

Sentences Criticized by Richardson

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Former Attorney General

Elliot L. Richardson, who supervised the federal investigation that led to Spiro T. Agnew's resignation as Vice President last year, yesterday criticized the prison sentences given to two key government witnesses in the case against Agnew.

"Normally, it would have been appropriate for them (the witnesses) to receive jail sentences," said Richardson, now a fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars here. "But I do think the circumstances of this case were unique."

Richardson said, in a telephone interview, that the cooperation of businessmen I. H. (Bud) Hammerman II and Alan I. Green "was essential" to building a corruption case against Agnew, who resigned Oct. 10, 1973 after pleading "no contest" to a single charge of federal income tax invasion.

George Beall, U.S. attorney for Maryland, "was fully justified," Richardson said, in recommending to a federal court in Baltimore Monday that Green and Hammerman not be imprisoned. Instead, a three-judge U.S. District Court panel gave Hammerman an 18-month sentence and a \$5,000 fine, and Green a one-year sentence and a \$5,000 fine.

Richardson said jail sentences for Green and Hammerman would have been appropriate "if they had pleaded guilty because the government's case was so overwhelming."

But there were "other factors" involved, he said, such as their cooperation in the Agnew investigation, which should have been taken into consideration.

Hammerman, 54, a prominent mortgage banker in Baltimore, admitted being the "bagman" in what the Justice Department charged last year was a scheme devised by Agnew to extort cash kickbacks from Maryland contractors seeking government business.

Green, 53, once headed one of the state's largest consulting engineering firms. He signed an affidavit for federal prosecutors acknowledging that he was one of the many businessmen who paid Agnew thousands of dollars in legal payments.