

Nixon Ex-Aides Seek to Delay Civil Lawsuits

47774
By George Lardner Jr.

Washington Post Staff Writer

Former White House aides H. R. (Bob) Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman are seeking to hold up half a dozen civil suits stemming from Watergate-related scandals until completion of the criminal trials facing the two men.

Their lawyers contend that continued disclosures in the civil suits could jeopardize their rights to fair criminal trials.

Acting on behalf of both men, Washington attorney Frank H. Strickler has asked for a halt to all further proceedings in:

- The milk-money suit filed by Ralph Nader, who has charged that President Nixon's controversial 1971 increase in milk price supports was a payoff for early contributions by milk producers to Mr. Nixon's re-election campaign.

- Litigation by Common Cause seeking disclosure of Nixon campaign finances and expenditures in the 1971-72 period prior to the effective date of a stiff new federal disclosure law. Common Cause lawyers contend that millions of dollars in contributions may still be unreported.

- Former National Security Council staff member Morton Halperin's lawsuit against the government for the 21-month-long wiretap on his phone. The tap was ordered in May, 1969, in connection with President Nixon's attempts to track down the source of news leaks concerning foreign policy. Halperin's name was submitted to the FNI for investigation by Henry A. Kissinger, nom Secretary of State.

- The Institute for Policy Studies' suit against former Attorney General John N. Mitchell, Ehrlichman and others because of alleged taps on the institute's phones in connection with the White House investigation of the leak of the Pentagon Papers.

- Daniel Ellsberg's suit against Mitchell and others for the government's handling of his prosecution in the Pentagon Papers case.

- Democratic litigation against President Nixon's re-election committees for the Watergate break-in and bugging of Democratic national headquarters. The principal suit, brought by the Demo-

cratic National Committee, is near an out-of-court settlement, but a related claim for damages by Spencer Oliver, a Democratic official whose phone was tapped, is still being pressed.

Strickler asked for postponement of the civil suits, including the taking of depositions, last Monday in motions filed with U.S. District Court Judges John J. Sirica and Gerhard A. Gesell.

Sirica is to preside over the Watergate cover-up trial, in which both Haldeman and Ehrlichman have been named as defendants. Gesell is handling the criminal conspiracy charges against Ehrlichman and others in connection with the 1971 White House-sponsored break-in at the offices of Ellsberg's California psychiatrist.

Chief Judge George L. Hart Jr. held Wednesday, however, that neither Sirica nor Gesell had authority to stop the civil proceedings, which have been assigned to six other judges of the District Court here.

In a letter to all the lawyers involved, Hart said those six judges had agreed that any protective orders for Ehrlichman and Haldeman should be sought from them individually on a suit-by-suit basis.

In that regard, Judge William B. Jones, who is presiding over the milk suit, is to hold a conference in his chambers Wednesday at 2 p.m.
TR FOR ADD FOUR
ADD FOUR—SUITS—N

Nader's lawyer, William A. Dobrovir, has already served notice that he wants to take depositions from Ehrlichman and Haldeman for the milk suit.

"We have no intention of letting anyone take their depositions if we can help it," John J. Wilson, chief Washington lawyer for the two former White House aides, said yesterday.

Ehrlichman decided last week to take on a new lawyer, William S. Frates of Miami, but he has yet to associate himself with a local Washington attorney and complete the formalities of becoming Ehrlichman's counsel of record. Until then, Wilson said he and Strickler will continue to represent Ehrlichman.