

When Nixon 'Threw an Ashtray'

Washington

President Nixon said that in a rage he threw an ashtray across the room upon learning of the Watergate break-in, according to testimony by former White House special counsel Charles W. Colson.

The testimony was released yesterday by the House Judiciary Committee.

Colson, now in prison for obstruction of justice in the Ellsberg case, testified at the committee's impeachment inquiry last week and was asked about his conversations with Mr. Nixon after the break-in at Democratic offices June 17, 1972.

"...The President had called me a couple of times on Sunday and he was so furious that he had thrown an ashtray across the room at Key Biscayne and thought it was the dumbest thing he had ever heard of and was just outraged over the fact that anybody even remotely connected with the campaign organization would have anything to do with something like Watergate," Colson said.

He said he and Mr. Nixon met two days later.

"He talked about, I think on that occasion — I know he certainly did on many other occasions around the same period of time — his dissatisfaction with the campaign committee," Colson told the committee.

Mr. Nixon's dissatisfaction with his re-election committee, he said, extended to "the way it was organized, the fact that it had too much money, the fact that the payroll was too fat, that there were too many people over there, that there were a lot of people that were there as professional mercenaries; that mercenaries didn't belong in a political campaign; people should be in a campaign because they believed in what they were doing, not because they

were being paid.

"He wanted all the salaries cut. He wanted the number of people in the committee cut. He wanted the committee better managed. He said it had gotten out of control, that too much money breeds things like the Watergate.

"I remember one thing specifically he said: 'It's a double standard when the press glorifies someone like Ellsberg for stealing national security documents, but pillories people for breaking into a political campaign in this kind of way,'" Colson said, adding that Mr. Nixon complained that his airplane had been bugged in 1969 and his office broken into.

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