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J.S. PROSECUTOR ON COAST RESIGNS

Meyer Is Reported Forced
Out Over Ellsberg

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 17—United States Attorney Robert L. Meyer of Los Angeles resigned today, and reliable sources said one reason was that he disagreed with the Justice Department's decision to prosecute Dr. Daniel Ellsberg.

The White House announced in Key Biscayne, Fla., this afternoon that Mr. Meyer had resigned, but the two-sentence statement did not contain the usual expressions of regret. In fact, the sources said, Mr. Meyer was forced out of office for a variety of complex reasons.

Mr. Meyer could not be reached immediately for comment.

Last June, Mr. Meyer refused to sign a two-count indictment that charged Dr. Ellsberg with illegal possession of the Pentagon papers and converting them to his own use.

One reason for his refusal, the sources said, was that Mr. Meyer felt "upstaged" by lawyers from the Internal Security Division of the Justice Department. These lawyers flew to Los Angeles on short notice, presented evidence to a grand jury and sought an indictment without consulting very extensively with Mr. Meyer.

Refused to Sign

Paul T. Vincent of the Internal Security Division signed the indictment when Mr. Meyer would not.

Sources in the Justice Department here said that the Ellsberg case did not figure seriously in Mr. Meyer's departure. But the lawyer has been telling friends lately that he disagreed with the prosecution of Dr. Ellsberg and predicted that the former Defense Department official would be acquitted.

Mr. Meyer had other problems. He obtained indictments against several Los Angeles policemen who were accused of killing two Mexican Nationals without just cause. Police Chief Edwin Davis and Mayor Sam Yorty later held separate news conferences at which they described his action. They also complained to the Justice Department about the indictments.

Moreover, the United States Attorney also aroused anger among some law enforcement officers when he started an investigation into police behavior during the riots at Isla Vista, the student community near Santa Barbara, that resulted in the burning of a bank and the death of a student.

There were also complaints from many sources that Mr. Meyer, a pension fund lawyer in private life, was too inexperienced and too abrasive to handle the job. A number of experienced lawyers in the Los Angeles office have left recently, partly out of disagreement with his methods.

Mr. Meyer, 48 years old, was appointed by President Nixon in April, 1970. One of his supporters apparently was Robert H. Finch, a close Presidential adviser and former Lieutenant Governor of California.

Mr. Meyer's predecessor, William Matthew Byrne Jr., was recently appointed to the Federal District Court and was chosen at random to preside over the Ellsberg case.