



The New York Times/George James

James D. St. Clair, President Nixon's defense lawyer, about to appear before House panel on impeachment.

## President's Lawyer

James Draper St. Clair

By LINDA CHARLTON

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 18 —

"I don't represent Mr. Nixon personally; I represent him in his capacity as President," James Draper St. Clair said in an interview two months after he became

**Man** Mr. Nixon's lawyer.

**in the** This classical lawyer's detachment parallels

**News** what has been a principal theme in his client's own defense; Mr. Nixon has said that he is fighting to preserve not himself but the Presidency. Mr. St. Clair has said he does not represent Mr. Nixon "individually" but rather "the office of the Presidency." But he has made it clear that, as long as he is Mr. Nixon's counsel, he is committed to him entirely. "I only reflect the President's views," he has said.

The 54-year-old lawyer was criticized by a former client, the Rev. William Sloane Coffin, as being "all case and no cause," a stance that he has maintained through his first five months as the President's defense counsel. It is also a posture in the tradition of such notable lawyers as the late John W. Davis, who during his long career argued both sides in civil rights cases with equal eloquence.

### Years for Boston

Smiling, imperturbably good-natured and courteous, Mr. St. Clair has made no secret of the fact that he would rather be back in Boston practicing law in the prestigious firm of Hale & Dorr, from which he resigned

as a partner to accept his present \$42,500-a-year position. But few believe that he will not stay with his client until the end of the case, if only because his withdrawal would be so damaging to Mr. Nixon.

Not that there has been even the smallest indication from Mr. St. Clair that he has any doubts about the case or his client. On the contrary, he has said that he believes in Mr. Nixon's innocence while calmly holding to his own self-definition.

As the tempo has quickened, Mr. St. Clair's weekend trips home to the Boston suburb of Wellesley Hills have become less frequent; his wife of 30 years, the former Asenath Nestle — known as Billie — has occasionally come to Washington for a weekend to join him at the Madison Hotel, where he has been living since he took the case in January. The St. Clairs have three children.

Mr. St. Clair, born in Akron, Ohio, April 14, 1920, graduated from the University of Illinois in 1941.

After one term at Harvard Law School, he joined the Navy for the duration of the war. Then he returned to Harvard Law School and graduated in 1947.

He joined Hale & Dorr, working under Joseph N. Welch, who served as special counsel for the United States Army during the 1954 Army-McCarthy hearings. Mr. St. Clair was an assistant counsel during those televised hearings, which were as popular with the nation's television audience in their day as were last year's Watergate hearings—and as the Judiciary Committee's hearings are likely to be.

### Very Efficient Operator

Mr. St. Clair has been described by one member of the committee, M. Caldwell Butler, Republican of Virginia, as "a particularly attentive listener, prodigious note taker, and a very efficient operator."

"For example," he said, "when we were given a preliminary briefing of back-

ground information on the chain of command within the White House staff, Mr. St. Clair, being totally familiar with that, proceeded to read the other evidence in the volumes before him, taking extensive notes. But I noticed that any interruptions or questions caught his immediate and full attention."

In his months as Mr. Nixon's lawyer, the white-haired Mr. St. Clair has lost none of his cool good nature, but appears to have put on some weight, possibly because the job gives him no time for the golf that he enjoys at home.

And there is no reason to believe that he has changed his views about what he has called "a professional engagement" of "significant importance"—a viewpoint that is consistent with his strategy. "This case is a piece of litigation," he said in February. "It is also a highly charged political matter—but not one that replaces normal legal procedures. So I hope to keep as close to normal procedures as possible. I happen to think that's the best politics, too, though I am not a politician."

7-19-74 NYT