



ELLIOT L. RICHARDSON
... got assurances

Richardson Convinced By Nixon

By William Claiborne
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Former Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson said yesterday that despite his confrontation with President Nixon over the firing of Watergate Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox, he believes Mr. Nixon has been truthful in denying complicity in the planning and cover-up of the Watergate affair.

Nevertheless, Richardson said, the President should probably answer questions under oath before a "responsible and informed" group to restore the nation's confidence in the White House.

Richardson, who resigned Oct. 20 rather than carry out Mr. Nixon's order to fire Cox, said he would encourage an interrogation of the President by the Watergate special prosecutor — now Leon A. Jaworski — and the chairman and ranking minority member of the Senate Watergate committee, Sam J. Ervin Jr. (D-N.C.) and Howard H. Baker Jr. (R-Tenn.).

The panel could also in-

clude a "neutral outsider," Richardson suggested, and a transcript could be made of the questioning.

Richardson said he believed the President told the "whole truth" about having no prior knowledge of Watergate or the alleged cover-up.

"Everything I know supports the conclusion that he has [told the truth]. I've found him personally convincing on this," Richardson said in response to questioning on the NBC-TV "Today" show (WRC).

"In my very first meeting with him on the subject of my nomination as Attorney General, he was at pains himself to assure me that he had not had any direct knowledge of these things or any part in them. And he was emphatic in saying, in effect, that I must believe that or I shouldn't take the job," Richardson said.

Richardson said his trust in Mr. Nixon was based, in part, on conversations he has had with White House officials who "have some awareness" of what is contained in the presidential tapes.

The former Attorney General said he would not characterize the Nixon administration as a corrupt administration.

"I think the worst things we have seen have been situations where the interactions of presidential politics, fund-raising [and] the aggressive pursuit of policies by men that did not have enough regard for individuals and for due process has resulted in a sum total of

abuses that are very serious."

Richardson said he believes Mr. Nixon has accepted responsibility for such abuses.

The firing of Cox, the resignations in the Justice Department and Mr. Nixon's capitulation on the issue of the tapes, Richardson suggested, probably will benefit the new Watergate special prosecutor by guaranteeing him more independence.

Richardson also noted that the President was "much more directly associated with a commitment" of independence in the appointment of Jaworski than he was in the hiring of Cox, which was negotiated exclusively by Richardson.

Richardson said he did not believe that Mr. Nixon could afford to fire another special prosecutor.

William D. Ruckelshaus, Richardson's former deputy who also resigned during what is now called the "Saturday night massacre," also called upon the President yesterday to tell everything he knows about Watergate. He said the public interest now outweighs any questions about compromising the doctrine of executive privilege with respect to White House documents.

"I think one of the wisest courses the White House could take is disclosure—full disclosure—of all documents bearing on the case," Ruckelshaus said on the CBS-TV "Morning News" program (WTOP).