

WXPost. DEC 23 1975

Chapin's Sentence Cut by Gesell

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A contrite Dwight L. Chapin yesterday had his prison sentence for perjury reduced by a federal judge to whom he admitted lying to the grand jury about so-called "dirty tricks" conducted during former President Nixon's 1972 campaign.

U.S. District Judge Gerhard

A. Gesell cut Chapin's sentence from 10 to 30 months in prison to six to 18 months and recommended that he "be paroled as soon as possible."

In his brief order, Gesell indicated he was basing his action in part on a handwritten note Chapin wrote to him Nov. 14, in which he said:

"You may want to know that I have accepted your punishment with a keen awareness that I would not be here if

indeed I had not done something wrong. If an acknowledgement of my wrongdoing is meaningful, be assured it is offered."

Chapin has been serving time in the federal prison camp at Lompoc, Calif., a minimum security facility, since last Aug. 11. Gesell's order means he will become eligible for release about Jan. 17, allowing maximum time off for good behavior.

Chapin, 35, who was Nixon's appointments secretary in the White House, was convicted April 5, 1974, of lying to the special Watergate grand jury

about his connection with Donald H. Segretti, an admitted political saboteur.

He denied to the grand jury that he had told Segretti to concentrate his "dirty tricks" on the presidential campaign of Sen. Edmund Muskie (D-Maine). He also denied to the

grand jury that he knew Segretti had distributed phony campaign literature.

At Chapin's trial, both of these statements were found to be false.

When he imposed the original 10 to 30-month sentence on Chapin, Judge Gesell made it clear he was doing so for reasons of punishment, and not because Chapin needed rehabilitation, or to set an example for others.

In his letter to Gesell, Chapin said, "There is a much more important thing happening to me here than punishment. While neither one of us felt that I was being put here for rehabilitation—in truth, that is what is really taking place."

Chapin said there were "some critical flaws" in his character and added: "Perhaps it was because of these that my involvement with Segretti and the resulting crime came about. I think that this is the case."

Chapin's application for a reduced sentence included a summary of the punishment received and the prison time served, if any, by 13 other Watergate defendants, including former Attorney General Richard C. Kleindienst (no time) former White House counsel John W. Dean III (four months and five days), former White House assistant and re-election campaign aide Jeb S. Magruder (seven months and

four days), former White House aide Charles W. Colson (six months and 23 days) and Segretti, (four months and 13 days).

The plea supporting the result request also mentioned the full pardon granted to Nixon by President Ford.

"Chapin was an appointee of President Nixon, and Chapin's activities related to the Nixon re-election campaign," the plea said.

Also included in the file was a letter from Gerald M. Farkas, warden of the Lompoc Prison Camp, which said Chapin's "institutional adjustment has been excellent."

Farkas wrote that Chapin had worked on the camp vegetable crew in the food service department, on the maintenance construction crew, and had received "excellent work reports."

The warden also said Chapin had been working with the Seventh Step Foundation, a voluntary organization of ex-offenders who try to help convicts readjust to normal life.

The papers filed with Gesell noted that Chapin's wife, Susan, and his two daughters, Kim, 10, and Tracy, 8, have been living in Winnetka, Ill., since the spring of 1973, and that it has been difficult for them to visit the prisoner because of time and distance.

As for Chapin's letter to Gesell, the papers filed by his lawyers recalled that at the

time of the first sentencing, Gesell "noted an absence of remorse on the part of Mr. Chapin. We suggest that with the passage of time there has been a change in Mr. Chapin's attitude." The lawyers then referred the judge to the letter.

The court sources noted that while Chapin showed no remorse at his sentencing, he asked Judge Gesell to permit him to begin serving his sentence last August even before the U.S. Supreme Court announced its refusal to consider his appeal.