

Sirica 'palpably unfair,' defense lawyer charges

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WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. District Judge John J. Sirica and a defense lawyer got into a shouting, fist-pounding argument out of the jury's hearing in the Watergate cover-up trial Wednesday during John Dean's sixth day on the witness stand.

John J. Wilson, attorney for H. R. Haldeman, accused Sirica of being "palpably unfair."

Angrily pointing his finger, the judge said, "Now listen Mr. Wilson, you know me, you've known me for years. I'm as much interested in getting the truth out as you are."

Wilson's client, the former White House chief of staff, is charged with conspiracy to obstruct justice in the Watergate investigation. The other defendants are H. R. Haldeman, John N. Mitchell, Robert C. Mardian and Kenneth W. Parkinson.

During a portion of Dean's testimony, Judge Sirica explained to the jury that when a witness is called by either prosecution or defense, that side vouches that what the witness says is believable.

When the jury was out of the courtroom, prosecutor James F. Neal said "we have concern" about vouching for some of the government's witnesses where "we think 85 per cent of what he says is true but have serious concern about the other 15 per cent."

Sirica said he wouldn't expect the

government to vouch for the credibility of witnesses who have been convicted, and Ehrlichman's lawyer, William S. Frates, said "I assume you were thinking about former President Nixon who may be called as a court witness."

Said Sirica: "That could happen. I'm not saying it will happen. In that case,

nobody would have to vouch for his credibility."

With the jury in the courtroom, Wilson, 73, led Dean, former White House counsel, through Dean's story of taking \$4,850 for his own use on a \$350,000 cash fund kept by Haldeman in the White House.