

Ruling by Sirica Imposes Silence on All Concerned

By BILL KOVACH

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WASHINGTON, March 1—The President, also issued a brief statement, saying, "During the past months my friends at the bar have expressed confidence in me and I thank them and promise when all circumstances are brought to light my innocence will be clearly demonstrated."

Two of those accused in the indictment charging conspiracy to obstruct justice, Charles W. Colson and Kenneth W. Parkinson, issued a personal statement of innocence and predicted their eventual exoneration on the charges.

The five others named—John D. Ehrlichman, H. R. Haldeman, Robert C. Mardian, John N. Mitchell and Gordon C. Strachan—relied on their attorneys to issue brief statements of innocence.

When the indictments were reported this morning they were accompanied by an order of Judge Sirica that enjoined all parties from any statements on the matter outside the court.

None of the seven, some of whom at one time were among the most powerful men in Government and those closest to President Nixon, were present in the courtroom when the indictments were handed up by the grand jury.

The First to Respond

Mr. Colson, the first to respond to the charges, called a news conference when he was notified that the indictment would name him. Speaking in the offices of the law firm from which he has taken a leave of absence, Mr. Colson said:

"My conscience is clear. Regardless of how rough the road ahead may be, I know that in the end my innocence will be established because I put complete faith in God and I believe deeply in my country."

Mr. Colson had reportedly originally planned to issue a five-page statement detailing claims of his innocence but was dissuaded by his attorneys because of the judge's order against out-of-court comment.

Mr. Parkinson, who served in 1972 as an attorney for the Finance Committee to Re-Elect the President and the Committee for the Re-election of

the President, also issued a brief statement, saying, "During the past months my friends at the bar have expressed confidence in me and I thank them and promise when all circumstances are brought to light my innocence will be clearly demonstrated."

The only other one of the accused to speak publicly, H. R. Haldeman, the former White House chief of staff, told newsmen in Los Angeles: "I have no comment and will have none for the time being. When the time does come that I have something, I will let you know."

'Nothing to Say'

John J. Wilson, Washington attorney who represents Mr. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman, the former domestic affairs adviser to the President, said his clients had neither read the charges nor had a chance to confer with him "and we have nothing to say."

William G. Hundley, Washington attorney for former Attorney General John N. Mitchell who is now on trial on conspiracy charges in New York City, also had little to say.

"We are going to fight this all the way," Mr. Hundley said, "and expect to be vindicated in the courts."

Referring to the judge's gag rule as a limiting force, Robert C. Marian, former Assistant Attorney General in Charge of Internal Security, spoke through his attorney, Thomas Green, who said: "Given this order, all we can say is we deny the charges, otherwise we risk a problem."

Neither Gordon C. Strachan, former assistant to Mr. Haldeman, nor his attorney could be reached for comment.

At least some of the reluctance of those accused and their attorneys to discuss the charges publicly apparently stems from the fact that one of the defense strategies being considered by some of them is based on prejudicial pre-trial publicity.

Challenge Considered

Other attorneys are privately chafing under the order and had briefly considered a legal



Associated Press
Leon Jaworski, special Watergate prosecutor.

challenge to the order as a violation of the First Amendment to the Constitution. Attorneys familiar with the legal situation, however, point out that a similar gag rule was challenged and upheld at the district level in Federal courts.

The order issued by Judge Sirica is directed to all those in the office of the Watergate special prosecutor, all defendants, their attorneys and all those identified as witnesses in the case. It enjoins them from making any "extrajudicial statements concerning any aspect of this case . . ." and further defines "extrajudicial statements" as "any statement which is not made during the course of judicial proceedings in this case."

Most attorneys who are connected with the case agreed that the order restricted them to little beyond statements of innocence.

Mr. Colson's statement, the most extensive issued today, defended not only himself, but President Nixon.

"Above all [I am] proud," he said, "to have served a man whom I believe history will record as one of the greatest and most courageous of our Presidents. Like most human beings, I have made my share of mistakes but during the time I served, I have always done my duty as I saw it."