

Warren on Watergate: 'Debasing, Cancerous'

Washington

Retired Chief Justice Earl Warren decried the Watergate scandal yesterday as "conduct debasing our institutions" and "cancerous to the body politic."

"It must be obvious to all by this time that secrecy in high places spawned this great tragedy of our time, and that continued secrecy has prolonged the judicial inquiry into admittedly illegal conduct to a point which erodes the rule of law," Warren said.

Warren spoke at a National Press Club luncheon at which the third annual Drew Pearson prizes for investiga-

tive reporting were awarded.

"The investigative reporting of the past year is entitled to high praise and to the gratitude of every American," he said.

"Without it, its disclosures of fraud, bribery, perjury, conflict of interest, obstruction of justice and so forth would probably have passed without official action.

"So if we are to learn from the debacle we are in, we should first strike at secrecy in government wherever it exists for it is the incubator for corruption."

Associated Press