of White House aides' involvement, called "the hang-out road" by Mr. Nixon in a Judiciary transcript of a March 13, 1973, conversation. The President is quoted specifically there as saying, "The hang-out road's going to have to be rejected because it was too late to use that option."

Ziegler complained that at least Tuesday of these and other conversations omitted

from White House versions was part of a "public relations scenario" by some committee members to discredit the President through selective use of evidence. The Judiciary transcripts were made public by a vote of the full committee.

"We have said over the past months frequently, that the importance of the transcripts and materials that have been provided to the House Judiciary Committee and to the public lies in the entire body of information," Ziegler said.

"Individuals who so desire can take sections of these transcripts and present the negative inferences (as related) to the President. But anyone who looks at the entire body of information will find that the thrust of the 1,200 or more pages in no way is inconsistent or contradicts what the President has said what the President has said regarding his role in this matter and his desire to deal with

Ziegler said that during the early part of last year "the President was playing the role of a lawyer's advocate in many instances — questioning and discussing various theories of how to proceed." It was at this time the President had very much on his mind the personal situation of these men," he said.

But Ziegler went on: "The overall weight of evidence shows clearly that the President did want the entire story out and did move to get this matter out to the public."

Ziegler also reiterated a statement by James H. St. Clair, the President's chief impeachment defense lawyer, that a long segment of the March 22 conversation, omitted entirely from the White House version and including the "stonewall" remark, was not included because it was of dubious relevancy.