

Watergate-- New Tape Revelations

Washington

The Watergate coverup trial heard tapes yesterday of former President Nixon and his top aides discussing the collapse of efforts to contain the investigation of the break-in at Democratic National Committee headquarters.

On April 16, 1973, John Ehrlichman advised Mr. Nixon that his press secretary "feels we have no more than 12 hours . . . it's his estimate that unless we take the initiative by 9 o'clock tonight it will be too late."

That segment was deleted from transcripts released April 30, 1974, by the White House.

Also deleted was a tape segment April 14, 1973, in which Ehrlichman and another top white House aide, H.R. Haldeman discussed with the former President their unsuccessful efforts to get former Attorney General John Mitchell to take the

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blame for the Watergate break-in.

Ehrlichman reported during the day that Mitchell considered himself "an innocent man" and had begun "lobbing mudballs at the White House."

Another deleted segment included a discussion of whether then - White House counsel John W. Dean III planned to plead guilty and cooperate with prosecutors.

Within the hour, Mr. Nixon met with Dean and asked him to submit, for future use, his letter of resignation. Dean responded that he thought Haldeman and Ehrlichman also should resign.

The next night, Mr. Nixon announced he had received new information about Watergate intimating that White House and campaign

aides might have been involved. He said he was initiating a new investigation.

The jury heard tapes of nine conversations, including several on April 14, 1973, during which Mr. Nixon, Haldeman and Ehrlichman discussed the need to explain thousands of dollars passed to the break-in defendants.

Mr. Nixon urged his two top aides to try to get "all these guys who participated in raising the money . . . to stick to their line that they did not raise this money to obstruct justice."

On April 17., Mr. Nixon brought the subject up again, asking: "Have you given any thought to what the line ought to be — I, I don't mean a lie — but a line on raising the money for these defendants? Because both of you were aware that was going on, you see — the, the raising of money — you were aware of it, right?"

Both Haldeman and Ehrlichman acknowledged that they were aware.

"You say that our purpose was to keep from talking to the press," Mr. Nixon said.

During a late-night telephone conversation on April 14, Mr. Nixon told Ehrlichman all the people involved in raising money for the original Watergate defendants must "have a straight damm line that, of course, we raised money. Be very honest about it. But, uh, we raised money for a purpose we thought was perfectly proper . . .

"We weren't trying to shut them up, we just didn't, we didn't want them to talk to the press . . . That's perfectly legitimate, isn't it?"

That part of the Ehrlichman telephone conversa-

tion was deleted from the Watergate transcripts released April 30 of this year by Mr. Nixon.

Haldeman, Ehrlichman, Mitchel, former Assistant Attorney General Robert Mardian and Kenneth Parkinson, one-time lawyer for the Nixon re-election committee, are charged with conspiring to obstruct the investigation of the Watergate break-in. They are the defendants in the coverup trial.

Minutes before his late-night conversation with Ehrlichman, Mr. Nixon had talked on the telephone with Haldeman and discussed the possibility that some of the break-in defendants would say they received money in exchange for their silence.

Earlier that same day Mr. Nixon, Haldeman and Ehrlichman discussed Dean's theory that White House and campaign aides could be charged with obstruction of justice stemming from the payments.

Ehrlichman recalled that Dean came to him and said, "May I go to (Nixon lawyer Herbert) Kalmbach?"

"Go to the Kalmbach for the purpose of?" Mr. Nixon asked.

"For the purpose of getting Herb to raise some money," Ehrlichman replied. "For the purpose of paying the defendants. For the purpose of keeping them, quote, on the reservation, unquote."

"Right," Mr. Nixon said. "with that they could try to tie you and Bob in a conspiracy to obstruct justice."

"That's his theory," said Ehrlichman.

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