Judge Finds Liddy Guilty Of Contempt of Congress

By Timothy S. Robinson
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Convicted Watergate conspirator G. Gordon Liddy, who is serving a minimum of eight years in jail, was found guilty yesterday of contempt of Congress for refusing to testify before a House Subcommittee that was investigating possible links between the Central Intelligence Agency and the Watergate burglary.

He was sentenced to a year in jail for the contempt, but that sentence was suspended by U.S. District Judge John H. Pratt, who placed Liddy on one year's probation. The sentence by Pratt has no effect on the terms already being served by Liddy, and he will remain in jail.

Yesterday's trial before Judge Pratt probably will be the shortest growing out of the Watergate scandal. It took approximately two hours for the prosecution and defense to argue legal points. There was no jury, and no witnesses were presented, since both sides agreed to basic facts.

Those facts included:

• The Special Subcommittee on Intelligence of the House Armed Services Committee was investigating possible CIA - Watergate links on July 20, 1973.

• Liddy was called as a witness, and was brought from jail to testify. He refused to be sworn in and refused to answer questions, saying he had a right against self-incrimination.
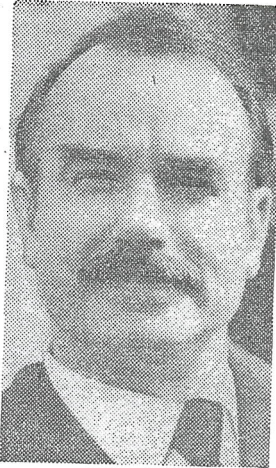
Liddy was indicted through efforts of the Watergate special prosecutor's office in March this year on two contempt of Congress charges for that refusal.

That indictment came on the same day that he was charged with five other persons in connection with the burglary of the offices of Dr. Lewis Fielding, who was the psychiatrist of Pentagon Papers codefendant Daniel Ellsberg. Liddy still faces trial on those charges.

Liddy's defense attorney, Peter Maroulis, argued that the House Subcommittee had committed several violations of House rules in its procedures setting up the hearing and in the manner in which it summoned Liddy as a witness.

However, Judge Pratt accepted the argument of Assistant Watergate Special Prosecutor Phillip Lacovara that such procedural violations, if they occurred, were no defense for Liddy's failure to testify.

Liddy stood erect, with his head thrown back, as Judge Pratt imposed the sentence. The former White House aide, who has adamantly refused to testify about his role in the Watergate affair, spoke briefly during the sentencing procedure to tell the judge that the "legal theory" on which he and his lawyer had proceeded in the contempt case "now appears . . . (to have been) wrong. I preserve the position that it may be correct and that I may be borne out" on appeal.

Liddy's attorneys also contended that he could not testify before the House Subcommittee because matters about which he could have been asked to testify were covered by national security. The prosecutor's office argued that, if that were the case, Liddy should have taken the oath and refused to answer specific questions by claiming the "national security" defense.

Five members of Liddy's family—including his parents, but not his wife—were in the courtroom and met with Liddy during a trial recess and after the trial ended, according to court sources.

The trial drew little attention in the U.S. Courthouse here, with numerous empty seats available until a high school civics group came in during a recess to fill the spectators section.

Liddy sat passively at the defense table during the trial, but once walked forward to hand a note to his lawyer at the lectern before being quietly reminded by a U.S. marshal that prisoners could not approach the stand.

Liddy is serving a sentence of from six and two-thirds years to 20 years for crimes directly related to the Watergate burglary. In addition, he is still serving a contempt of court sentence that runs for the duration of the Watergate grand jury, which has been extended to June, 1974.

He s currently in D.C. jail—in part, to be available for trial in the Fielding break-in case.

G. GORDON LIDDY
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