

Cox Rejected Advice on Phone Tapes

By Jack Anderson

Not long after Archibald Cox was appointed Watergate special prosecutor, he turned down a recommendation that he subpoena White House telephone tapes.

This was several weeks before the prosecutors learned that President Nixon had secretly taped all conversations inside his oval office. They knew, however, that his two top aides, H. R. (Bob) Halde- man and John Ehrlichman, had taped their telephone conversations.

The original prosecutors subpoenaed some telephone tapes from Ehrlichman. When Cox took over the prosecution, they recommended that he subpoena other Haldeman-Ehrlichman tapes in White House custody.

Sources close to Cox say he turned down the suggestion because he was still in the process of reviewing the case. He didn't want to take any action, they say, until he had completed his assessment. He has now issued a subpoena for selective White House tapes.

Footnote: Cox's office gave us this statement: "It is im- proper for any prosecutor to

discuss communications or recommendations made among the prosecution team in any case. On the general subject of how we have pro- ceeded, Mr. Cox has pointed out that he tried to establish very early at the White House that he had no desire to sim- ply rummage through files. The subpoena issued last week was as specific as it could be to make it clear the special pro- secutor sought information clearly relevant to the investi- gation of the case."

Naval Negligence—More than ever, the Navy seems to be made up of steel ships and wooden men.

Documents intended for the eyes only of top Navy brass tell how the fleet has been measurably weakened by mis- management of ship repairs, which keep vessels in port far longer than necessary.

In shipyards run by the Navy itself and in others oper- ated by private industry, Navy inspectors have found strong evidence of inefficiency, waste and greed.

In Norfolk, Va., where ship repairs are handled by private shipyards under the direction of the Navy, the inspectors found:

- The Navy is unable to compel the contractors to pay for extra shifts or have em- ployees work overtime as long as the contractor says work is on schedule.

- The Navy has been unable to collect damages from ship- yards for delays "although there have been completion deals as the result of contrac- tor negligence."

- Shipyards are under- staffed. Part of the blame, ac- cording to the Navy, belongs to its own supervisor who has failed to tell shipyards of esti- mated workloads. The contrac- tors "do not have adequate manpower available and little capacity to expand to meet the workload available," allege the inspectors.

- Shipyards that already have too much work are given more, although other Ches- apeake yards at Baltimore are not used.

- There is a general snafu on scheduling repairs, with some requests being made too late and others being made early but ignored by the brass until the deadline.

- Some repairs are grossly underestimated when ordered by officers. Reported the inspectors: "Results have been

excessive work growth from time of initial bid award, at times exceeding 100 per cent."

- Late awards of repair con- tracts—sometimes only 10 days before work is to begin— make it impossible for con- tractors to have adequate sup- plies on hand. The inspectors note: "Material is difficult and expensive to obtain on a crash basis."

- Equipment needed for many older ships is no longer available, forcing contractors to make parts as they go along.

- Reports on progress of the repairs often fail to warn officials of developing trouble. "Often," the inspectors found, "the situation is one of being in extremis before notifying all concerned."

In their wide-ranging criti- que of the Norfolk operation, the inspectors said they did not want to single out Norfolk for rebuke. "The nature of the problems are such," they said, "that they are undoubtedly present in every location where repair work is being ac- complished on ships in private shipyards under the cogni- zance of a supervisor of ship- building."