

Petersen Wants Special, Outside Prosecutor to Oversee Inquiry on Watergate

# Petersen Wants Special Finds Independence Vital To Restore Public's Faith

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WASHINGTON, May 4 — Henry E. Petersen, who is in charge of the Federal investigation of the Watergate case, has told associates that he would like to have a special, outside prosecutor appointed to oversee the entire inquiry.

Mr. Petersen who is head of the Justice Department's Criminal Division, is said to have come to believe that public confidence in the administration of justice can be restored only if someone not connected with the Nixon Administration directs the prosecution.

In the last two weeks, as more information about the Watergate affair has unfolded, pressure has increased from members of Congress and from Republican party leaders for the appointment of an independent investigator.

Mr. Petersen was apparently placed in charge of the Federal inquiry in late March, at a time when President Nixon has said he obtained new information about the burglary and bugging of Democratic national headquarters in the Watergate complex last June.

It is not clear when Mr. Petersen began to argue for the appointment of a special prose-

cutor, but as early as two weeks ago he remarked that he was uncomfortable heading the investigation.

## In Department Since 1951

Mr. Petersen has served in the department in various positions since 1951. Until he became an Assistant Attorney General last year, he had never held a job by Presidential appointment.

He is widely respected by other career officials in the department. Many of them do not want a special prosecutor in the Watergate case, partly because they believe it might reflect badly on Mr. Petersen and also because they view it as outside interference in the department's business.

Senators who have met with Elliot L. Richardson, President Nixon's nominee to be Attorney General, are convinced that Mr. Richardson will name an outside director of the investigation. But Mr. Richardson has refused to commit himself directly.

There were many rumors floating today in legal circles and on Capitol Hill about whom Mr. Richardson might pick.

William T. Coleman, a Philadelphia lawyer who served with Mr. Richardson as clerk to the late Supreme Court Justice, Felix Frankfurter, was ruled out as a possibility by White

House and Congressional sources. These sources said that, among other factors, Mr. Coleman was too close personally to Mr. Richardson to be viewed as independent.

## New York Lawyer

Another name discussed was that of Lawrence E. Walsh, a lawyer from New York who is active in the American Bar Association and who has a background as a prosecutor and a judge. Mr. Walsh said today that he had not been approached for the job.

A third prospect, Herbert J. Stern, the United States Attorney for New Jersey, also said he had not been asked to take the position. Mr. Stern's appointment has been urged by members of the New Jersey Congressional delegation.

The Associated Press reported today that Mr. Richardson was considering choosing a retired Federal appeals court judge from the East and that the Justice Department was studying whether the individual could accept the job without forfeiting his retirement pay. But that report could not be confirmed.

Congressional sources said they thought Mr. Richardson would probably promise to name a special prosecutor when he comes before the Senate Judiciary Committee for confirmation hearings next Wednesday, if not before.

## May Delay Announcement

But these sources noted that Mr. Richardson, a former Congressional assistant himself and a man widely experienced in dealing with Congress, might not announce his choice until after he had been confirmed as Attorney General. In that way he would not have to defend his selection before the committee.

It is not clear whether that tack would satisfy the members of Congress who have been demanding an outside investigator.

Twenty-nine Democratic Senators, led by Adlai E. Stevenson 3d of Illinois, signed a letter to Mr. Richardson yesterday urging the appointment of a special prosecutor and setting forth the qualifications they thought he should have.

They said it was "essential" to have a person of "true independence and impartiality" heading the investigation. A mere promise by Mr. Richardson might not be enough to assure these Senators that the individual would truly be independent of the White House and Mr. Richardson.