

Judge Assails Dean's Hint He Would Aid GOP

By Timothy S. Robinson
Washington Post Staff Writer

U.S. District Judge Charles R. Richey described yesterday as "sheer poppycock, ridiculous" allegations by former White House counsel John W. Dean III that Richey had promised to be "helpful" to Republicans in Watergate-related civil cases.

Dean's statement about Judge Richey was only one lengthy paragraph in a 245-page statement. But to Judge Richey—who has a reputation as probably the most media-conscious judge on the District Court here—it meant that 60 million Americans heard him accused of possible bias.

Dean said, in part:

"... I learned during a meeting in (former Attorney General John N.) Mitchell's office that Mr. Roemer McPhee was having private discussions with Judge Richey regarding the civil suit filed by the Democrats.

"... I was told by (GOP attorney Kenneth Wells) Parkinson and later McPhee that Judge Richey was going to be helpful whenever he could. I subsequently talked with Mr. McPhee about this as late as March 2 of this year, when he told me he was going to visit the judge in the judge's rose garden over the weekend to discuss an aspect of the case."

Judge Richey says, among other things, that he doesn't even have a rose garden. And he points with pride to his record in the Watergate case, where a Democratic National Committee attorney said last fall the judge had made an "unprecedented, extraordinary" effort to bring the case to trial before the election.

The judge describes McPhee as a "close friend and neighbor—we'll go to his house, or he'll come to our house; my son played tennis at his house



CHARLES R. RICHEY
... 'sheer poppycock'

yesterday, that sort of thing," but vigorously denied ever discussing any substantive aspect of the case with him. The two men live about 10 minutes from each other in Potomac.

McPhee has served as a legal adviser to various Republican campaign organizations.

"Something may have been said at a party, such as 'I wish I didn't have this darn case because of the tremendous amount of work involved,' but certainly nothing more than that," Judge Richey said.

In addition, said Judge Richey during a pause in a brown-bag lunch in his office, McPhee is a "man of high principle... He would know better than to try" to discuss a pending case.

Later in the day, while on recess during an armed robbery trial, Judge Richey met with a reporter again and showed portions of previous Watergate transcripts where Democratic attorneys had praised his attempts to bring the case to trial.

He said he had turned down an invitation to at least one party that one of the GOP attorneys was expected to attend.

McPhee issued a one-sentence statement denying Dean's accusations. Parkinson issued a similar statement.

Richey is a former political supporter of Vice President Spiro T. Agnew who has openly admitted that he would not have been a

judge without the Vice President's help. Since his appointment to the bench, however, he has built up a striking record as a liberal judge whose actions on the bench are frequently at odds with the administration.

All civil suits directly related to the Watergate break-in—including one by the Democrats, two countersuits by Republicans, and one filed two weeks ago by a Democratic official on whose phone a bug was found—are assigned to Judge Richey.

He ruled last September, with the agreement of lawyers for both sides, that it would be "impossible" for the suit to be tried before the November election.

The latest delay in the civil cases was ordered at the request of the Democrats, who had asked for more time to amend a complaint.

At a hearing on that move, Judge Richey expressed irritation that the case had not yet come to trial.