

Ehrlichman Calls Inquiry 'Destructive'

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SEATTLE, Aug. 13 — John D. Ehrlichman charged today that the work of the Senate Watergate committee was "destructive."

The President's former domestic adviser said that the committee members had forged with "what they consider to be in the national interest" even though the inquiry may violate "the rights of individuals."

"I'd hate to be on the committee and have to read their mail," said the relaxed and tanned Mr. Ehrlichman, who spent five days testifying before the committee recessed its hearings until next month.

If his own mail is any indication, Mr. Ehrlichman said, the backlash against the "sort of circus atmosphere" of the nationally televised investigation and against some of the seven Senators on the committee was "terrible."

Mr. Ehrlichman, who resigned from the Administration April 30, drove across the country with his family after his committee appearance. He made his comments today at a news conference at a sprawling yellow frame house on the shore of Lake Washington in nearly Hunts Point. The family is now leasing the house, which they once owned.

Colson View Stressed

Asked how he thought the Administration had fared in the first phase of the Watergate hearings, which ended last Tuesday, Mr. Ehrlichman said he felt that all the evidence was not in yet.

He noted that Charles W. Col-

son, a former White House political adviser, would not be called as a witness until the hearings are resumed.

Recalling that Mr. Colson had been a participant in many meetings about which there were conflicts in testimony, he said, "I think it's important to wait until Colson has testified."

Although his easy manner today was in sharp contrast to the combativeness that marked much of his testimony in Washington, Mr. Ehrlichman took a sharp dig at the committee on the delay in Mr. Colson's appearance.

He said the committee had voted on "partisan" lines in an executive session to postpone Mr. Colson's testimony. He said he interpreted this action to mean that "the Administration had too much initiative after Bob [H. R. Halde- man, the President's former chief of staff] and I testified."

Mr. Ehrlichman was asked why he thought Richard G. Kleindienst, the former Attorney General, Henry E. Petersen, an Assistant Attorney General, and L. Patrick Gray 3d, the former acting director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, had all testified they had received no orders to report directly to the President even though Mr. Nixon had said in a nationally televised speech April 30 that he had taken personal charge of the Watergate inquiry on March 21 and had given such instructions to those responsible for the investigation.

Mr. Ehrlichman said he called Mr. Kleindienst on March 28 and told him he was to report

any new findings in the case directly to the President. He said he had "assumed" that the Attorney General had passed on those instructions to Mr. Gray and Mr. Petersen.

'Not Knocking' Leisure

Much of the 45-minute news conference, which Mr. Ehrlichman acknowledged he had set up to "get it over with all at once," dealt with his personal plans and his feelings about how the Watergate affair had affected his career.

Asked at one point why he had returned to Seattle, Mr. Ehrlichman, a lawyer, smiled broadly and gestured at the surrounding trees and the lake.

"Look about you, man," he replied. "I can't think of any place I'd rather be."

Again, questioned about what the Watergate investigation "has done to John Ehrlichman," he said:

"It's given me a little time off, which I'm not knocking."

While he said he had been warmly welcomed back in Seattle, a dozen pickets along the heavily wooded road outside his winding, secluded driveway provided another sort of greeting.

They carried signs such as "Who really wallowed in Watergate?" One of their leaders, David Benson, a telephone installation man, said they represented a loosely organized group of "concerned citizens" known as the American Brotherhood Alliance.

"What we're trying to do," to do," he explained, "is make Mr. Ehrlichman aware of the fact that he's not really welcome back in Seattle. We have enough corrupt politicians already."



Associated Press

John D. Ehrlichman, right, at his news conference at his home in Hunts Point, near Seattle, to which the former assistant to President Nixon has returned.