

Ehrlichman on the Politics of Drugs

Washington

Convicted Watergate conspirator John Ehrlichman said yesterday Nixon administration drives against drug pushers were inefficient and done partly for "political mileage."

In congressional testimony, the bearded former White House aide also scoffed at the crime-busting image of the FBI and questioned whether the bureau is "any good at anything."

"We have the Efreim Zimbalist Jr. image of the FBI, that kind of stainless steel image," he said in a reference to the star of a television series.

"Before we demand that the FBI get involved (in drug enforcement) we ought to question whether any good can come from it, indeed whether it's any good at anything."

"I don't think the FBI has lived up to its capacity for many, many years."

For the first time since 1973, when he appeared before the Senate Watergate committee and trad-



John Ehrlichman wondered if the FBI is 'any good at anything'

ed barbs with Senator Sam Ervin on nationwide television, Ehrlichman returned yesterday to a Capitol hearing room and testified on federal drug enforcement efforts before the Senate permanent inves-

tigations subcommittee.

He described drug-busting drives carried out under former President Nixon as riddled with rivalries and often motivated by politics.

Drug enforcement, he said, was considered "a very sexy political issue."

"Therefore, the White House often wants to be involved in narcotics problems, even when it doesn't need to be. The politics of narcotics may account for some of the organizational competition between departments and the anomalies we find in the federal effort."

"For example, the Feds went into street enforcement partly in response to the obvious political mileage to be gained."

Another Nixon administration official convicted of Watergate-related crimes, Egli Krogh Jr., gave Mr. Nixon better marks for sincerity in his drug enforcement efforts.

"Mr. Nixon spent quite a lot of time, relatively speaking, in per-

suading his federal team to greater and greater effort in their drug control work," Krogh said in his testimony.

Both men recommended that narcotics enforcement be retained under one agency, preferably within the Justice Department. But Ehrlichman said not the FBI.

Ehrlichman was sentenced last year to 2½ to eight years in prison for conspiracy and obstruction of justice in the Watergate burglary coverup. He was also sentenced in 1974 to 20 months to five years imprisonment for conspiracy and perjury in connection with a West Coast break-in by the so-called White House Plumbers.

He is free pending appeals of both convictions.

Krogh, co-director of the Plumbers and former undersecretary of transportation, pleaded guilty to conspiracy in the West Coast break-in and was sentenced to two-to-six years in prison in 1974. All but six months were suspended. He served four months.

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