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Kleindienst

Silent on

Watergate

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By George Murphy

United States Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst told an overflow audience at the Commonwealth Club yesterday he cannot comment on the Watergate incident, "although I'd like to."

Kleindienst said he was bound by a court order not to comment on the alleged bugging of the Democratic National Committee headquarters because the case is in litigation.

But the Attorney General was outspoken on several other matters, including the death penalty.

CRIMES

He said that he is "generally opposed" to capital punishment, but listed some crimes for which he felt it should be imposed.

These, he said, include assassination of a public official, death as a result of kidnaping, the bombing of a public building and assault on a prison guard by a convict serving a life term.

As to Democratic presidential nominee George McGovern's charge that the Nixon administration is "the most corrupt in history," Kleindienst had short shrift.

"This is hysterical campaign rhetoric," he said, "based on desperation, instead of fact."

These comments were made in the Commonwealth Club's traditional question-and-answer period following the speaker's formal address.

APPROACH

In his prepared remarks, the Attorney General said Washington, D.C. has cut crime by 50 per cent in the past three years because of a "total systems approach."

"Criminal justice is not only a matter of apprehending a subject and giving him a fair trial," he said. "It is also a matter of deterring others by the promise of swift court action and of

genuinely correcting those who are convicted."

Kleindienst added: "It is my conviction that as we further strengthen all three links in the chain of criminal justice, we will make still more decisive inroads against crime in this country."

COURTS

He said the Nixon Administration is providing national leadership in reforming the courts, citing as an example the Justice Department's Law Enforcement Assistance Administration's financing of projects to speed the trial process and to improve the operation of state courts.

Kleindienst, whose confirmation by the Senate was held up for 90 days while the Judiciary Committee looked into any untoward involvement he might have had with the ITT affair, told the audience:

"We didn't take any \$400,000 or any other kind of money to settle the ITT case, and you might tell Senator McGovern that, too."