

Ehrlichman Says Nixon Misled Him on Cover-Up

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Former White House aide John D. Ehrlichman declared yesterday that then-President Nixon repeatedly "deceived" him during the Watergate cover-up.

Charging that Ehrlichman had misled Nixon, too, Watergate prosecutors counterattacked with a cross-examination that forced Ehrlichman to recant crucial segments of testimony that he had given just the day before.

Under questioning, the former White House adviser said he made "a mistake" in telling the jurors at the Watergate cover-up trial Tuesday that he knew nothing of the "hocus-pocus" behind the flow of cash to the original Watergate defendants until last year.

Ehrlichman had also testified Tuesday that he had suggested contacting former Attorney General John N. Mit-

hell about a \$100,000-plus demand from Watergate spy E. Howard Hunt Jr. Yesterday he took it back and said he hadn't meant to say that either.

The interrogation by chief trial prosecutor James F. Neal was relentless. At one point, he suggested that Ehrlichman had deceived Nixon far more than Nixon had deceived him.

The 49-year-old Ehrlichman denied it indignantly and for the first time publicly accused the former President of duplicity in the scandal.

"There is ample showing in this record that I was deceived," the tall, balding defendant declared in citing sample after sample from Nixon's White House tapes. "As I look back on it all," Ehrlichman said, "I knew pitifully little of this matter . . ."

The dramatic courtroom ses-

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sion brought a steady stream of loud interruptions from Ehrlichman's chief lawyer, William F. Frates, until he was finally rebuked by U.S. District Court Judge John J. Sirica.

The clash came at the windup of a rapid-fire series of questions by Neal challenging Ehrlichman's claims that he had always wanted to "get the truth out" in the wake of the Watergate arrests at Democratic National Committee headquarters here on June 17, 1972.

Angrily, Frates accused the prosecutor of trying to "put on a show for the press and the audience"—an assertion that Sirica promptly told the jurors to ignore.

Neal held his tongue until the jury had been excused for the luncheon recess but then denounced Frates' remarks in front of the jurors as "despicable."

"I don't mind personally," the prosecutor declared. "I'm an old dog with a lot of scars, but I do resent it for the effect it might have on the jury."

Sirica agreed and admon-

ished Frates not to let it happen again. "From where I sit, I have detected nothing im-

proper on Mr. Neal's part," the judge said.

Insisting that Neal was "showboating," Frates told reporters later that "if he wasn't so effectite, I wouldn't be complaining about it."

On the witness stand for the third day in a row, Ehrlichman admitted withholding information about the Watergate scandal from the FBI, the Watergate grand jury and even other top Nixon aides.

Insisting at the same time that he wanted "to get the truth out," he said he meant by that a series of public statements by the White House and the Committee for the Re-Election of the President that would have gone beyond the secondhand information he described himself as having gathered.