

# Richardson Criticizes Ford's Pardon of Nixon

Washington

Elliot Richardson, who resigned as attorney general in 1973 rather than obey President Nixon's order to fire Special Watergate Prosecutor Archibald Cox, said yesterday that he does not believe Mr. Nixon should have been pardoned by President Ford.

Richardson, who takes on the job of commerce secretary Monday, told reporters that "the end result that former president Richard M. Nixon did not go to jail was right," but that Richardson would have favored a different process.

"The facts should have come out first," Richardson said. "The President should have been asked to say all he had to say," and then, with consultation between the executive branch and the Congress, there could have been discussion of the desirability of a trial that might have resulted in a jail sentence.

The result of all this, Richardson continued, could have been for the attorney general, "with the concurrence" of the judiciary committees, to decline to prosecute.

Richardson said he would have preferred the exercise of prosecutorial discretion to a pardon because a pardon "conveys that a person is forgiven." The pardon is usually granted, he noted, "years later . . . normally after a person has been rehabilitated."

At a meeting with reporters in September, 1974, right after Mr. Ford's announcement of a pardon for Mr. Nixon, Richardson said that he approved of the general idea of the pardon. Richardson did say then that he felt a harder bargain should have been struck for a full confession by Mr. Nixon or an outlining of the charges against him before the pardon was granted.

Richardson was not asked yesterday

about his earlier statement.

Asked what he thought had caused the Nixon administration its problems, Richardson pointed to "a compound of at least three things."

"One," he said, "is traceable to flaws in Nixon's own character," particularly his inclination "to be suspicious of his opponents and to cast them as enemies," together with his "secretiveness and manipulateness."

Richardson said a second element was "the aggrandizement of the presidency . . . a culmination of long-developing trends."

"The strong presidency requires manipulative trends in dealing with Congress and the press," Richardson added. "The Nixon White House pushed it further and went over the edge."

He said the third component was the employment by the White House of "rootless, amoral individuals whose only loyalty is to the organization that employs them." Richardson asserted that this personality trait — "a win-at-any-cost attitude" — is "a flaw in many American organizations."

The three factors "add up to an excess different in degree but not fundamentally different in kind" from Mr. Nixon's predecessor, Richardson said.

Last week Mr. Ford included Richardson among eight persons he considers "fully qualified" to be his running mate in the presidential election. Richardson said that he did not know what his response would be if he were asked to be the vice-presidential candidate.

"In general," he said, "I don't try to anticipate what my decisions will be."

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