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Richardson Friend Considered For Role in Watergate Probe

A Philadelphia lawyer and close friend of Attorney General-designate Elliot Richardson was reported under consideration yesterday as the government's special prosecutor in the Watergate scandal.

The lawyer, William T. Coleman Jr., 52, refused to comment on the reports. Justice Department spokesmen said there was no clear sign yet that Richardson has decided to name a special prosecutor in the Watergate case under the authority delegated to him Monday by President Nixon.

In an interview with Robert L. Turner of the Boston Globe, Richardson's brother, Peirson, said that Mr. Nixon ordered Richardson to take over the Watergate investigation despite Richardson's feeling that an outside prosecutor should have been given the assignment.

"He had some reluctance about taking it over," the brother, Dr. Peirson Richardson, a Boston neuropathologist, told The Globe of his brother's appointment. "He thought someone outside should do it."

In announcing his choice as new attorney general, Mr. Nixon said Richardson had been given "absolute authority" over the Watergate investigation, but added that this included the authority to name "a special supervising prosecutor" if he wanted one. Dr. Richardson said he

did not know what his brother would do about that option.

FBI agents, according to the Philadelphia Inquirer, began a background check on Coleman Tuesday, interviewing his friends and associates in the routine prescribed for high administration appointments.

President of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, Coleman is a partner with former Philadelphia Mayor Richardson Dilworth in the firm of Dilworth, Paxson, Kalish, Levy and Coleman.

Both graduates of Harvard Law School, Coleman and Attorney General-designate Richardson worked together there on the Harvard Law Review and later both were law clerks in 1948-49 for the late Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter.

No Leaks Reported At the Watergate

Residents of the south building of the Watergate complex were without water for about nine hours Tuesday following a rupture in the main water line to the building.

C.M. Percy, assistant building manager, said the rupture occurred at 11 a.m. and there was no water until 9:30 that evening when workmen succeeded in putting "a temporary fix" on the line.

In his law practice, Coleman has specialized mainly in corporate and antitrust litigation, but he has also been active in NAACP Legal Defense Fund work and helped write the brief that led to the Supreme Court's 1954 school desegregation decision.

Coleman served in 1964 as a consultant and assistant counsel for the Warren Commission's investigation into the assassination of President Kennedy. A Republican, he was a member of President Nixon's Phase II Price Commission and has also been a consultant to the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency.

Reportedly, he has been offered Administration posts in the past, including positions as undersecretary of Health, Education and Welfare where Richardson was once Secretary, and as legal counsel for the State Department, where Richardson was once undersecretary.

Coleman was described by a Philadelphia friend as "in the throes of deciding whether to take a position in Washington."

FBI spokesmen said they could not confirm whether any background checks had been ordered for a special prosecutor in the Watergate investigation, which is now being directed by Assistant Attorney General Henry E. Petersen.