

Nixon Ran Committee, Mardian Tells Sirica

By Donald M. Rothberg
Associated Press

Two life-long Republicans, the judge and a defendant in the Watergate cover-up trial, had an impromptu discussion yesterday about recent GOP presidential politics.

U.S. District Judge John J. Sirica turned to Robert C. Mardian and asked whose idea it was to set up a campaign committee to re-elect Richard M. Nixon that was separate from the Republican National Committee.

With the jury out of the courtroom Sirica commented, "This is where a lot of the trouble started."

Referring to the Committee for the Re-Election of the President by the acronym CREEP, the judge said, "Isn't it a fact that a lot of amateur politicians got mixed up in CREEP . . . you collect all this money, you get a lot of amateur politicians running things and this is the result. Right?"

Mardian, one of five former Nixon administration and campaign officials charged in the Watergate

of anyone in government, in my experience, who could overrule John Mitchell, except the President."

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cover-up, held up a memorandum he had written in the spring of 1972 and said to Sirica, "That's what I say in here."

"If they had stayed with the Republican National Committee and let the Republican National Committee run the election you wouldn't have had CREEP, isn't that right?" Sirica asked.

"That is true, your honor," replied Mardian.

Mardian told how he first joined the Nixon re-election committee about June 1, 1972, and quickly concluded that former Attorney General John N. Mitchell, the official committee head, and another of the cover-up defendants, was not really making the key decisions.

"Who was running it?" Sirica asked, this time with the jury in the room.

"In my opinion?" asked Mardian.

"Yes," said the judge.

"I believed it was President Nixon," replied Mardian. "I concluded that some of the decisions being made were not those of John Mitchell.

"On occasions when I thought he had made a decision, he was overruled. He was overruled on several occasions: And I didn't know