

Impact Downplayed

Richardson Talks Of the Cox Probe

Washington

Elliot Richardson testified yesterday that even if all of ousted special Watergate prosecutor Archibald Cox's investigations had led to indictments, there would have been "nothing inflicting any additional damage on the White House or the President."

"No very shattering impacts would have occurred," said the former attorney general, who resigned rather than carry out President Nixon's order to fire Cox.

He told the Senate Judiciary Committee that there was a feeling among the White House staff that Cox was "a ravenous beast whose appetite was insatiable," and said they were constantly getting complaints from Republicans about "why they were let-

ting that guy Cox roam all over the place."

As a result, Richardson told the committee, he received "chronic complaints" from the White House that Cox was trying to carry his investigations beyond his assigned jurisdiction.

Richardson said "the sad aspect" of it was that a little more cooperation would have expedited the investigation, avoided a cataclysmic upheaval in the Justice Department and, so far as he knew, "would not have significantly affected the over-all picture of what occurred."

Chairman James Eastland, (Dem.-Miss.), asked Richardson if he thought Cox was fired because he was on the trail of "some sensational stuff."

"Nothing essentially new or radically different from what had publicly emerged was in the works that I know of," Richardson replied.

He said the "crunch arose" over the President's proposal to withdraw Cox's authority to bring court challenges to claims of executive privilege for White House tapes, notes and memoranda of presidential conversations.

Richardson told the committee that Mr. Nixon should waive executive privilege and commit himself to making available to a special prosecutor all tapes and other materials relevant to the Watergate and related investigations.

"I see no other way at this juncture of providing the reassurance necessary that the special prosecutor is going to get to the bottom of these matters," Richardson said.

Richardson also testified that sometime in September or in early October, Mr. Nixon first said "something to do with getting rid of Cox" to him.

"I didn't take it seriously, but just as a general expression of irritation," Richardson said.

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