

Ruckelshaus Terms His Defiance Of Nixon a 'Very Easy' Decision

By E. W. KENWORTHY

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WASHINGTON, Oct. 23—The last question asked of the former deputy attorney general, William D. Ruckelshaus, at his news conference today was, "Would you take another job in this Administration?"

"No," said Mr. Ruckelshaus, striding from the rostrum.

Mr. Ruckelshaus was dismissed last Saturday by President Nixon for refusing to dismiss the special Watergate prosecutor Archibald Cox—the same offense that had led to the resignation of Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson. Before being named by Mr. Richardson as his deputy, Mr. Ruckelshaus had been successively assistant attorney general in charge of the Civil Division, administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency and temporary head of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

He Is Relaxed

Mr. Ruckelshaus delivered his views of the weekend's events in unqualified language but in a relaxed manner. He began by saying that his refusal to obey the President was a very easy decision and certainly "not an heroic act."

Anyone in public life, he said, always has to keep before him "the option to resign," but it is to be exercised usually only when there is "a fundamental disagreement" with a superior.

"There has to be a line," he said, "over which any public official refuses to step." The decision, he said, is inevitable when you are asked to do something "that your conscience simply will not permit you to do."

The president, he made plain, drew such a line for him and forced his conscience. As a condition of getting Senate confir-

that the President would agree to another special prosecutor. And he had no firm answers to questions on why there was any reason to believe Mr. Nixon would give to another special prosecutor or to Mr. Petersen the files that he had refused to give to Mr. Cox.

Mr. Ruckelshaus merely said, "I have no reason to suspect [the] files won't be turned over."

Impeachment Question

Like Mr. Richardson, Mr. Ruckelshaus declined to say whether he thought Mr. Nixon should be impeached. No one is less qualified to speak on that question, he said with a smile, "than someone who has just been fired." It is "a political question in the broadest sense," he continued, "and it requires a broad judgment by the people."

Asked whether, during his brief tenure as head of the F.B.I., he had received any information pointing to the President's involvement in the Watergate cover-up, Mr. Ruckelshaus said that he had "no independent knowledge" of Mr. Nixon's involvement.

In his travels throughout the country, Mr. Ruckelshaus said, he found two disturbing reactions to the stormy events of the last year—either "an apathy taking over" with a concomitant tendency to drop out of the political process, or a kind of hysteria, that could lead to "a taking to the streets."

"The people should become involved more than ever," he declared. "They should not only believe in law and order but take part in the process of law and order. I intend to stay involved."

mation, Mr. Ruckelshaus said. Mr. Richardson promised, and the President reaffirmed the promise, that Mr. Cox would have a free hand in conducting "a vigorous, thorough and fair" investigation.

"What I was requested to do was to violate that agreement," Mr. Ruckelshaus said.

F.B.I. Experience Cited

Mr. Ruckelshaus said that when he was head of the F.B.I. he had become convinced of the need for an independent investigation because he had felt very strongly for some time "that we are facing a crisis of confidence in our institutions."

He is still of this mind, he added. Without in any way questioning the integrity of the acting attorney general Robert H. Bork, or of Henry F. Petersen, assistant attorney general in charge of the Criminal Division, who will once again be in charge of investigating Watergate and related matters, Mr. Ruckelshaus expressed doubt that the Justice Department could conduct an independent investigation.

For one thing, he said, the department will be under such pressure after the events of the weekend that it might find it difficult "not to prosecute" when the evidence might be too slim to risk prosecution.

Mr. Ruckelshaus, however, did not seem very confident