

# Independent Prosecutor In Watergate?

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WASHINGTON — President Nixon, saying he was misled but accepting responsibility for the Watergate affair, has authorized his new attorney general, Elliot Richardson, to name a special prosecutor if necessary to get at the truth and protect the integrity of the presidency.

There will be "no whitewash at the White House," the President declared.

Thus the President gave a nod of approval to the suggestion of critics — including many Republican members of Congress — that an outside expert may have to prosecute the Watergate case to avoid the appearance of a cover-up.

Hours after sweeping some of his top aides and friends from the Administration, the President told a national TV audience last night that it would be "a cowardly

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thing to do" for him to blame others for the political espionage plot and alleged effort to conceal White House involvement.

## Zeal

"I will not place the blame on subordinates — on people whose zeal exceeded their judgment and who may have done wrong in a cause they deeply believed to be right," he said.

Nixon admitted accepting the resignations of "two of my closest associates in the White House" — chief of staff H. R. Haldeman and domestic affairs counselor John Ehrlichman — was "one of the most difficult decisions of my presidency."

In accepting their resigna-

tions as well as that of Attorney General Richard Kleindienst, Nixon said he didn't mean to leave any implication of personal wrongdoing.

But he did not have any word of defense for his legal counsel, John W. Dean, who he indicated misled him in the investigation. Dean was fired.

Nixon said it was neces-

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sary for him to accept the resignations of "some of my closest friends and most trusted aides" for this reason:

## Confidence

"In matters as sensitive as guarding the integrity of our democratic process, it is essential not only that rigorous legal and ethical standards be observed, but also that the public, you, have total confidence that they are both being observed and enforced by those in authority and particularly by the President of the United States."

The President praised a "vigorous free press" the courts and the system for bringing the Watergate facts to light.

Thus the President dealt with his seventh crisis — eighth counting the Cambodia invasion protests — by

cleansing the Administration of those aides still figuring in reports about the conspiracy and efforts to cover it up and turning the investigation over to Richardson. The President said he had spent too much time on it.

Richardson, the New England aristocrat and former Massachusetts attorney general, received his third Administration job in three months — from Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, to Secretary of Defense and now Attorney General. Richardson first joined the Administration as undersecretary of state.

## Regard

The President described Richardson as "a man of unimpeachable integrity and rigorously high principle," and added:

"I have directed him to do everything necessary to ensure that the Department of Justice has the confidence and trust of every law abiding person in the country.

"I have given him absolute authority to make all decisions bearing upon the prosecution of the Watergate case and related matters.

"I have instructed him, that if he should consider it appropriate, he has the authority to name a special supervising prosecutor for matters arising out of the case."

Looking back on the Watergate's history the President asked, "How could it have happened? Who is to blame?"

## Campaign

The President said that, although he always insisted on running his own campaign in the past, he had decided that in 1972 "the Presidency should come first and politics second" because of his efforts to bring "peace to American and peace to the world."

Thus he said he sought to delegate campaign opera-

tions and limited his own campaign activities.

But while he suggested others were actually to blame for the break-in at the Democratic headquarters, for the political espionage, and for the efforts at concealment, "the man at the top must bear the responsibility."

"That responsibility,

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therefore, belongs here, in this office. I accept it," he said.

But the President also pointedly noted that he didn't mean the guilty would escape, saying:

"For specific criminal actions by specific individuals, those who committed those actions, must, of course, bear the liability and pay the penalty."

## Other Matters

Now, the President said, he was returning to other goals and the pursuit of peace, equal opportunity, employment for those who can work and help for those who can't and to make America a country "in which each person can dare to dream."

"We cannot achieve these goals unless we dedicate ourselves to another goal," he said. "We must maintain the integrity of the White House. And that integrity must be real, not transparent. There cannot be a whitewash at the White House."

In claiming he had been misled, the President said he had "received repeated assurances" from those conducting the investigation that members of his Administration were not involved in the Watergate in any way.

## Removal

Dean was the man in charge of that investigation until he was removed by Nixon apparently in March.

He said because he had faith in those giving him the assurances "I discounted the stories in the press that appeared to implicate members of my Administration or other officials of the campaign committee."

Closing his 27-minute speech, Nixon said the lesson of Watergate "is clear" campaigns must never fall into the trap "that the end, no matter how great that end is, justifies the means."