

Prosecutors' Split With Petersen

Washington .

The originaltergate prosecutors broke off all contacts with the Justice Department in April, 1973, after Assistant Attorney General Henry E. Petersen refused their demands that he end his close association with President Nixon, highly reliable sources said yesterday.

The prosecuting team, then led by Earl J. Silbert, an assistant U.S. attorney, repeatedly warned Petersen that he was scheduled to be a key witness against John

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W. Dean III in any Watergate coverup trials, the sources said, and therefore could not continue advising the President.

"It was awful, just awful," one involved official said of the disputes between Petersen and Silbert. "They told him, 'You've been used; Dean used you.'"

At the time, Petersen, who had been put in charge of the Watergate investigation by the President on April 15, 1973, was meeting almost daily with Mr. Nixon and relaying grand jury and other information to him, according to the edited White House transcripts released last Tuesday.

Asked why he did so, Petersen said, "We thought he had a right to know."

After nearly two weeks of what one source termed "bad shouting matches" with Petersen, the three-man prosecuting team then in the midst of almost daily discoveries about the extent of the high-level Watergate coverup stopped relaying any information to their superiors in the Justice Department.

It was not until May 22, when Archibald Cox was named special prosecutor, the sources said, that Silbert and his two aides, Seymour

Glanzer and Donald E. Campbell, again began providing details to higher-ups.

Petersen could not be reached for comment about these new disclosures, but he told newsmen early yesterday that I'm not a whore. I walked through a minefield and came out clean," in reference to his Watergate involvement.

Petersen added during a brief meeting with newsmen outside of his office, "You newspaper people are disappointed that I'm not a whore."

The New York Times reported yesterday that the White House transcripts showed that Petersen tried to discourage the prosecutors in April, 1973, from investigating the President's personal involvement in the Watergate coverup. The edited tapes also disclose that Petersen repeatedly assured the president that he believed in his innocence in the scandal.

At the time, sources said, Dean, then a White House counsel, had begun testifying in full about the coverup and told the prosecutors how he had relied on Petersen to provide the White House with secret grand jury information throughout the summer of 1972.

New York Times