

# SIRICA SEEKS END TO TAPES DEBATE

Judge Says Lawyers Agree  
to Halt Public Statements  
on Experts' Findings

By ANTHONY RIPLEY  
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WASHINGTON, Feb. 19 — Chief Judge John J. Sirica tried today to end the public debate over findings of the court-appointed panel of electronics experts that is investigating subpoenaed Presidential tape recordings.

After a weekend of reports in the press, statements by lawyers for President Nixon and his secretary, Rose Mary Woods, and comments by some of the electronics experts themselves, Judge Sirica called a meeting this morning in his chambers in United States District Court. The tapes issue is before one of the Watergate grand juries.

Lawyers for all sides, the judge said in a statement issued later, "agreed that continued public comment on the grand jury's work by those who have any association with the investigation is inappropriate."

### LAWYERS in Accord

James D. St. Clair, President Nixon's lawyer; Charles S. Rhyne, Miss Woods's lawyer, and Leon Jaworski the special Watergate prosecutor, attended the meeting.

Judge Sirica said that public debate now could only hinder the grand jury investigation and that "once the grand jury is through, there will be time enough and opportunity for thorough public analysis."

The judge said that several "precautionary measures" had been agreed to by those at the meeting in his office "to prevent the disclosure of matters which ought, for the time being at least, to remain confidential."

Those measures included having attorneys on all sides refrain from making further public statements, cautioning the panel of tape experts to do likewise and advising the grand jury to disregard any speculation that it might have read or heard.

### Comment by Ziegler

Before the results of Judge Sirica's meeting were made known, Ronald L. Ziegler, the Presidential press secretary, commented briefly on a statement by Allan D. Bell Jr., a Virginia electronics and counterintelligence expert.

Mr. Bell told The New York Times he had reported to Mr. Rhyne on Jan. 29 that marks indicating erasures and recordings that the panel had found on a June 20, 1972, tape recording might have been caused accidentally by a malfunctioning part on Miss Woods's tape recorder.

Mr. St. Clair had referred to such a conclusion in a statement Sunday night at President Nixon's Key Biscayne estate, citing "our technical investigation" as the source of his remarks.

Mr. Ziegler said that the technical analysis referred to by Mr. St. Clair was not the Bell report.

### 'So Important'

Mr. Rhyne told the times that he considered Mr. Bell's findings "so important" that he had sent copies to Judge Sirica, the special prosecutor and the White House. He also sent them last week to the panel of experts.

The Bell report appears to contradict findings of the panel of experts that have been widely interpreted as suggesting that the erasures on the tape were deliberate.

Science magazine in its Feb. 22 issue reported that two electronics experts whom the magazine had consulted said that the Bell analysis was "technically feasible," based on the little amount of information made public thus far.