

SFChronicle MAY 8 1973

Richardson Says He'll Pick Prober

N.Y. Times Service

Washington

Elliot L. Richardson announced yesterday that if he is confirmed by the Senate as attorney general, he will appoint a special prosecutor to conduct the investigation of the Watergate case.

Richardson, who had been under pressure from congressman and Republican party officials to appoint someone from outside the administration, said that he has not picked anyone for the job but has "begun the search and will press it as rapidly as possible."

The prosecutor, Richardson said, would have "all the independence, authority and staff support needed to carry out the tasks entrusted to him."

Secretary of Defense, Richardson made the announcement in a statement

he read to newsmen at the Pentagon. He refused to answer any questions.

In explaining his decision, Richardson said: "I have taken into account the fact that, because I have held office in this administration from its beginning, my objectivity may be questioned."

The statement came a week after President Nixon nominated Richardson as Attorney General to replace Richard Kleindienst, who resigned because he said he had had personal and professional associations with some of those implicated in the Watergate case.

At that time, Mr. Nixon said Richardson would have the authority to select an outside prosecutor if Richardson believed such action appropriate.

CHOICE

Since then, many members of Congress and other politicians from both parties have noted Richardson's association with the Nixon administration since its inception and have said that Richardson should choose someone who has no connections to the administration to head the prosecution.

Last week, the senate voted to call on the President to appoint a special prosecutor. A vote is expected later this week on a resolution that would express the "sense of the Senate" that Richardson should name a prosecutor and that the appointee should be submitted to the senate for approval.

In his statement, Richardson seemed to take pains to

See Back Page

From Page 1

meet the demands from Congress.

Richardson said he would ask the Senate Judiciary Committee to hold public hearings on the "suitability of the appointee" and would "welcome, in addition, an expression by the Senate as a whole of its confidence in him."

The prosecutor, Richardson said, would "be in the Department of Justice and report to me — and only to me — (but) he will be aware that his ultimate accountability is to the American people."

HEARINGS

Tomorrow Richardson is to go before the Judiciary Committee for the beginning of his confirmation hearings.

Members of the committee said that they have little doubt that Richardson will be confirmed, but they said they want to question him closely about the authority he would give to the special prosecutor.

Two Democratic senators — Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia and John V. Tunney of California — said they are eager to learn whether the prosecutor would be able to grant immunity from prosecution to a witness or whether he would have to clear such action with Richardson or the White House.

LETTER

Another Democrat, senator Adlai E. Stevenson III of Illinois, commented that "to call the special prosecutor independent does not guarantee his independence."

Stevenson wrote a letter last week to Richardson signed by 29 senators calling for the appointment of a truly independent prosecutor.

Republican leader Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania, who is also a member of the Judiciary Committee, stressed the importance of "a full hearing before the committee" and said he expects Richardson would give the committee "Guidelines about the type of prosecutor he is looking for."