

Removing Politics From Justice Dept.

Washington

Attorney General Elliot Richardson announced yesterday that as part of his effort to depoliticize the Justice Department, every department employ-

ee will henceforth be required to report any conversation about Justice Department matters they have with outside parties — including congressmen, their staffs and other governmental officials.

The new reporting system "will discourage approaches" by persons with improper motives, he said. "Only news media representatives are excluded" from the restrictions, he asserted.

The attorney general also announced that senators and congressmen will no longer be allowed to announce Justice Department grants to their home areas — because, he said, those announcements create the public impression that the senator or congressman had some sort of influence on the results when, in fact, he had nothing to do with it.

"Having taken office as attorney general in the midst of the darkening cloud of suspicion and distrust engendered by Watergate, I recognize it as my first duty to do what I can to eliminate the causes of distrust," he told delegates to the American Bar Association meeting here.

SUSPICION

And one of those causes, he said, was "the suspicion that political considerations or political influence can color the administration of justice."

Richardson told the lawyers that he himself was forswearing politics, that he expected his "principal colleagues" to do the same, and that he hoped "those who follow" him will do likewise.

The office of attorney general has been political in the past, he said, but in view of Watergate, it could no longer be so.

In his speech Richardson noted that in the wake of Watergate, many people suspected that the laws were applied differently to the rich and to the poor, to the strong and the weak.

FAIRLY

He is considering creating an "inspector general's office" within the Justice Department, to insure that the laws are applied fairly and consistently across the board, he said. William Ruckelshaus, President Nixon's nominee for deputy attorney general, will head a committee to study the idea.

Richardson also acknowledged that many people suspect that the Justice Department "is not being sufficiently honest in its communication with press and public," and pledged to "improve the department's candor and openness."

Then, in a somewhat startling admission, Richardson said that the department had no "comprehensive crim-



AP Wirephoto

ELLIOT RICHARDSON
He issued the orders

inal justice planning capacity" — despite its "consistent preaching to the states" that they have such planning. Indeed, he said, "we lack the criteria for intelligent choice" in making plans.

MARIJUANA

The American Bar Association officially condemned yesterday many unethical or illegal activities committed by lawyers involved in the Watergate affair.

It also called for the decriminalization of the possession and "casual" non-commercial distribution of marijuana, and to decriminalization of non-commercial sexual conduct between consenting adults.

The ABA convention ended here last night.

New York Times