

The Weather

Today—Cloudy, high near 40, low in the 30s. Chance of precipitation is 20 per cent today and 60 per cent tonight. Thursday—Partly cloudy, high in the 40s. Yesterday's temperature range, 39-29. Details Page B2.

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WEDNESDAY,

Ehrlichman Describes

By George Lardner Jr.
Washington Post Staff Writer

John D. Ehrlichman choked up and cried on the witness stand yesterday as he told of the painful day last year when then-President Nixon asked for his resignation.

He said Nixon told him he had been the President's conscience in the Watergate scandal and offered him attorneys' fees or anything else that Ehrlichman

wanted to make the crisis easier to bear.

"I said sometime I would like him to explain to our children . . ." the former White House aid testified at the Watergate cover-up trial here before breaking down.

Tears welled up in Ehrlichman's eyes as he tried to finish the sentence. He took his glasses off and wiped them on his necktie. He face grew red.

"Excuse me," he murmured, rocking forward in

his chair, struggling to regain some composure. He sipped from a glass of water, but all he could manage was to say "Excuse me" again in a louder voice.

U.S. District Court Judge John J. Sirica then gently ordered a recess, over Ehrlichman's weak protests that it would take only a moment for him to pull himself together again. The emotional scene came near the end of a long round of testimony at which Ehrlichman portrayed

himself as an innocent bystander in the Watergate scandal who vainly urged a full disclosure before it was too late.

The once-powerful White House adviser said his efforts ended on April 29, 1973, when he was summoned to the presidential retreat at Camp David. Ehrlichman said then-White House chief of staff H. R. (Bob) Haldeman told him on their way up together "that

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Emotional Resignation

the President had decided I should resign."

Now on trial on charges of conspiracy, obstruction of justice and lying to the Watergate grand jury, Ehrlichman said he found Nixon waiting on the terrace of the presidential lodge, but they soon moved inside.

"He said, in substance, that this was a very painful conversation for him," Ehrlichman recalled. He said Nixon himself "broke down at one point and cried."

"He was obviously very emotionally upset," the 49-year-old defendant emphasized, adding that Nixon told him "he regretted very much having to take this step."

The President "said he felt I had been, or tried to be, his conscience," Ehrlichman continued, testifying in slow, deliberate tones.

"I said I hadn't been as effective as I would have liked. He said, on reflection,

that my judgment had been correct."

According to Ehrlichman, Nixon then offered once again to pick up his legal fees.

It was a suggestion that the President had made twice before in the face of disclosures to government prosecutors that White House Counsel John W. Dean III and others involved in the scandal were

See TRIAL, A12, Col. 1



JOHN D. EHRLICHMAN
... overcome on stand

Ehrlichman Describes Resignation From Post

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starting to make. Nixon had said that \$200,000 to \$300,000 was available in a secret cash fund maintained by the President's closest friend, C. G. (Bebe) Rebozo—apparently for favors to steady political contributors.

This time, Ehrlichman related, the President simply told him "he'd like to help me with attorneys' fees if attorneys' fees were necessary—that he had a large sum of money available to him and he would like to have me share it."

"I told him I could not accept that offer or anything like it," Ehrlichman declared.

"He asked me if there were anything else he could do for me," Ehrlichman said in a halting voice. He got only a few words further before choking up on the thought of what his five children would think.

Excused from the courtroom for a 20-minute recess, Ehrlichman stood up, apparently still distracted, and

started to walk out a back door reserved for the jurors. His wife, Jeanne, watched from a front row as his chief attorney, William S. Frates, called him back and pointed to the appropriate side door exit.

Back on the witness stand after the break, Ehrlichman insisted on finishing the account in a few short, anticlimactic, sentences.

"It's important to me," he told Frates, who had started to skip to another subject. "I said he (Nixon) could explain to our children why he was asking me to leave. That, basically, was the end of the meeting."

The courtroom episode capped Ehrlichman's repeated disclaimers throughout the day of any criminal intent in the alleged cover-up conspiracy. At one point, he implied that Nixon misled him, but his testimony fell far short of his lawyer's sharply worded denunciations of the former President when the trial began in October.