

Ehrlichman, CBS Deny Nixon Aide Told Network to Fire Dan Rather

Post 6/9/71

Reports that presidential assistant John D. Ehrlichman "demanded" that CBS fire White House correspondent Dan Rather were denied yesterday.

Nevertheless, it was confirmed that Ehrlichman was highly critical of Rather in a conversation with CBS officials.

Both Ehrlichman and William Small, CBS Washington bureau chief, told essentially the same story of a meeting between Ehrlichman and Richard Salant, president of CBS News.

Small said that Ehrlichman was "very critical" of Rather but "at no time did he suggest that Rather be fired or transferred."

Ehrlichman said that he appeared on the CBS Morning News in New York on April

29. After the appearance, CBS newsman John Hart, who interviewed him, invited him to breakfast at the Plaza Hotel. Accounts of the meeting subsequently appeared in the Long Island newspaper Newsday and other papers.

Ehrlichman and Hart were joined later by Salant, Ehrlichman said, and "talked about a lot of things."

"In the course of the conversation I was asked my opinion of the CBS White House coverage," Ehrlichman said. He

said he was critical of Rather but "at no time did I imply or request that they make any changes in personnel."

When Ehrlichman said Rather was not objective, the CBS representatives strongly defended Rather, Small reported.

Rather after called on Ehrlichman, who repeated his criticisms to his face, both Ehrlichman and Rather said, "He and I agreed to disagree as to his objectivity," Ehrlichman said.