

Ellsberg, Watergate And Prejudice



— Jack Anderson

TO DRUM UP prejudice against Daniel Ellsberg while the government was preparing its case against him in 1971, the White House secretly asked a congressional committee to hold hearings on his theft of the Pentagon Papers.

The appeal for Ellsberg hearings was made by White House officials to the House Committee on Internal Security through the office of its chairman, Representative Richard Ichord, (Dem-Mo.), in June 1971. This was the same committee which the young Representative Richard Nixon used as his stepping stone to national publicity 25 years ago with the Alger Hiss pumpkin papers case.

Ichord's aide William Hecht confirmed to us that a White House official called him and confided: "Some committee is going to investigate this matter. It should be one with genuine interest in the national security."

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WHEN SEVERAL more pressing calls followed, Hecht began to wonder just who at the White House was so eager for the hearings.

"Is this something the President wants done?" Hecht inquired.

"Yes," was the immediate White House response.

Ichord cautioned his aide that with criminal charges pending against Ellsberg, he would not risk prejudicing the case with pretrial publicity unless national security arguments were overwhelming.

"The only way I'd go ahead with this is if the President personally asked me," he

instructed Hecht. Dutifully, the staffer informed the White House. Sure enough, within days a call came to Ichord from his acquaintance in the oval office, Richard Nixon.

As Ichord told us with a chuckle, "I thought, 'how am I going to be able to talk him out of this?'" But President Nixon made it easy by not bringing up the probe. And when Ichord shrewdly avoided bringing it up himself, the President warmly wished Ichord a "happy birthday" and hung up.

Footnote: Today, the shoe is tightly on the other foot. Ex-Nixon aides face prosecution in the Watergate debacle and are now loudly complaining that their own cases are being prejudiced by congressional hearings.

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DESPITE the gasoline shortage and President Nixon's attempt to reduce government fuel consumption by seven per cent, government cars will be using more gas than ever in the year ahead.

The government is also continuing to give away gasoline by the millions of barrels to foreign nations. Documents reveal that in fiscal years 1971 and 1972, the Defense Department gave foreign nations \$30 million in grants to purchase 5.1 million barrels of petroleum. The program is continuing.

The General Services Administration has admitted to Representative Ben Rosenthal, (Dem-N.Y.), meanwhile, that government cars were allowed to use 34 million more gallons of gasoline in 1973 than in 1972.