Bush's administration is worse than Nixon's, says Watergate aide

By Julian Coman in Washington

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John Dean, Richard Nixon's legal counsel who was jailed for his part in the Watergate scandal, has accused the Bush administration of trumping even the Nixon regime in secrecy, deception and political cynicism.

In the latest book to attack the conduct of the current United States administration, Mr Dean says that it has created potentially the most corrupt, unethical and undemocratic White House in history.

His Worse than Watergate, the Secret Presidency of George W. Bush is published this week by Little Brown.

"Bush and [Vice-President Richard] Cheney are a throwback to the Nixon time," Mr Dean, 65, told The Telegraph last night. "All government business is filtered through a political process at this White House, which is the most secretive ever to run the United States.

"This is not in the public's interest. It's in the White House's interest, and the interest of Bush's re-election. The White House is being run like a private business, with the difference that it is not accountable to the shareholders - in this case the voters."

His attack follows a torrid month in which the Bush administration has faced accusations from Richard Clarke, its former chief intelligence officer, that it failed to take the threat of terrorism seriously enough before September 11.

Mr Bush's national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice, initially refused to testify before a public inquiry into the events of September 11. Under intense pressure, the White House has agreed to let her testify this week.

"As with Nixon," noted Mr Dean, "the concept of executive privilege is being abused. This is about pure politics: do it as long as you can get away with it, and when you can't get away with it any more, yield."

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