

Anderson to Give Jury Transcripts to Sirica

4/26/73

By Lawrence Meyer

Washington Post Staff Writer

Columnist Jack Anderson told federal prosecutors yesterday that he will voluntarily turn over his copies of secret Watergate grand jury testimony to Chief U.S. District Judge John J. Sirica.

After an almost two-hour meeting with the Watergate prosecution team, Anderson said the prosecutors had convinced him that his publishing of verbatim excerpts of the testimony has hampered their investigation.

Anderson said it was "unlikely" that he would publish any more verbatim testimony. But he added that he made no binding agreement to refrain from ever doing so in the future.

Yesterday's meeting, according to Anderson, was arranged at his initiation through his lawyers. Ander-

son said United States Attorney Harold H. Titus Jr., principal Assistant U.S. Attorney Earl J. Silbert and Assistant U.S. Attorneys Seymour Glanzer and Donald Campbell met with him yesterday afternoon.

Beginning on April 16 and in subsequent columns, Anderson has published verbatim extracts of testimony heard by the Watergate grand jury. Anderson's columns have included testimony by convicted Watergate conspirators James W. McCord Jr. and E. Howard Hunt Jr.; Sylvia Panarites and Sally Harmony, both former secretaries to convicted Watergate conspirator G. Gordon Liddy; former White House aide Dwight Chapin, and Robert Reisner, assistant to former White House aide Jeb Stuart Magruder.

Reporters covering the Watergate grand jury, which normally meets on the third floor of the U.S. District Courthouse here, have been unable to locate the grand jury this week or to determine whether it has met.

Although Silbert refused to say whether the grand jury has met this week, he said in a telephone interview that Anderson's publication of verbatim extracts of the grand jury testimony had not stopped the investigation. "We did not stop hearing testimony because of that," Silbert said. "It did not stop us."

Silbert, who has been directing the Watergate investigation, also declined to say whether Anderson's intention to turn over the copies of transcripts to Sirica was a satisfactory settlement.

The prosecution team has been accused by Justice Department officials of leaking the transcripts to Anderson. "I have assured them the leaks were not in the prosecutor's office," Anderson said after the meeting. Anderson said his source was a "man with high connections in the administration. I didn't ask and he didn't say where he got his information from."

Anderson described the one-hour, 45-minute meeting as "just a cordial conversation with both of us taking strong positions from time to time." Ultimately, Anderson said, he was convinced that publication of the transcript excerpts was hurting the investigation. "I don't want to hamper their investigation," Anderson said. "They made such a passionate point of it."

Anderson said the prosecutors told him that people were calling them anonymously, "saying, 'We have information but we're afraid to come in' " because of the

columns. In addition, Anderson said he was told that the testimony of some government witnesses "will be terribly restrained because they're afraid their bosses will read about it in the column the next morning."

Because of his "great respect for Judge Sirica," Anderson said he would voluntarily turn over the transcript copies to him and not publish anything more from them.

Following an extraordinary executive session of all 15 U.S. District Court judges here Monday, Sirica ordered Titus to conduct an investigation into the leaks. Silbert declined to say whether the investigation would proceed in the face of Anderson's intention to give the transcript copies to Sirica.

Anderson said that Titus was "most persuasive. I came away most impressed with his sincerity. I think he's trying to get to the bottom of this. I told them, 'I'm convinced now that you're trying to get to the bottom of this.' They took offense at the word 'now,' but I didn't retract it."

The prosecutors made no threats, Anderson said. He, in turn, told them that he will not give up "digging into the grand jury" proceedings. Although Anderson said it is "unlikely" he will again use verbatim quotes from the grand jury, he added, "I can't ever say in advance what I will do. If it is information that will hamper the investigation," he said he would not use it.

Silbert agreed that Anderson had made no firm commitment. "He hasn't obligated himself to do anything," Silbert said. "It isn't like a contract."