

Coverup Prosecutor

New Blast at Ehrlichman

Washington

The chief prosecutor at the Watergate coverup trial contended yesterday that John D. Ehrlichman was blaming former President Nixon for the entire Watergate coverup when, in fact, Ehrlichman had confessed his own role in the coverup to Mr. Nixon in the spring of 1973.

The prosecutor, James F. Neal, made his accusation toward the end of a long and often bitter cross-examination of Ehrlichman.

He made the charge angrily and loudly, and backed it up by reading aloud a statement by Ehrlichman contained in one of the White House tape recordings played at the trial. It was Ehrlichman's statement to Mr. Nixon on April 14, 1973, in a discussion about the coverup, that "in the first instance, we were protecting your re-election in a sense."

Ehrlichman denied the charge just as angrily and

loudly, saying that he had not participated in the coverup.

He also said that his remark to Mr. Nixon on April 14 was made in the course of "an attempt to look at what had happened in this whole period of time."

"To call that a confession is perfectly ridiculous in the context of this conversation," he said.

Ehrlichman also denied that his "defense" in the trial was that Mr. Nixon had manipulated and deceived him.

"That certainly is where the truth seems to lead as in this case," he said. "But that is not my defense."

His defense, he said, is that the charges against him, by government witnesses such as John W. Dean III, "are not supported by the facts."

Ehrlichman, once Mr. Nixon's chief domestic affairs adviser, rested his case

yesterday — with the exception of a few documents that may be filed later — after four days on the witness stand.

Neal had brought out a number of potentially damaging concessions in his first day of cross-examination Wednesday.

Yesterday, the prosecutor confronted Ehrlichman with one segment of the White House tapes after another containing seemingly incriminating statements by Ehrlichman.

Ehrlichman tried a number of approaches in attempting to rebut the prosecution's interpretations of the tapes. At one point, for instance, he noted that the transcript of one of the conversations contained the phrase "unintelligible." He said that the "unintelligible" comment, could it be deciphered, would undoubtedly demonstrate that his statement in the conversation

had no improper implications.

At another point, he contended that the transcript was simply incorrect.

And, although he denied that his defense in the case was that Mr. Nixon was to blame for the Watergate coverup, he continued to give incriminating testimony about Mr. Nixon.

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