

Ehrlichman's Notes Released

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White House View of Ellsberg

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Two months before the Plumbers burglary of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist, President Nixon asked John D. Ehrlichman whether a "non-legal team" should be put on the Ellsberg "conspiracy," according to documents released by the House Judiciary Committee.

In Ehrlichman's handwritten notes of conversations with the President, Mr. Nixon is quoted as saying that damaging information on Ellsberg must be leaked to the press — "that is the way we win." The President added that the Ellsberg case "must be tried in the papers."

Ehrlichman, then Mr. Nixon's top domestic adviser, subsequently was convicted of conspiracy in the Sept. 3, 1971, burglary, which was executed by the White House Plumbers team.

Another White House aide, Charles W. Colson, pleaded guilty to putting out derogatory information on Ellsberg in violation of his civil rights, Colson said he acted at the urging of the President.

Ehrlichman's notes were turned over to the House Judiciary Committee's impeachment inquiry by the Watergate special prosecutor's office last Monday.

They were released Saturday.

They "confirm that the President viewed the prosecution of Ellsberg (for leaking the Pentagon Papers to the press) not principally as a national security matter, but with a view toward gaining a public relations and political advantage." The committee's staff charged in a report submitted by special counsel John M. Doar.

Citing the Ellsberg case and various wiretaps of

newsmen and government employees, the staff report accused Mr. Nixon of "widespread and repeated abuses of power" in authorizing and concealing "illegal intelligence-gathering activities" carried out for his "political benefit."

The staff report disputed the President's contention that the Plumbers' mission was to investigate security leaks.

"Documents written at the time of the formation of the

Plumbers . . . show that the Pentagon Papers matter was viewed primarily as an opportunity to discredit Ellsberg, the peace movement, the Democratic party and prior administrations," the report said.

It cited memos by Colson and White House aide Patrick Buchanan in an effort to support this point.

Then the report referred to Ehrlichman's notes of a June 17, 1971, conversation

with the President. Ehrlichman noted:

"Win PR (public relations), not just court case." Two days later, the notes state: "Win the case but the NB (apparently meaning next best) thing is to get the public view right. Hang it all on LBJ."

The apparent intent was to lay blame on former President Lyndon B. Johnson for any embarrassing aspects of the Vietnam war detailed in the Pentagon Papers.

The staff report said that on June 23, ten days after publication of the Pentagon Papers and several weeks before organization of the Plumbers, Ehrlichman's notes show that former Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird advised the President and Ehrlichman that 98 per cent of the Pentagon Papers could have been declassified.

This was acknowledged on July 1 when the President

said, according to the notes. "Espionage — not involved in Ellsberg case," and "don't think in terms of spies."

The report said Mr. Nixon advised Ehrlichman to read the Alger Hiss chapter in the President's book "Six Crises," observing, "it was won in the press." At the same meeting, Ehrlichman wrote, "leak stuff out — that is the way we win."

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