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**Nixon Withheld a Portion  
Of Tape on Cover-Up Talk**

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WASHINGTON, July 10 — President Nixon personally decided against releasing in the White House-edited tapes made public last April 30 that portion of a conversation on March 22, 1973, in which he discussed a cover-up of the Watergate affair, White House officials said today.

They said that the President had ordered the portion withheld because it was of "dubious relevancy" to Mr. Nixon's role in the case.

The House Judiciary Committee released yesterday a 2,500-word transcript of the conversation in question as a part of its over-all release of eight transcripts that the committee decided was pertinent to its impeachment inquiry.

James D. St. Clair, the President's chief lawyer, and Ronald L. Ziegler, the White House press secretary, held separate news conferences to defend the President's actions and play down differences between the transcripts released by the White House and the committee.

They contended that even though Mr. Nixon on occasion urged a cover-up of the crime and other illegal actions, both transcripts, if read as a whole,

proved Mr. Nixon's innocence. On those instances in which Mr. Nixon seemed to say things that suggested violation of the law, Mr. Ziegler insisted, he was simply acting as a "devil's advocate."

Mr. St. Clair, speaking to reporters in the Capitol, said: "Squabbling over words is not a fruitful exercise. It is the over-all gist of it that counts."

Mr. Ziegler, making a rare appearance in the White House press room, said the 2,500-word segment of the conversation of March 22, 1973, was of "dubious relevancy" because the discussion centered on how White House aides were to conduct themselves before the Senate Watergate committee, which was then preparing for hearings on the burglary of the Democratic national headquarters in the Watergate apartment and office complex on June 17, 1972.

#### Some Ambiguity

"The President," Mr. Ziegler said, "was examining the various theories on how to deal with a political situation before the Senate Watergate committee, and not in reference to grand jury proceedings or other proceedings."

The possibility of covering up White House involvement in the burglary was discussed at length, however, in a conversation between Mr. Nixon and former Attorney General John N. Mitchell. There was some ambiguity in Mr. Nixon's position. At one point he said: "I want you all to stonewall it, let them plead the Fifth

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Amendment, cover-up or anything else, if it'll save it—save the plan [referred to previously in the transcript as a cover-up plan]. That's the whole point. On the other hand, uh, uh, I would prefer, as I said to you, that you do it the other way if it's going to come out that way anyway."

Mr. Nixon's last sentence seemed clearly to refer to a proposal that the committee accept a written report on the case by John W. Dean 3d, then the White House counsel, rather calling White House aides to testify.

The President's decision to withhold that section of the conversation raised questions because Mr. Nixon and his assistants said when the White House transcripts were released last April 30 that the only deletions were words on the tapes that could not be heard, vulgar and profane language and passages not pertinent to the President's role in Watergate.

#### "The Complete Story"

On May 2, Gerald L. Warren, the deputy White House press secretary, said, "This [the White House transcripts] is the complete story as it relates to the President and Watergate."

Subsequently, in response to frequent questions on the subject over a period of weeks, Mr. Warren and other officials insisted that no conversation pertinent to the President's role in Watergate had been left out.

In the past, Mr. Ziegler and others steadfastly denied White House involvement in the Watergate affair. When such involvement was proved, they

said they had been misinformed by the officials involved.

Mr. Ziegler insisted today that he could say with a clear conscience that he felt no need to withdraw past statements about the transcripts, and that the committee's version was pretty much in agreement with the White House version, if one considered the general thrust and not the particular parts.

"The over-all weight of the evidence shows that the President did want this material [the cover-up] out," Mr. Ziegler said. "The thrust of the transcripts in no way contradicts what the President has said."

#### Helpful to President

Mr. Ziegler added that, in some instances, the committee transcript proved helpful to the President. For example, he said that the transcript disproved an article in The New York Times reporting that sources said the President, on one occasion, had called Judge John J. Sirica of Federal District Court a "wop." The Times article, however, referred to tape submitted to the Federal District Court in New York for the trial earlier this year of Mr. Mitchell and Maurice H. Stans, the former Secretary of Commerce, not to the tapes that were made available to the Judiciary Committee and that were released yesterday.

The Times article of May 11 said that "sources, while confirming that such epithets were on the Mitchell-Stans tapes, said few such epithets existed on the tapes edited by the White House and sent to the House committee."