

Final 5/4/74

# Peterson Gave Dean Reports

WASHINGTON (AP) — At a crucial point last year in the government's Watergate investigation, the prosecutors cut off Asst. Atty. Gen. Henry E. Petersen from all information about the case because they learned Petersen was giving the information to the White House.

A source close to the prosecutors said the prosecutors learned that Petersen was passing information to the White House Counsel John W. Dean III and they feared Dean was passing on the information to potential defendants in the case.

The prosecutors did not believe Petersen was willingly or knowingly involved in any conspiracy but thought he should be severed from the case because he was a potential witness against Dean on a possible conspiracy to obstruct justice charge.

"Dean distributed information he obtained from Henry Petersen to potential defendants while telling Petersen he was collecting information strictly for President Nixon," one source said.

"What was happening to Henry, really, was that one of the principals in the potential obstruction of justice case (relating to the Watergate cover-up) was using the information from Henry Petersen to further the continued obstruction of justice."

Neither Petersen nor the prosecutors had any immediate comment.

The split between Petersen and the prosecutors came a year ago. The White House tape transcripts released ear-

lier this week show that Petersen referred obliquely to the problem in a conversation with Nixon on April 27, 1973.

"We had a kind of crisis of confidence night before last," Petersen told the President.

Later in the same conversation, he refers to his questioning of Dean as to what Dean was doing with the information he received.

"I can almost quote him," Petersen said. "He said 'Henry, God damn it, I need this information. That man has designated me to get all these facts ...'"

"He told me that he had been designated by you to accumulate all these facts and he was reporting to you personally. And that you'd be clearing his ass out if he didn't have it and I went back to him again, I said, 'John, are you sure this information is not going later-

ally?' I said, 'Not that I distrust you, but you, where is it going? Do you know?'"

"He said, 'Henry, it is only going upward,' which I took to mean Ehrlichman, Haldeman and you."

According to the sources close to the prosecutors:

"He (Dean) told Henry the President wanted the information and Henry believed him. When the prosecutors found out what Dean was doing with the information Henry was giving him, the prosecutors told Henry he had to sever himself from the case because he was a potential prosecution witness against Dean in an obstruction of justice.

"Petersen bridled at that. He took the position that Nixon and (Atty. Gen. Elliot L.) Richardson wanted him to be there doing what he was doing."