

Ehrlichman May Seek New Lawyer

Washington

John D. Ehrlichman, concerned about a potential conflict of interest with H.R. Haldeman, his former White House colleague, has decided to drop John J. Wilson as his lawyer for the Watergate coverup trial, sources close to the case disclosed yesterday.

Ehrlichman was said to have concluded earlier this month that Wilson's joint representation of him and Haldeman "wouldn't be fair to the court and to himself," a source close to the former White House domestic adviser explained.

Wilson will continue to represent Haldeman for the foreseeable future, the sources said, but Ehrlichman's decision to go elsewhere for representation marked the end of the 72-year-old attorney's unique year-long role as counsel for the two highest White House aides implicated in the Watergate scandals.

Inevitably, the sources said, separate representation for Ehrlichman could lead to efforts on the part of the Watergate special prosecutor's office to renew plea-bargaining attempts with him. Such talks have failed in the past.

Those familiar with Ehrlichman's motives cautioned against what they termed overemphasis of the significance of the move. "This is strictly trial strategy," one source said. "You simply



JOHN J. WILSON
One client now

can't have two guys wedded in the jury's eyes in a case like this."

Ehrlichman was indicted earlier this month on a total of ten federal charges of conspiracy and false swearing for his alleged role in the Watergate coverup and the burglary of Dr. Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist. He also is facing a trial next month in California on a state charge of perjury. He has pleaded not guilty to all of the specifications.

Haldeman, who served as Mr. Nixon's chief of staff, was indicted on five federal counts of conspiracy and false swearing for his alleged role in the Watergate coverup. He also has pleaded not guilty to the charges.

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