

Ehrlichman's cross-examination ends

WASHINGTON (AP) — The prosecutor at the Watergate cover-up trial closed his cross-examination of John D. Ehrlichman Thursday by accusing him of falsely dumping the blame for the cover-up on former President Nixon.

Climaxing two days of relentless questioning, prosecutor James S. Neal reached into the transcript of a White House tape for what he said were Ehrlichman's own words describing a good defense against criminal charges for Watergate.

Waving the transcript of an April 15, 1973, tape, Neal quoted Ehrlichman as suggesting that former White House

counsel John W. Dean might avoid prosecution.

In the tape, Ehrlichman, who was White House domestic adviser, suggests to Nixon, "If I were Dean, I would develop a defense that I was being manipulated by people who had a corrupt motive for ostensibly a benign motive."

Pressing Ehrlichman, the prosecutor noted that Ehrlichman's lawyer had declared that Nixon "deceived, misled, lied and used John Ehrlichman to cover up his (the President's) own activities."

Neal went on, "As a matter of fact, didn't you tell the President that Mr. Dean's defense ought to be that he was manipulated by others who had bad motives ... and thereby you predicted

your own defense in this case?"

Ehrlichman replied, "I don't agree with your characterization."

Neal asked Ehrlichman if he is not saying, "You were manipulated by Mr. Nixon who had a corrupt motive."

Ehrlichman: "No, my defense is that I'm innocent of the charges that the government has brought against me."

Neal for a third time asked Ehrlichman if he was not blaming Nixon. "That certainly is where the truth seems to lead us in this case," Ehrlichman replied.

Ehrlichman and four other defendants are charged with conspiracy to obstruct justice in the investigation of the June 17,

1972, break-in at Democratic headquarters in the Watergate building.

Before Neal completed his vigorous cross-examination, Ehrlichman said he believes Nixon never wanted the full truth about Watergate.

The 49-year-old Ehrlichman said while the former president asked him in March to gather the facts of Watergate, Nixon hoped his aide would come back with a less-than-complete report.

Neal asked, "It was not supposed to be a true report was it?"

"As far as I was concerned," Ehrlichman testified, "but looking back on the tapes it is my present belief that he (Nixon) was hopeful it would not be."