



UPI Telephoto
JOHN WILSON
'Pleasant surprise'

Watergate Lawyers Still Busy

Washington

Lawyers in the Watergate coverup case went ahead yesterday with plans for a trial 20 days away, despite a possibility of presidential pardons in the offing.

The White House announcement that pardons were being studied caught defense lawyers by surprise. They were elated, while prosecution lawyers — who expressed little surprise — were dismayed.

Both sides said the only thing to do was to proceed on the assumption that the trial will begin September 30.

"We'll do the best we can," said Richard Benveniste, a prosecution law-

yer who will have a major role in the trial of six former White House and campaign aides of former President Nixon.

"When you've got a deadline for trial, you don't let up," said a lawyer for one of the defendants. "It's like in a civil case where you're near — but not quite at — a settlement. But I've got to reassess everything."

Prosecution and defense attorneys have spent months and millions of dollars preparing for the trial of H. R. Haldeman, John D. Ehrlichman, John N. Mitchell, Gordon Strachan, Kenneth W. Parkinson and Robert C. Mardian.

At the moment that White House spokesman John W. Flushen was disclosing that a pardon study was under way for all those convicted or accused of Watergate-related crimes, the six defendants' lawyers were meeting to discuss strategy.

"It comes as a complete but very pleasant surprise and I hope it comes to pass," said John J. Wilson, who then telephoned Haldeman in California to tell him the news.

Ehrlichman, at the prosecutor's office to listen to some White House tapes, declined comment except to say "the problem with a pardon is that when you know you're innocent, it precludes the possibility that your innocence will be established finally."

To date 48 individuals have been accused of crimes ranging from the Watergate break-in and coverup to making an illegal campaign contribution. Of those, 39 have pleaded guilty or been convicted.

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