

Colson's Ellsberg Strategy

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Three days before Daniel Ellsberg was indicted in California for unauthorized possession of the Pentagon papers, Charles Colson sent White House chief of staff H. R. Haldeman a confidential memorandum describing how the Ellsberg prosecution could be used to confront the press, divide the Democrats and "arouse the heartland."

The story of how this White House political strategy led to the burglary of a psychiatrist's office, a defamatory psychological profile, the illegal use of the Central Intelligence Agency and the ultimate loss of the case against Ellsberg was told in graphic detail in evidence released yesterday by the House Judiciary Committee.

Much of the story has been told before, first to the Senate Select Committee and the Watergate grand jury, then to jurors who last week tried and found guilty the former No. 2 White House aide, John Ehrlichman.

But the narrative scattered through four new vol-

umes of impeachment evidence gives by far the most detailed picture yet of the bungled political strategy that caused the Ellsberg case to backfire on those who sought to exploit it.

The "national security" issue has from the first been the battle cry of the White House in the Ellsberg affair. However, the documents released yesterday by the Judiciary Committee show a far more persistent White House interest in using the Ellsberg case for purposes of political strategy than in plugging security leaks.

In his June 25, 1971, memo to Haldeman, Colson, candidly acknowledges that "the heartland isn't really aroused" over the publication of the Pentagon Papers. Ellsberg is seen as a way of getting at the press second-hand because, says Colson, "the fact that he conspired with the press and the press printed the documents that he stole is bound to have a bad ruboff on the press."

"There is another opportunity in this whole episode, that is the prosecution of Ellsberg," Colson continued. "It could indeed arouse the heartland which is at

present not very excited over the whole issue."

In this memo Colson describes Ellsberg as "a natural villain to the extent he can be painted evil."

Several wiretaps, two psychiatric profiles and one break-in later, the White House was still trying to paint this picture without much success.