

Testimony Before Senators

Richardson's Promises on

Washington

Vowing to stay at "arm's length" from the White House in pursuing the Watergate scandal, Attorney General-designate Eliot L. Richardson said yesterday that he has no intention of "going easy" on anyone involved.

He assured the Senate Judiciary Committee that he would not even try to stop the special Watergate prosecutor he plans to enlist from pressing for the "personal testimony" of President Nixon himself.

If the White House wanted to object to that, Richardson told Senator Birch Bay (dem-Ind.), the President's White House lawyers would have to fight it out with the prosecutor.

The same standard, Richardson said, also would apply to any subpoena of White House files, even in the face of claims of executive privilege. As attorney general, Richardson said he would step in pressing his investigations.

Despite those and other assurances, the committee concluded its second day of confirmation hearings on Richardson's nomination amid strong indications that he will have to name the prosecutor before Richardson can become attorney general.

He indicated that he hopes to submit his choice to the FBI Monday for an extensive five-day background check.

In his testimony, Richardson promised to give the prosecutor a wide-ranging, written charter along with jurisdiction over any violations of federal law by White House personnel, 1972 Nixon campaign officials, and administration appointees.

Pressed by Senator Ed-

ward M. Kennedy (Dem-Mass.), he also agreed to give his private list of candidates for special prosecutor to committee members for their advice.

The concessions still failed to satisfy Democratic senators troubled by Richardson's insistence on keeping "final authority" over the Watergate investigation for himself.

Now secretary of defense, Richardson acknowledged that he had been one of Mr. Nixon's "surrogate" campaigners last fall, praising the administration's record in speeches and interviews arranged by the Committee to Re-Elect the President.

He insisted, however, that any warmth he might have developed then or during his administration service with men now under investigation has been "at least neutralized" by his indignation over the depth of the scandals generically labeled Watergate.

"I don't want to get dramatic about it. Or melodramatic," Richardson testified. "But I'm among the great majority of Republicans who feel betrayed by the shoddy standards and morals displayed by people whose activities have recently come to light."

However, Kennedy and Bayh, who conducted most of the questioning, were unable to pin Richardson down on what they regarded as a satisfactory definition of "extreme circumstances" but he also refused to limit himself, as the Democrats suggested, simply to retaining the right to fire the prosecutor.

At one point, Richardson said he would keep hands off the Watergate investigation so long as the prosecutor showed "reasonable" judgment. Bayh protested that such caveats sounded to him like "a trap-dOR."

Bayh also pressed Richardson to speed up a long-overdue Justice Department report on whether any witnesses had perjured themselves during last year's Senate hearings on Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst's nomination.

Singling out former Attorney General John N. Mitch-

ell, Bayh charged that "there is a very definite possibility that perjury was committed before a commit-

Probe

tee of the United States Senate by a member of the executive branch."

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