

New Testimony on Payments to Hunt

Washington

The top Nixon campaign aide who channeled nearly \$300,000 to the Watergate burglars believes the payments were meant to buy their silence, according to evidence released yesterday by the House Judiciary Committee.

"My purpose . . . was to protect the 1972 presidential campaign of Mr. Nixon," Frederick C. LaRue said in testimony given during a closed session of the impeachment panel earlier this month.

LaRue testified that Watergate conspirator G. Gordon Liddy told him immediately after the bugging arrests on June 17, 1972, of "certain commitments" to meet the financial needs of the burglary team. He said he acted to make that pledge good without checking either its accuracy or its source.

"I felt that the reason I made these payments was to fulfill these commitments and . . . I personally felt, or it was my opinion, that a point of commitment was that these defendants would remain silent, yes sir," LaRue said, although he testified he had "no direct knowledge" this was the case.

The committee made public LaRue's testimony, given July 3 and July 8.

The other two witnesses included in the latest testimony were Paul L. O'Brien, a post-Watergate lawyer for the Committee for the Re-Election of the President, and Alexander Butterfield, the White House official who

revealed last summer the President's system for taping conversations.

O'Brien indicated it was the final money demand by bugging conspirator E. Howard Hunt Jr. in March, 1973 that triggered John W. Dean's decision to blow the whistle on the Watergate coverup.

Describing his "personal horror" when Hunt asked him on March 16, 1973, for an immediate \$130,000 to cover legal fees and family support, O'Brien said he quickly carried the request to Dean.

"Mr. Dean got extremely excited and I think his exact language was, 'I am tired of being put in the middle. I am going to bust this God-damned thing up,'" O'Brien testified on July 3.

Butterfield, whose office was next to the oval office, painted a picture of Mr. Nixon as "a detail man" whose concerns ranged from "whether or not the curtains were closed or open" to the type of band that should play at White House events and whether salad should be served at dinners.

He also described Mr. Nixon as a hard worker, a "great interrogator" who threw "question after question after question" at this staff, an executive who was "unquestionably the decision maker," and a man so "wholly taken up with history" that he kept notes on the precise time he finished handwriting a given portion of a speech.

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