

5th Confirmation Hearing a Breeze for Richardson

By JOSEPH LELYVELD

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 4—Elliott L. Richardson had an easy, clubby time today with the Senate Commerce Committee at his fifth confirmation hearing in less than six years.

The committee and then the full Senate are expected to approve his nomination as Secretary of Commerce next week and Mr. Richardson—most recently the American Ambassador to Britain—will then become the first American ever to have held four Cabinet positions.

He has served as Attorney General, Secretary of Defense and Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare.

The only whiff of controversy in the questions posed to Mr. Richardson this morning had to do with the refusal of his predecessor, Rogers C.B. Morton, to supply a House subcommittee with the names of American companies that have been approached to support the Arab boycott of Israel.

Mr. Morton faces a contempt citation in the House for withholding the names, but this was the Senate, and Mr. Richardson's questioners seemed more interested in expressing their own concern on the boycott question than in wringing commitments from the nominee.

In a series of balanced, carefully phrased responses, Mr. Richardson said he respected Mr. Morton's stand but would not be bound by it. He promised strong enforcement of regulations penalizing American companies that complied with the Arab boycott, but said that secondary boycotts by foreign companies would probably have to be handled through diplomatic channels.

It was a polished and disciplined performance by a veteran witness. Mr. Richardson maintained a rigid posture with his forearms folded on the table before him, allowing himself little more than a small smile as a succession of Senators wryly traded reminiscences of past confirmation hearings in which he had figured.

The first laughs were drawn by the two Senators from Massachusetts who were there to introduce Mr. Richardson as a native son. Senator Edward M. Kennedy interrupted his encomium for the nominee to tell a story about how all the Cabinet limousines had to line up in front of the Richardson residence every morning because no one could ever be sure about which one he would be using.

Senator Edward W. Brooke, a fellow Republican, said the hearing gave him "an enormous sense of *deja vu*" and asked whether Mr. Richardson was "incapable of holding a job" or just remarkably capable. "Obviously, the latter is true," he added.

Senator Philip A. Hart, a Michigan Democrat, thought that Mr. Richardson's many nominations might be "a comment on the resources of the Republican Party." Another Democrat, John V. Tunney of California, assured his Republican colleagues that the nominee was in friendly hands.

"I've already voted for him once for one position," Mr. Tunney said and then instantly corrected himself. "Twice. Three times maybe. It's getting difficult to remember."

Even with time out for such Senatorial byplay and a vote on the Senate floor, the hearing detained Mr. Richardson only two hours.

In response to questions, he said that President Ford intended to name him chairman of the Energy Resources Council, a Cabinet-level group that Mr. Morton headed; that he would campaign for the President in the coming year but not solicit funds, and that he had no other ambitions for next year.

"I came back to be Secretary of Commerce and I have no

other expectations," he said.

Then Mr. Richardson breezed out of the hearing room, leaving behind only a freshman Democrat, Senator Wendell H. Ford of Kentucky, a staff member and a stenotypist to hear a denunciation of himself by John D. Hemenway, a retired diplomat who is president of the American Foreign Service Association.