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Watergate Trial Jury 'Secrecy'

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Judge John J. Sirica imposed secrecy on the jury selection process for the Watergate coverup trial yesterday as he screened more prospective jurors and gave defendants five additional chances to challenge final choices.

Sirica ordered court clerk James F. Davey not to tell reporters how many jurors had been questioned nor how many had been excused. Previously, Davey has briefed reporters periodically on those figures.

And the judge signed a four-page order increasing from 10 to 15 the number of peremptory challenges for the five defendants. They will be able to exercise 10 as a group, and each of the five former Nixon aides will have the opportunity to make one such challenge individually as well.

Defendants are former Attorney General John Mitchell, White House aides H. R. Haldeman and John Ehrlich-

man, reelection committee lawyer Kenneth W. Parkinson, and Mitchell aide Robert Mardian.

The five former top officials are charged attempting to coverup the Watergate scandals, and all but one — Mardian — are charged with obstruction of justice.

The process of selecting a jury began when the trial opened Tuesday and Sirica remained optimistic Friday that 12 jurors and six alternates could be selected by early next week.

United Press