

Kleindienst Pleads Guilty To Misdemeanor

Former Attorney General Allowed Plea in Return For Aid in ITT Inquiry

By a WALL STREET JOURNAL Staff Reporter

WASHINGTON—Former Attorney General Richard Kleindienst was allowed to plead guilty to a federal misdemeanor charge in return for his cooperation in the continuing International Telephone & Telegraph Corp. investigation.

It isn't clear whether Mr. Kleindienst, who already has been talking to government prosecutors, has any new information that could lead to criminal charges against other top Nixon administration officials. So far, only one other person, California Lt. Gov. H. Edwin Reinecke, has been formally charged in the investigation growing out of the 1971 settlement of government antitrust suits against ITT.

A spokesman for the Watergate special prosecutor's office stressed that the conviction of Mr. Kleindienst "by no means" signals the end of the ITT investigation. This came amid comment that the special prosecutor's offer has been dragging its feet in the inquiry and concentrating more on corraling government officials than on investigating whether ITT was guilty of any wrongdoing.

Mr. Kleindienst, as well as his predecessor, John Mitchell, have been widely presumed to be targets of the grand jury inquiry, partly because of documents provided by the White House itself that contradicted sworn testimony the two men gave about White House involvement in the ITT case.

Mr. Kleindienst, 50 years old, pleaded guilty to concealing from the Senate Judiciary Committee during his 1972 confirmation hearings the fact that he had been ordered by President Nixon to drop an appeal to the Supreme Court of one of the suits against ITT. President Nixon has acknowledged giving such an order to Mr. Kleindienst in an April 19, 1971, phone call but has denied that it was related to a pledge of ITT financial support for the 1972 Republican convention.

The President rescinded his order a few days later, but the Justice Department had already requested a 30-day delay in the deadline for filing the appeal. Mr. Nixon has said that he changed his mind because Mr. Mitchell feared that Solicitor General Erwin Griswold would resign in protest if the appeal were dropped. Mr. Kleindienst, who as Deputy Attorney General was in charge of the ITT case because Mr. Mitchell had removed himself, has said it was he who threatened to resign.

In any case, before the matter reached the Supreme Court, the Justice Department and the company agreed to a settlement that allowed the conglomerate to retain its profitable Hartford Fire Insurance Co. subsidiary while disposing of other units.

Both Mr. Kleindienst and Mr. Mitchell denied at the confirmation hearings that they had ever discussed the ITT case with the President.

Mr. Kleindienst yesterday, however, pleaded guilty to a charge that he "did re-

Please Turn to Page 25, Column 5

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