

Richardson: Nixon May Be Accountable

From News Dispatches

AUSTIN, Tex., Feb. 1—Former Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson said Thursday that President Nixon could be held accountable for the Watergate break-in and cover-up even if he wasn't aware of them.

"The President in theory could be found culpable in the manner in which a corporate executive could be found culpable for things that he did not know about," Richardson said.

"But what grounds would justify what is culpable? That, if you put aside ordinary crimes, is the toughest problem that will be facing the House," which is considering a resolution to impeach President Nixon.

Richardson said Congress could consider impeaching Mr. Nixon for the manner in which he has conducted himself in office without specific evidence of crimes, but "there would have to be a very serious abuse of power."

"On what we have now, the answer is no, we don't have the basis for impeachment on any evidence relating to a crime," Richardson said to an audience of university students, faculty members and Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson at the LBJ Library on the University of Texas campus.

He said he agreed with a "shorthand statemnet" of Vice President Gerald R. Ford, who once said high crime or misdemeanor is anything the House says it is. Ford, then a congressman, was talking about the possible impeachment of Justice William O. Douglas.

Richardson said the House has "unreviewable authority" to determine what an impeachable offense, but it "should observe certain fundamental, fair procedural standards."