

Cover-up Trial Delay Barred

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U.S. District Court Judge John J. Sirica yesterday rejected an attempt by H. R. (Bob) Haldeman to put off the Watergate cover-up trial until the Supreme Court can rule on the validity of his indictment.

The former White House chief of staff's lawyers moved back into court later in the day with a series of protests over Sirica's arrangements for picking a trial jury.

They also maintained that there was no point to locking up the jury now in light of the summer-long wave of Watergate publicity capped by President Ford's controversial par-

doning last Sunday of former President Nixon.

The prospective jurors "have already been affected by this news and sequestration will not erase this extraordinary event from their minds," attorney John J. Wilson and three other lawyers for Haldeman contended in their latest petition.

Haldeman had asked Judge Sirica to delay the Sept. 30 trial until the Supreme Court could consider his complaints that a special 1973 law extending the life of the Watergate grand jury was illegal.

Still apparently determined to start the trial on schedule, Sirica refused a postponement in a one-line order saying that he saw no merit to Halde-

man's protests over the grand jury's status.

In a separate order, the judge also denied former White House aide Gordon Strachan's attempts to win dismissal of his indictment on the grounds that the government's evidence against him was tainted. Strachan's lawyers are expected to ask the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals later this week to overturn Sirica's ruling.

In their new complaint over the judge's method of picking a trial jury, Haldeman's lawyers maintained that the judge followed "an easy excuse policy" with prospective jurors who answered questionnaires by saying they did not

want to serve at the lengthy trial.

The attorneys said this "took away from the defendants the right to have all requests for excuse from jury service made under oath..." They also contended that the prospective jurors who indicated a willingness to sit for a lengthy trial before Sirica could hardly be unaware "that they were being considered for service in the so-called 'Watergate cover-up case.'"

In another development bearing on the controversy over Sunday's pardon, Ralph Nader formally asked the White House under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act for copies of any documents bearings on the Nixon pardon.

Nader said the sweeping grant of clemency for any federal crimes Mr. Nixon may have committed in office did not even follow the Justice Department's own pardon regulations, which apply on their face only to persons convicted of a crime.

Nader aide Alan Morrison said, for example, that the regulations require a five-year waiting period after conviction before a pardon can be granted to anyone found guilty of a "violation of public trust involving personal dishonesty."

The regulations were issued in 1962 during the Kennedy administration when Mr. Nixon's lawyer in the recent pardon negotiations, Herbert J. Miller Jr., was assistant attorney general in charge of the Justice Department's Criminal Division.