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Dean Disputes Nixon On Payment to Hunt

Washington

John W. Dean III has disputed President Nixon's statement that the question of paying \$75,000 to Watergate burglar E. Howard Hunt was "left hanging" at the end of a White House meeting March 21, 1973.

In previously secret testimony released yesterday by the House Judiciary Committee, Dean said he left that meeting convinced Mr. Nixon felt the alleged hush money payment was "desirable."

The thing left hanging, he said, was how to raise \$1 million which he told Mr. Nixon ultimately might be demanded if the Watergate burglars were to remain silent.

Dean also revealed to the committee that he destroyed two notebooks and a telephone directory found in Hunt's White House safe shortly after the Watergate

break-in. He said he only glanced inside the "fairly old" notebooks and could not recall what they contained.

Under cross-examination by chief Nixon lawyer James D. St. Clair, Dean said he forgot to mention the destruction of the books when he testified last summer before the Senate Watergate Committee. Subsequently, he said, he did tell the Watergate grand jury about it.

Dean's testimony dealt almost exclusively with his March 21 meeting with Mr. Nixon, in which Hunt's money demands were discussed.

The former presidential counsel said he has the feeling Mr. Nixon was aware of Hunt's demands for money prior to the meeting. Mr. Nixon has said he learned of it for the first time from Dean at the meeting.

Dean said he and the President discussed the premise that in the long run

it would cost \$1 million to pay the Watergate burglars. He said the \$1 million estimate — not the \$75,000 for Hunt — was the question "left hanging."

Dean's interpretation of Mr. Nixon's comments at the March 21 meeting came out during cross-examination by St. Clair. Several members of the committee expressed surprise at the time that the President's lawyer asked questions which seemed to hurt Mr. Nixon's case in the impeachment inquiry.

St. Clair asked Dean: "Is it fair to say that at the conclusion of the conversation, as far as any payment to Hunt was concerned, nothing was resolved and the matter was left hanging?"

Dean responded: "... I had gone in there with the intent of trying to turn off the payment to Hunt. I came out, having been turned around as far as the desirability or not desirability of doing that, that indeed, the President felt it was desirable, but I knew I had nothing, or had the impression I had nothing to do with it and would not have any responsibility for it."

United Press