

Watergate Prosecutor

ELLIOT L. RICHARDSON, hopscotching rather impressively from Secretary of HEW to Secretary of Defense toward Attorney General, has announced that he will, once his nomination is confirmed, exercise his President-given option to appoint a special prosecutor for the expanding Watergate inquiry and any prosecutions that result.

His selection, he says, must be a man of the highest character and integrity, widely recognized as such, must be judicious in temperament and independent in spirit, must have a proven record of outstanding competence as a lawyer — preferably with trial experience — and must be wholly free of association with persons of alleged or suspected complicity in the tangled Watergate affair.

What is more, Richardson will ask the Senate Judiciary Committee to hold a public hearing toward approving his nominee, and would take it kindly if the entire Senate would thereafter give him a vote of confidence.

RICHARDSON SAYS TRULY that it may take some time to find a man with such requisites, but once found, he will be given all the independence, authority and help he needs "to uncover the whole truth" and will in the process be under obligation to report to Richardson and Richardson only.

This seems a set of ground rules well adapted toward the goal he describes as the fair, full, impartial pursuit of justice "no matter who is involved." They seem certain to guarantee his confirmation as Attorney General, and quite likely to inspire public confidence in their fairness. If it is possible to detach the administration fully from this investigation of the administration, Richardson's measures are well tailored to do it.