

ELLSBERG TRIAL HEARS SORENSEN

He Says He Left the White House With U.S. Data

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Theodore C. Sorensen, former counsel to President Kennedy, told the Pentagon papers jury today that when he left the White House he took with him many Government documents.

Mr. Sorensen was asked whether he had taken information that he had written as a Kennedy aide, and he replied, "Yes."

He was asked if he had taken material that other officials had written, and again he replied, "Yes." But United States District Court Judge William Matthew Byrne Jr., who is presiding, refused to allow him to say whether he had taken material that had been classified.

It is the contention of Daniel Ellsberg and Anthony J. Russo Jr., the defendants, that it is common practice for Government officials, from Presidents on down, to take classified material with them when they leave government service and to use it for their own purposes, such as writing books.

Retired Diplomat Testifies

Earlier, Chester Ronning, a retired Canadian diplomat, completed his testimony. Before he started he shook hands with the judge, an act that seemed to startle everybody in the courtroom. He was perhaps the most assured and relaxed witness to appear so far.

Mr. Ronning is a tall man, with long, neat gray hair. He was one of the few witnesses the judge did not have to admonish to speak up, as his answers were loud and clear.

Mr. Ronning was called by the defense because in 1966 he undertook two missions for the Canadian Government to Saigon and Hanoi to offer Canada "good office" in bringing the parties together for direct peace talks.

The details of those missions, and some of the official Government cables, memorandums and documents involving the missions, were reported in one of the volumes of the Pentagon papers at issue in this trial. In addition, many of the documents were reprinted in the volume.

Under direct examination by Leonard Boudin, a defense attorney, Mr. Ronning told how the details of his first mission — although not he documents involved — were reported in The New York Times in March, 1966, and that, therefore, "my opinion is that the release of the information [in 1969] after the contacts had been finished is of damage to no one."

He was asked whether the United States' leak of the information was one of the "principal factors" leading to the termination of the second mission in June, 1966.

"It was not the principal factor, but a factor," he said. "The principal factor was the United States' proposal to Hanoi."

Some Data Not Public

Under cross-examination by David R. Nissen, the chief prosecutor, he was asked whether, as of 1969, it was not true that diplomatic communications involving his missions had still not been made public, and he answered, "that's correct."

The defendants are accused of stealing the Pentagon papers in 1969.

Mr. Nissen then had Mr. Ronning read to the jury an excerpt from a message by Dean Rusk, then Secretary of State, in which Mr. Rusk questioned Canada's motives in offering her "good offices."

The prosecutor asked whether the disclosure of Mr. Rusk's message would not have angered Canadians and therefore had an "adverse" effect in Canada against the United States.

Mr. Ronning pulled himself forward in the witness chair and said loudly, "Canadians would know that's not true."

He meant that Canadians would know that the contents of Mr. Rusk's message were not true.

It seemed clear that Mr. Ronning was still very angry over the Rusk message, which had been sent to the American Embassy in Ottawa.

Prosecutor's Point

To prove espionage against the defendants, the Government must first prove that the national defense was damaged by their actions, and that a foreign nation could have been helped by their actions.

The prosecutor's point seemed to be that if Mr. Rusk's message had in fact angered Canada, then its disclosure through the Pentagon papers had, in fact, damaged the United States' relations with Canada and, therefore, had helped foreign nations not allied with this country.

Mr. Ronning was asked whether release of Mr. Rusk's message had not in fact had "any adverse impact on Canada" that would be seen in the future, and he answered, "none whatsoever."

Dr. Ellsberg and Mr. Russo are accused of six counts of espionage, six of theft and one of conspiracy.