

FPost
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Jury asked to close

WASHINGTON (AP) — Chief prosecutor James F. Neal appealed to the jury Friday to "close the ledger ... on Watergate" as final arguments ended in the Watergate cover-up trial.

"As the representatives of a free people, the prosecutor told the jurors "you are the ones who must now balance the accounts and close the ledger plates on Watergate."

All that remains now in the lengthy and complex conspiracy trial are final instructions to the jury and their final deliberations beginning Monday morning.

Following completion of nearly 15 hours of final defense arguments, Neal summed up the government's case against the five defendants for the last time.

He suggested to the jury they should find it strange that a common thread

runs among the cases put on by all of the defendants.

He accused defendants of blaming, not only each other, but many others who have already pleaded guilty or begun serving prison sentences for Watergate crimes.

"What they all have done is to say it was someone else, not I," said the 44-year-old Neal in his ringing Tennessee twang.

"No one has denied there was a massive attempt to obstruct justice in this case," said Neal.

He went on, "How relieved (John W.) Dean, (FRED C.) LaRue, (E. Howard) Hunt, (Herbert W.) Kalmbach and yes, even (Charles W.) Colson must be that they have confessed their sins and retained their dignity."

The prosecutor recalled his prediction that the defendants would dump much of

Watergate ledger

the responsibility for the attempted cover-up of the original June 17, 1972, Watergate burglary on former White House counsel Dean.

"I couldn't have predicted any better what they would do," Neal said, alluding to final defense arguments.

On a broader note, Neal said, "This case is not one political party against another. I condemn lawlessness — by one side or the other — wherever it is committed."

While public officials may attack their political opponents with propaganda, he said, "they may not engage in illegal entries to wiretap (opposition) headquarters."

"They may make mistakes, but they may not cover up those mistakes by misuse of government agencies such as ordering the CIA to stop an FBI investigation."

Neal said officials may not make veiled offers of clemency, suborn perjury, lie under oath, destroy evidence or make payments of hush money to keep those with knowledge quiet.

The prosecutor said when all those things happen, "society must call those responsible to account." The jury, he said, "must now balance the accounts."

While Neal challenged the final arguments for defendants John N. Mitchell, John D. Ehrlichman, Robert C. Mardian and Kenneth W. Parkinson, assistant prosecutor Richard BenVeniste made the final attack on the case of defendant H.R. Haldeman.

Ben-Veniste cited the example of a mother hearing a crash in her kitchen and finding her 3-year-old son on the counter with jam on his hands and face.