

Judge Rejected Ehrlichman Offer

By Maribeth Morris

Seattle Post-Intelligencer

SEATTLE — Morell Sharp, a Seattle federal judge, said yesterday he turned down an offer by former White House Chief domestic adviser John Ehrlichman to head a secret White House domestic intelligence evaluation committee.

The committee later supplied information to Watergate figure James McCord.

Judge Sharp said he declined Ehrlichman's invitation to coordinate daily reports of government intelligence agencies when he was told, in January 1971, that "existence of the committee would not be made public."

"I was not about to participate in a secret activity," Sharp said.

Sharp said he attended two meetings of representatives from the FBI, CIA, the National Security Agency, Secret Service, and the departments of Justice, Defense and the Treasury.

'President Desired Panel'

The first was held in "late November or early December," 1970, and was a "general discussion focused on the how and why of such a committee" — a committee that Ehrlichman told Sharp the President desired, Sharp said.

The second meeting of intelligence representatives that Sharp said he attended was on or shortly after Jan. 11, 1971.

Present were John Dean III, then the President's counsel, and Robert Marjorian, who had just been assigned as chief of the Justice Department's Internal Security Division.

It was at that meeting, Sharp said, he learned the existence of the committee itself would be kept secret.

Hoover 'Reluctant'

"(J. Edgar) Hoover (the late director of the FBI) was at the time being subjected to criticism and was particularly reluctant to cooperate with such a committee and questioned its need," Sharp said.

While a decision was being made at the White House level whether to form the committee, Sharp said:

"I did not want to participate in any private activity, particularly if the committee was to operate in secret.

"I talked to Ehrlichman, Dean and Mitchell about this. My reluctance (to take the job as coordinator) was accepted by them.

Justice Department

"It was then I was told for the first time that the committee would function as part of the Internal Security Division (of the Justice Department) instead of as a White House committee, as I had understood it would be.

"I dropped out then (before the committee was actually formed) and whatever they did and how far they went (supplying information to McCord) I never knew."

Ehrlichman's Neighbor

Sharp went to Washington, D.C., the first time shortly after he was defeated in September, 1970, as State Supreme Court Justice.

A month afterwards, Sharp said he received a call from Ehrlichman,

whom he had known as a fellow lawyer and as a neighbor in Bellevue, Wash.

"He asked if I would be interested in coming back to Washington, D.C. because he had several projects in mind," Sharp recounted.

In late October, 1970, Sharp went to Washington, where Ehrlichman told him of the intelligence project.

The "project," Sharp said Ehrlichman told him, was to coordinate intelligence agencies' reports because "the President felt there was very little coordination between these agencies and separate reports were of little value."

**JUDGE SHARP**

He said no