

Diversion

Dean: Watergate conspirators may get pardon

(Mar. 10, 1975)
By Randy Gordon

A soft-spoken John Dean said Friday night that there is a chance President Gerald Ford will pardon those men recently convicted in the Watergate cover-up trial.

"You have to remember that these are still very powerful men," he told an audience of nearly 1,000 at the Omaha Civic Auditorium Music Hall.

As to whether Ford should pardon former Nixon officials H.R. Haldeman, John Ehrlichman, John Mitchell and Robert Mardian, Dean said he "does not wish jail on any man, but I don't think this (the pardon) would be a just solution."

"I would prefer to see them come forward and explain what went on" before any pardon or sentence reduction is given, he said.

Dean also urged former President Richard Nixon to escape the "prison of his own conscience" by revealing what he knows about Watergate, an incident in U.S. history that he said will not "quickly pass from the minds of the American people."

"He (Nixon) is not what you would call a 'free' man," Dean said. "He has to be very concerned about what people did in his behalf, but he has not done so much as come forward and straighten the record out one way or the other with regard to that activity."

Dean said he does not think Nixon would have been impeached had he admitted wrongdoing in the Watergate affair. "But for some reason Richard Nixon could never trust the American people," he added.

Dean said it is impossible to judge the Nixon presidency through what he called the lens of Watergate, and that Nixon won't be judged fairly until he "comes forward and tells the American people what he did and why he did it."

"In a sense it's a shame that any good he has done has been lost in Watergate. Hopefully some day he will dispel all that by laying it out for what it is," he said.

He said the pardon also "did not extract so much as an ounce of truth in exchange, and I felt that was wrong." Dean also said there was no distinction made between official wrongdoing and private crimes, such as tax fraud.

Dean said Nixon was a kind man to his staff. "He always went out of his way to do those little things," he said.

Nixon was also a leader who was "in total control as presi-

dent," Dean said. He said people who worked with Nixon saw a man who was a fast study, very able and was very disciplined in the allocation of his time each day.

First shock

Dean's first shock in the Watergate affair, he said, was when former-president Nixon, in an August 29, 1972 press conference from San Clemente, Calif., "announced to the world" that Dean had investigated the Watergate affair and found no White House involvement. Dean added that there was no such investigation.

"Nobody was more surprised to hear about it than I was," Dean said. But he said he "somehow justified in my mind" the upcoming cover-up then.

"Maybe it was not wanting to think about what I was doing, or because of the company I was keeping" at the White House, Dean said.

He said he wanted out of the expanding coverup in January and February of 1973, but found he was too deeply involved by then.

One of the "triggering" events that eventually led him to expose the coverup occurred March 19, 1973, when he learned Howard Hunt, a former CIA agent who was involved in the break-in of National Democratic headquarters in the Watergate Complex, was "blackmailing the White House," Dean said.

Last Straw

"That, to me, was the last straw," he said. "I was just not going to be involved in answering any demands of Hunt, and I didn't think anybody in the White House should."

The next morning, he said he told Nixon of the "cancer growing on the presidency" -- the extent of the coverup.

Dean qualified convicted Watergate conspirator G. Gordon Liddy's statement that Dean cooperated with the Special Prosecutor's Office "only to save my own ass."

Self-preservation was involved, he said, adding that he would be less than candid if he did not admit it.

But Dean stated that after Nixon sent him to Camp David, Va., for a rest during late March, he returned with the conviction that "I would never lie for them. I know that and I never have."

Dean, who called Watergate a "corrupt use of power by government officials for political purposes," said it was both one of the worst and best moments of his life.

He said it was the worst moment because of the grief it caused him and his family; his four month jail sentence, which he said was not a "country club"; and the "fact that I'll always wear the scarlet letter of Watergate for the rest of my life."

Maturing

However, he said the episode was a maturing experience.

"I was ambitious. I got blinded by my ambition. I did my damndest to please my superiors," Dean said. "I forgot that each man's integrity belongs to him, and that's where his loyalty to his integrity belongs."

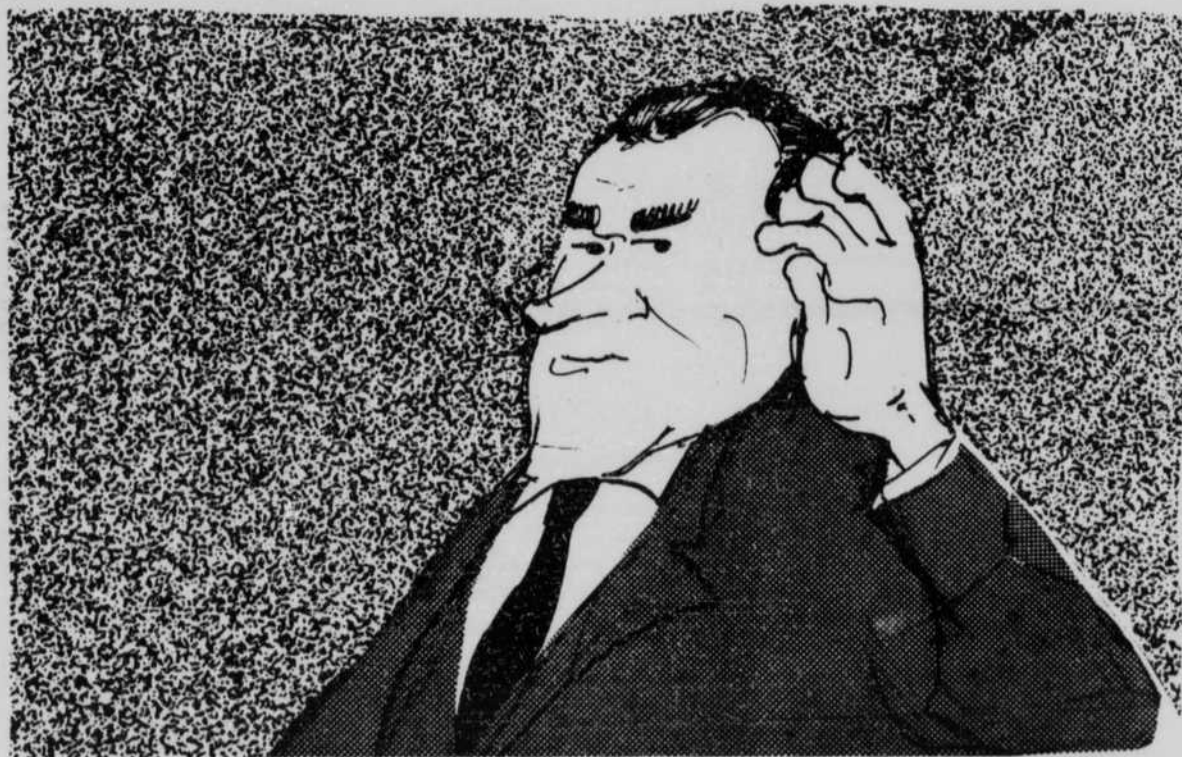
He told the crowd that ambition is not a bad trait. "It's the way things get done. I just wish all those who are ambitious 'good luck' and I hope you keep your head better than I did."

Referring to the lectures he has been conducting on college campuses, Dean said he viewed the chance to talk with students as a "golden opportunity to share my past mistaken judgements, hoping that it might be of some meaning to you because every person is capable of having his own Watergate."

He said he has been surprised by the number of campuses asking him to continue the lecture series, which ends next week, and the amount of fees they have offered. Some, which he said he will not accept, reached \$6,000 to \$7,000.

"I so think there is a point where it would become commercializing on Watergate, and that was not my intent," he said.

The UNO Student Programming Organization paid Dean \$3,500 for his appearance in Omaha.



Andy Manhart/Daily Nebraskan

Results: Carter is President-elect

Nov. 3, 1976

Democrat Jimmy Carter has tallied enough electoral votes to win the presidency. But, as late as 3 a.m. today, some news sources were still saying the election was too close to call.

Shortly after 2 a.m., United Press International projected Carter the victor in Hawaii and Mississippi, giving him more than the

270 electoral votes needed for the victory.

ABC projected him the victor in Hawaii and the nation at 2:32 a.m.

Nebraska voted solidly for Ford.

As late as 2 a.m. Wednesday, Carter was within three electoral votes of victory, with the outcome in 15 states still undetermined. As one commentator put it, it was

Carter's ball, first and goal on the Ford one-year line.

New York's electoral votes put Carter within eight votes of the 270 needed for election.

However because of the narrowness of the Carter margin and suspected tampering, the New York State Supreme Court at 1:45

See CARTER on 7

Editor's Note: In conjunction with Arts and Entertainment's celebration of the 1970s, Diversion is re-running stories that ran in the Daily Nebraskan from 1975 to 1979. Some of the stories deal with issues still contemporary in 1989; others deal with issues reflective of the 1970s. A lot happened at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and in the world, but space only allowed a brief sampling of the decade.