

Committee's Fairness Hit

By Carroll Kilpatrick
Washington Post Staff Writer

SAN CLEMENTE, Calif., July 20—Presidential counselor Dean Burch today called the House Judiciary Committee's impeachment proceedings "a black spot on jurisprudence."

Keeping up the almost daily White House assault on the committee, Burch accused the committee of using a "blunderbuss" approach and "hired guns" to attack President Nixon.

The reference to "hired guns" was in criticizing majority counsel John Doar and minority counsel Albert E. Jenner Jr.

White House press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler, who sharply attacked the committee Friday, announced that presidential counsel James D. St. Clair would hold a news conference here Monday.

"What we are now seeing," Burch said, "is the reaping of the whirlwind whereby bad procedures are almost sure to give bad results."

The committee has insisted on secrecy in its hearings, but has leaked material detrimental to the President, embargoed stories to produce daily headlines critical of the President, and is

now ushering St. Clair out of the committee room as it prepares for televised hearings, Burch said.

Burch expressed confidence that the full House would reject a move to impeach the President.

Part of the White House strategy appears to be to challenge the fairness and integrity of the Judiciary Committee and Chairman Peter J. Rodino (D-N.J.) in an effort to swing doubtful votes on the floor.

Asked whether the President believed the committee had acted unfairly, Burch said that he did.

Burch said that in May Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.) was quoted as saying his role doesn't get too damn fair.

"He has succeeded," Burch said.

Ziegler argued that President Nixon's remark in a White House transcript of a March 22, 1973, tape that a Watergate defendant got a 35-year sentence was a reflection of speculation in the press. No sentences were handed down until March 23.

Ziegler said there was much speculation in the press before March 22 that the defendants could receive long sentences.

On Jan. 31, all the net-

works and wire services reported that two defendants could be sentenced to between 35 and 45 years, Ziegler said.

There were subsequent stories speculating on how long the sentences might be, the press secretary said.

However, Ziegler did not explain why Mr. Nixon spoke in the past tense on March 22 about the sentencing that did not occur until the next day.

In the transcript presented last Thursday by St. Clair to the Judiciary Committee, Mr. Nixon is quoted as saying on March 22, 1973, "That, uh, judge gave him 35 years."

It was not clear from the edited White House transcript, which consisted of 2½ pages of excerpts of a one-hour, 24-minute conversation between Mr. Nixon and his then-chief of staff, H. R. (Bob) Haldeman, whether the President was referring to U.S. District Court Judge John J. Sirica's sentencing of Watergate conspirator E. Howard Hunt Jr. or G. Gordon Liddy. Immediately before Mr. Nixon's comment in the transcript, Haldeman had been discussing Liddy.

On March 23, 1973, Sirica

gave Hunt a provisional sentence of 35 years in prison and Liddy a term of six years and eight months.

Mr. Nixon's use of the past tense on March 22 is also puzzling because a White House transcript of a conversation between Mr. Nixon and Haldeman and then with White House counsel John W. Dean III on March 21, 1973—two days before the sentencing—made several references to it as a future event.

At one point Dean says, "We don't know what they will be sentenced to. There's always a chance—"

The President interrupts, "Thirty years, isn't it?"

Dean—"It could be. You know, they haven't announced yet, but it—"

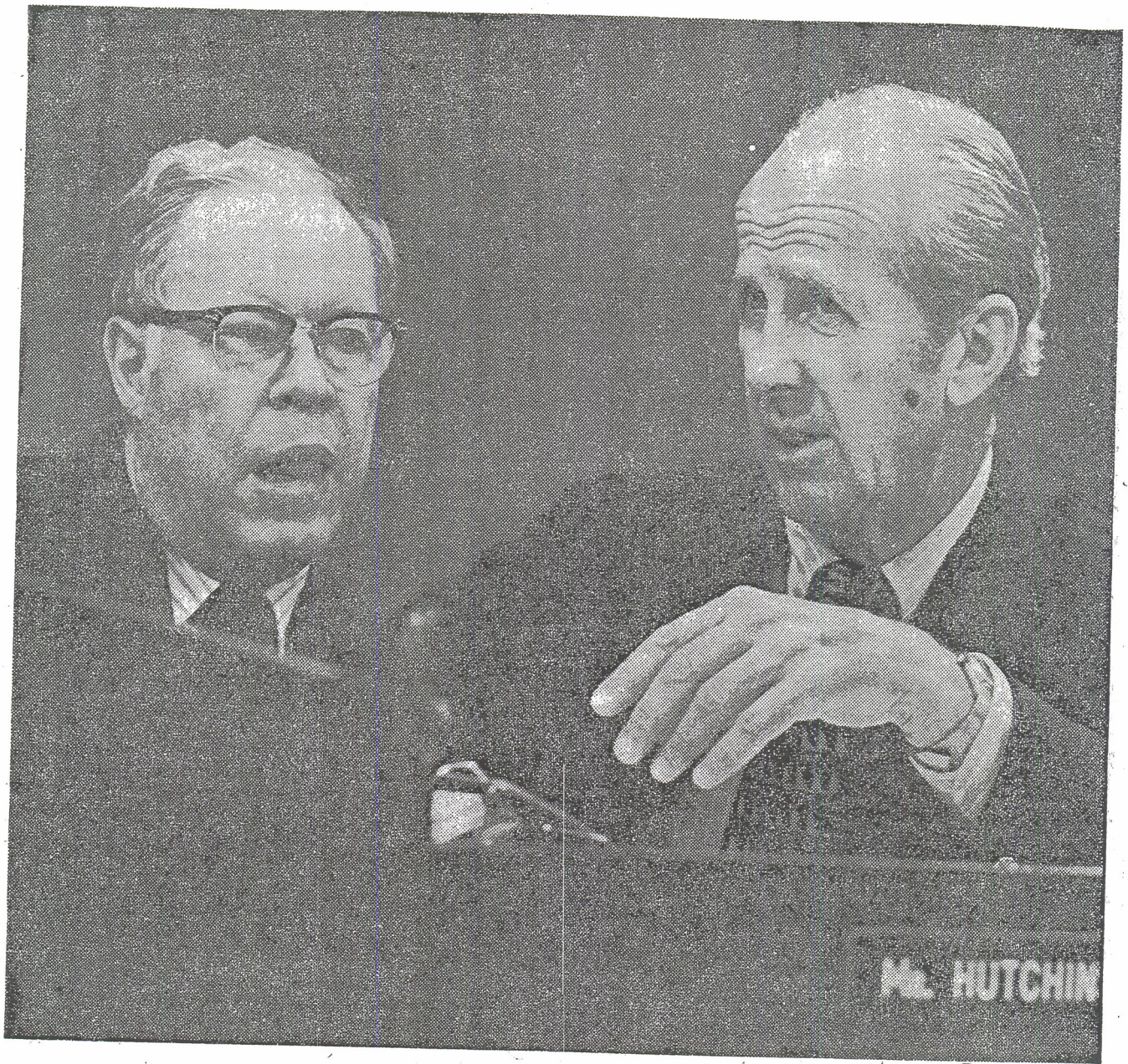
President—"Top is 30 years, isn't it?"

Dean—"It is even higher than that. It is about 50 years. It all—"

President—"So ridiculous."

At another point Dean says, "Well, so much depends on how Sirica sentences. He can sentence in a way that makes parole even impossible."

And Mr. Nixon replies, "He can?"



By Charles Del Vecchio—The Washington Post
Ranking-Judiciary Committee Republicans Hutchinson, left, and McClory confer at Saturday's session.