

Committee doubts transcript dating

Examiner News Services

WASHINGTON — A White House tape transcript submitted to the House impeachment inquiry as an 11th-hour defense move shows President Nixon discussing as accomplished fact a prison sentence that was not imposed until a day later.

In apparent reference to convicted Watergate burglary figure G. Gordon Liddy, Nixon is quoted as saying on March 22, 1973: "That, uh, judge gave him 35 years."

However, no Watergate sentences were levied until the next day, March 23, when U.S. District Judge John Sirica sentenced Liddy to a prison term of from 6 years, 8 months to 20 years and a \$40,000 fine.

Also on March 23, E. Howard Hunt drew a provisional 35-year term, later reduced when he cooperated with Watergate investigators.

At the Western White House yesterday, Press Secretary Ronald Ziegler said the President apparently had been confused by news reports that Liddy could be sentenced to 35 to 45 years and was unaware that the sentencing had not yet occurred.

"I can state categorically that this is the tape of March 22, 1973," Ziegler said, insisting the transcript had not been tampered with.

But several members of the committee called the discrepancy the latest episode in a pattern of deception by the White House during the committee's 10-week impeachment investigation.

On Thursday, the President's chief impeachment lawyer, James D. St. Clair,

tween Nixon and his then-chief of staff, H. R. Haldeman.

The excerpt was intended to buttress St. Clair's argument that the President had not approved payment of hush money to Hunt on March 21 but instead had authorized funds to Watergate defendants for compassionate reasons.

The reported exchange took place during a one-hour, 24-minute meeting. The Judiciary Committee has subpoenaed a tape recording of the full session but has been rebuffed by White House officials.

The transcript begins with this exchange:

Haldeman: Well — what's the (inaudible) — still the Cubans seem to be the least matter of concern — they're fanatics — and they don't seem to be too concerned about their (inaudible) and their needs are fairly minimal. And Dean confirms that Liddy — Liddy is enjoying — Liddy's in jail — he didn't stay out. He just said I want to start serving my term. And he's at Danbury and thoroughly enjoying it. It's a little strange.

President: That, uh, judge gave him 35 years.

Haldeman: As long as he thinks we are going to be of some help to him some day then he thinks (inaudible) has five kids. And all he is concerned about is that there is enough income to take care of his kids and that's being taken care of right now by his father.

Obviously shocked when he learned of the discrepancy, committee chairman Peter W. Rodino, D-N.J., said St. Clair had assured him that the transcript came from the March 22 tape.

The committee's chief

But some committee members reacted more strongly. "It was a good way to end the hearings," Rep. Jerome R. Waldie,

D-Calif., said of the transcript. "We started with deception, with cover-up, with alterations, with lies — so on the last day of evidentiary presentation, to end it the same way."

Rep. George E. Danielson, D-Calif., said, "This is just a pattern of concealment that's been going on from the beginning."

Edward Hutchinson of Michigan, the committee's ranking Republican, suggested the White House may have received advance notice of the sentencing.

But another Republican, Hamilton Fish Jr., of New York, said: "If it was willful it was a very serious