

The Haldeman Appeal

A confidential letter seeking to build a half-million dollar legal defense fund for H. R. Haldeman describes the White House Chief of Staff under Richard Nixon together with "most of his associates" as "American patriots."

The letter, dated Aug. 8, was signed by Z. Wayne Griffin, a wealthy, elderly and conservative Los Angeles businessman-philanthropist and an intimate friend of Haldeman, Haldeman's family and California Gov. Ronald Reagan.

The date appears significant. It was on Aug. 8 that Nixon resigned from the presidency—ending all prospect that Haldeman and other Watergate defendants might obtain a pardon from the former President.

"There is little doubt," Griffin wrote a highly selective list of possible contributors, "that history will reveal Bob and most of his associates as dedicated young American patriots victimized by a massive twist of political persecution. History will applaud them. It is our privilege to recognize and help them today—now."

Griffin estimated Haldeman's legal fees would "exceed \$350,000—possibly considerably more." Haldeman, he said, is now spending all the time he can "writing a book on his Nixon years." Future income from the sale of the book, he said, "is highly speculative and, in any event, would be far in the future."

Trustee of the Haldeman legal defense fund is the Crocker National Bank. Griffin was unavailable for a report on how well the fund may be doing after five weeks.

A postscript: It was only hours prior

to the Aug. 8 date of Griffin's letter that John Ehrlichman, Nixon's No. 2 White House aide, telephoned the former President's personal secretary, Rose Mary Woods, seeking her intervention with Nixon for an Ehrlichman pardon. The appeal got nowhere. But last Tuesday, Ehrlichman told reporters here he was not sure whether he would even want a presidential pardon.

Special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski got sandbagged when President Ford told his congressional leaders last Wednesday that Jaworski's Sept. 4 letter to White House counsel Philip Buchen would put the Nixon pardon in a more favorable light — if only the President could release all of it.

Soon after, Sen. Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania, the Senate Republican Leader, was implying to reporters that the real explanation of Mr. Ford's politically damaging pardon of the former President could be found in the letter from Jaworski.

The President's words, perhaps erroneously, were interpreted by the Republican leaders as new ammunition to explain the pardon at Jaworski's expense and ease his own political situation.

Jaworski wrote the letter in response to a question from Buchen as to when Mr. Nixon might come to trial "if" he were indicted. Jaworski replied that the legal process might take a year.

Although Buchen did, in fact, read only part of Jaworski's letter in his press briefing last Sunday, at the start of the pardon firestorm, Jaworski

never stamped his letter secret. The decision to withhold parts of the letter was Buchen's alone, based on a desire to conform to Federal Judge John J. Sirica's gag rule on public discussion of the pending Watergate trial.

Indeed, the "secret" parts of the Jaworski letter said nothing about any possible rationale for the pardon. In the part of the letter Buchen did not read, Jaworski simply noted the huge amount of condemnatory publicity which surrounds Nixon in the wake of the impeachment proceedings. As a result, he said, it would be unfair to the six Watergate defendants to link Nixon with their upcoming trial scheduled for Sept. 30.

Although President Ford does not want a single chief of staff in his White House, he may ask former Gov. William Scranton of Pennsylvania to fill that role temporarily when retired Gen. Alexander Haig resigns in the next few days.

Scranton has denied that he already agreed to take the job. He has previously denied that he would take any White House position. But he has said he would take temporary assignments from the President. Scranton has been a key member of President Ford's transition staff, but agreed to assume that post only on a strictly temporary basis.

Now, however, Scranton is at the top of the list of possible replacements for Al Haig as temporary White House chief until the Ford White House becomes a fully working operation.