

## Prosecutor Cox

The designation of Archibald Cox as Special Prosecutor for the Watergate imbroglio is a belated if hopeful start on the awesome task of restoring public confidence in the Administration's return to the rule of law.

Professor Cox was appointed by President Kennedy as Solicitor-General of the United States—third-ranking member of the Department of Justice—and he served in that prestigious office through the Kennedy and early Johnson years. There must be some wry memories at the White House today of the new prosecutor when he was full-time leader of the Kennedy brain-trust for the 1960 election victory over Richard M. Nixon.

Knowledgeable in the law, in politics and in the ways of official Washington, Professor Cox hardly needs to have the difficulties he faces spelled out for him. There are still serious deficiencies in the guidelines for his Special Prosecution force issued by Attorney General Richardson Thursday, notably the tenacity with which the Administration, through Mr. Richardson, retains nominal authority over the prosecution. A genuinely independent prosecutor, mandated by Congress outside the Justice Department, would have had a significant head start on the psychological task of restoring the public trust which the highest officers of the land have so brutally mishandled.

But these are problems which a determined prosecutor can overcome. There has already been too long a delay—by several months—in designating a special prosecutor; to continue arguing over the bureaucratic status of the office, whether its authority was "final" or only "full," would merely prolong the national distress. Mr. Cox is no novice in the subtleties of high politics; he would presumably speak out should there be any hint of political pressure or obstruction in his public task.

If under the guidelines, he is somewhat less than independent in his official status, Professor Cox has promised to be completely independent in spirit—and this is the more important need of the country now.