

Petersen Receiving Jury Transcripts

By FRANK VAN RIPER

Washington, April 26 (NEWS Bureau) — Earl J. Silbert, the government's chief prosecutor in the Watergate bugging investigation, revealed today that, acting on the personal order of Assistant Attorney General Henry E. Petersen, he had been sending transcripts of Watergate grand-jury proceedings to the Justice Department since Tuesday.

Silbert conceded that this could allow key figures in the investigation, such as White House counsel John W. Dean 3d and White House chief of staff H.R. (Bob) Haldeman, access to the

secret minutes and thus give them warning of what the grand jury knows about their Watergate-related activities.

Under persistent questioning by reporters Silbert said he did not believe Petersen would give

the minutes to possible Watergate defendants.

"Do you think the transcripts might end up in the White House?" Silbert was asked.

"I hope not," he replied.

Pressed to say whether it was

● Watergate has cast a long shadow over President Nixon's design for global peace. See Capitol Stuff, page 6.

● Nixon clamps news blackout on Watergate talk at White House. Page 7.

possible for Dean and others in the White House to gain access to the grand-jury minutes, Sil-

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bert replied: "Yes, that's possible."

How, then, could he be sure that this wasn't being done?

Answered Silbert, an assistant U.S. Attorney: "A., because he (Petersen) is my boss, and B. because I trust Henry Petersen."

Petersen, who has been in daily contact with President Nixon for the past week or longer, is entitled to receive grand-jury minutes. But Silbert and other Justice Department sources said it was "highly unusual" for him to ask for them.

Petersen, whom President Nixon has chosen to conduct the White House investigation into the Watergate scandal, could not be reached for comment.

The deputy White House press secretary, Gerald Warren, said Nixon had told Petersen not to send him information concerning the Watergate grand jury. Warren added that, "of course," others in the White House were not receiving the confidential information.

Bar's Request

The disclosure that the grand-jury minutes were leaving the control of the prosecutor's office every day seemed certain to inject new controversy into the Watergate tangle and renew calls for an investigation by someone not connected to the administration.

The New York City Bar Association, citing the Teapot Dome precedent of the 1920s, today urged Nixon, a member of the New York bar, to appoint an independent prosecutor to take over the Watergate investigation.

After the death of President Warren G. Harding, the association recalled, President Calvin Coolidge named Owen J. Roberts, later a Supreme Court justice, and Sen. Atlee Pomerene (R-Pa.) as special counsels to investigate the Teapot Dome oil-reserve scandal.

Schell Sends Letter

In a letter to Nixon, the bar association's president, Orville H. Schell, said many lawyers were "greatly concerned" about the Justice Department's handling of the bugging investigation. Said Schell:

"We feel sure that it must have occurred to you that lawyers and laymen alike would have greater confidence if all proceedings were under the independent and direct control of an eminent lawyer who has no connection with the Department of Justice or any persons under investigation."

Sen. Jacob K. Javits (R-N.Y.), a member of the association endorsed its recommendation, saying this "would carry out the President's concept of the office of the presidency as the highest trust in the nation."

Special Couriers

Silbert, who was involved in the search for the news leak that put grand-jury minutes into the hands of columnist Jack Anderson, said transcripts were being hand-delivered to Petersen at the Justice Department. Reporters have seen two special couriers leaving Silbert's office.

Silbert said that last Tuesday, Petersen received all copies of the grand-jury minutes to that date, including those obtained by Anderson. Assistant U.S. Attorney Donald Campbell, one of Silbert assistants, said Petersen would continue receiving the transcripts.

Meanwhile, there were indications that Watergate indictments will not be returned for perhaps another three weeks.

In another development, Stephen King, who replaced James W. McCord Jr. as chief of Nixon campaign security after McCord was attested at the Watergate, has gone to work for Agriculture Secretary Earl L. Butz.