

# Cover-Up Evidence 'Overwhelming'

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Watergate prosecutors maintained yesterday that former President Nixon's top aides and campaign advisers were convicted of the Watergate cover-up by a jury that was "if anything, more sympathetic to the defendants than the government."

Urging flat rejection of a round of defense motions for a new trial, Watergate Special Prosecutor Henry S. Ruth Jr. and his aides said the evidence produced against former Attorney General John N. Mitchell and former White House aides H.R. (Bob) Halde- man and John D. Ehrlichman was simply too overwhelming to be ignored.

The prosecutors agreed that the proof against former As- sistant Attorney General Robert C. Mardian, the fourth defendant convicted at the prolonged trial, was not as strong. But they said it was still "more than sufficient" to establish his guilt in the conspiracy.

The government pleadings were filed yesterday with U.S. District Court Judge John J. Sirica, who must rule on the defense requests before imposing sentence.

All four defendants contend

that they were denied a fair trial because of massive pre- trial publicity and Sirica's handling of the questioning of prospective jurors.

They also raised a variety of other issues, from protests over the introduction of White House tapes to the court's refusal to suspend the trial until the ailing Nixon's testi- mony could be obtained.

Sirica conducted the ques- tioning of prospective jurors at closed-door sessions which remain under seal. But the prosecutors argued that the painstaking process, which lasted two weeks, showed that it was possible to obtain a fair and impartial jury despite the defense complaints about pre- judicial publicity.

In fact, Ruth disclosed, "of the jurors who decided this case, not one expressed the opinion on voir dire [the jury selection process] that any de- fendant was guilty, but four stated that they thought the prosecution was unfair in view of the Nixon pardon" granted by President Ford.

"Indeed, the jury chosen was, if anything, more sym- pathetic to the defendants than the government," the prosecutor contended.