

Department of Justice

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1	HONORABLE ELLIOT L. RICHARDSON,
5	ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
6	ON
7	"NEWSWATCH NEWSMAKER"
8	OVER
9	STATION WDSU-TV (AN NBC AFFILIATE)
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17	June 17, 1973
18	New Orleans, Louisiana
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MR. Melancon: Good evening. I am Kirk Melancon,
and this is NEWSWATCH NEWSMAKER. Our special guest tonight is
United States Attorney General Elliot Richardson.

5 Mr. Richardson is in New Orleans for a speech to the 6 National Council on Crime and Delinquency.

Time Magazine says few men are better qualified by
temperament and experience to be the Nation's chief legal
officer. Mr. Richardson was elected Attorney General of
Massachusetts. In 1970, he became Secretary of Health,
Education, and Welfare. He was later named Secretary of
Defense, a post which he held for just a hundred days before
being named the United States Attorney General.

14Questioning Mr. Richardson tonight will be Charles15Bosworth, Iris Kelso and Tim O'Brien of Chanel 6 News.

Mr. Richardson, first let me welcome you to New
Orleans and thank you very much for being with us tonight on
NEWSMAKER. It is quite a pleasure to have you here.

19ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: Thank you very much,20Mr. Melancon, and members of the panel. I look forward to21your questions and I am very pleased to be on your program.22MR. Melancon: Fine. Let me begin with the first23question, if you will. Watergate, the break-in at Watergate,24was a year ago today, and I would like to know how badly you

feel public confidence in government has been shattered by the

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Watergate scandal.

ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: Well, I think it certainly has had a very disturbing effect and, of course, part of the problem is that people don't distinguish between various parts of what seems to them a sort of cloudy business that has called into question a lot of agencies and a lot of individuals, and so I think we do have a real job in front of us to restore confidence, to find the facts and to make sure that anyone who is established to have been guilty of any crime is dealt with appropriately.

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MR. Melancon: Do you think that public confidence has been shattered a good deal? How badly has it been?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: Well, I don't think I really can answer that. Of course, I have spent most of my time in Washington this year and all of it really since the hearings got underway, and I am not in a very good position to sense how people feel across the country as a whole. Certainly, it is my impression that it is a serious situation that needs to be treated in that way, and that we do have a major job to do in enhancing confidence not only in the law enforcement process or even primarily in that, but in government itself.

22 MR. Melancon: Mr. Richardson, we thank you for 23 being with us, and we will be back in just a moment for more 24 questions for the United States Attorney General, right after 25 this. [Commercial]

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MR. Melancon: Now let's continue the questioning of U.S. Attorney General Elliot Richardson with Charles Bosworth of Channel 6 News.

MR. BOSWORTH: Mr. Richardson, the latest Watergate 5 6 poll by Mr. Gallup is out and it shows that 66 percent of the 7 American people think the President was involved in one way or another in the break-in or the cover-up. Now, you have been very 8 9 careful not to make too much of a personal commitment on your thinking as to the President's role, but in the light of 10 various testimony, and particular Mr. Magruder's in the Senate 11 Watergate hearings, have your thoughts on Watergate changed as 12 regards the President's role either in the break-in itself or 13 the cover-up? 14

ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: No, I really haven't seen any evidence that directly implicated the President. We have had nothing but a certain amount of hearsay and so on. Of course, the kind of enveloping cloud that I referred to earlier is inherently one in which it is hard to get a clear fix on the facts.

So far as I personally am concerned, I have had the opportunity to hear the President talk directly about this, and I find convincing the disclaimers he has expressed of any personal involvement.

MR. BOSWORTH: A number of people, Republicans and

Democrats, have said the President should go before the press for a full-scale news conference in regard to Watergate. Do you think that would really serve any purpose?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: Well, I don't really know on that score. I certainly think that it would be helpful and in some ways contribute to clearing the air, if it were possible for him to meet with the press on the subject in some way. I think clearly a good deal of thought would need to be given to the most appropriate format, otherwise, of course, you could have a very large news conference in which what questions got asked would be very much a matter of chance and there would be no adequate opportunity to develop either any clear sequence or to get from the President any adequate response to the kinds of things that would be on the minds of the press.

During the hearings, Mr. MR. : 16BOSWELL Magruder, the Deputy Campaign Director for the President, said 17 that the workers within the campaign were influenced by what 18 they thought was a general lawlessness, particularly among 19 antiwar demonstrators, they would break the law for their own 20 causes, and he indicated that this was a frustrating point of 21 -- a frustrating problem for the people within the campaign. 22

Now, you were in government back at that time. Did you find a feeling among government workers that if those other guys can break the law for their causes, why can't we?

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ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: I can't say that I found this a general attitude but, of course, most people in government are doing a job from day to day in which that kind of question doesn't arise. Certainly speaking for myself, I did find this disturbing really long before that, the general attitude that was being displayed on the part of people who advocated violation of law as a way of demonstrating some It would seem to me that at the very least anyone who point. advocated the violation of law for some reason of conscience should be willing to pay the penalties of the law. Of course, that has not been the attitude of many, especially those who have fled the country in order to escape the draft laws.

And so I think that we have had a general attitude on the part of many who have felt that if their cause in their own eyes justified it, they were free to break the law and I think this in turn has made some contribution to the general erosion of respect for law.

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MR. Melancon: Iris Kelso.

MISS KELSO: What would you consider an appropriate 1920 format for the President's meeting with the press and with the news media? And do you intend to discuss this with the President?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: I am really not, I think, a very well informed expert witness on the question of the best 25 format, and I don't think it likely that I will have the occasion

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to advise the President or express any views. He will certainly have available to him people more knowledgeable on the media than I am.

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MISS KELSO: But you seem to be saying that a smaller meeting, a smaller group meeting with him would be able to explore it more?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: That certainly would be my overall reaction to it. Of course, he has had programs from time to time of that kind.

10 MISS KELSO: Let me ask another question. What do 11 you propose to do to keep the FBI from getting involved in 12 another Watergate affair?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: I think the FBI still 13 is and deserves to be regarded by people of America as a law 14 enforcement agency not only of the highest competence but the 15 highest integrity. The situations in which the FBI has been 16 drawn in in some way have been for the most part situations in 17 which the FBI has resisted involvement. Individuals in the 18 FBI have had some sort of part, particularly the Acting 19 Director, depending on how widely you define Watergate. And, 20 of course, it has come to stand for a lot more things than 21 just the break-in at the Democratic National Headquarters. 22

But overall the FBI has, I think, remained untouched by this and with the leadership that I am confident will be given to the bureau by Chief Kelley, who has been nominated by

the President as the new Director, I am sure that it will go on]. to a future with the same kind of general respect and confidence 2 it has always had. ÷ MR. Melancon: Tim O'Brien. 61 MR. O'BRIEN: We were talking about the media a few 5 moments ago. How would you evaluate the media coverage of 6 Watergate? 7 ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: Well, I would certainly 8 call it, especially in the greater Washington area, more than .9 adequately comprehensive. I have sometimes wondered whether 10 all the people out there are as much interested in it as the 11. press or at least the Washington press think they are. .12 MR. O'BRIEN: How can you say "more than adequately 13 comprehensive," when there are so many answers still that we 14 don't have? 15 ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: Well, that depends on 16 whether or not you wish to allow the investigative processes 17 to find the answers and then report them, or whether you want 18 to report page after page of speculation, gossip and hearsay 19without waiting for the answers. 20 21MR. O'BRIEN: Of course, the country tried a year ago 22 to have the Justice Department investigate Watergate, and what 23 happened? We didn't get the answers 'then, and maybe this is 24 one way of getting them, through the press. 25 ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: I am not sure that I

can -- of course, I don't speak from enough knowledge to assert confidently that the people in the Justice Department, particularly the United States Attorneys Office for the District of Columbia, did all they could have done. But I think it is at least worth nothing that when the witnesses who had refused to testify up to the point of their conviction and sentencing would not talk then, it may well be that no one could have gotten them to talk and that the new event that has taken place since then, and which has brought out additional information, is the fact that they have been under sentence. And, of course, they were placed under sentence as the result of Justice Department action.

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MR. O'BRIEN: Mr. Richardson, we seem to be stuck on the press coverage of Watergate, so I will hold us there for a few more minutes.

16ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: Are you sure you want17to do that?

MR. O'BRIEN: Oh, just for a few more minutes.

19ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: There are a lot of20other things going on today in the Department of Justice, of21great importance to the citizen's safety and security over the22U.S.A.

23 MR. O'BRIEN: We will get to those. Let me ask you 24 this question: The special prosecutor, Archibald Cox, had 25 wanted TV_coverage of the Senate investigation of Watergate

stopped when Mr. Stans and Mr. Magruder were ready to appear. Did you agree with that? If so, why? If not, why not?

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ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: I did agree with it, and I think anyone whose perspective on Watergate is that of an investigator and prosecutor would agree with it. I can see, of course, why the congressional committee did not agree with it, because they were not acting in the role of prosecutor.

But if your concern is with indictments and convictions, you would be bound to be concerned with the massive pretrial publicity that is currently underway, and I think it 10 is going to be exceedingly difficult if not impossible ever to 11 impanel juries that could approach these cases without precon-12 ceptions. 13

MR. O'BRIEN: Do you think that the concern over the]4 possible indictments has priority over the concern with the 15 political system which seems to have been subverted by this? 16

ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: I think that is a very 17 tough question. This is a particularly difficult question to 18 answer from the perspective of a point of view capable really 19 of taking into account both the interest in the public's right 20 to know on the one side and the interest in administering 24 justice and punishing the guilty on the other. 22

I think, as an original matter, it ought to have 23 been possible to do both. I am concerned that as the matter 24 is in fact proceeding, that there may be public disillusionment 25

at the end of the road when they find that in spite of all this no one has ever been sentenced and sent to jail.

MISS KELSO: Are you saying then that they may go free because of this?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: I think that is a very real possibility.

MR. Melancon: Well, Mr. Richardson, we have come to the part in our show where we take a commercial break. So we will be back in just a moment with more questions for the United States Attorney General right after this.

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[Commercial.

MR. Melancon: We will continue the questioning of Mr. Richardson now with Charlie Bosworth.

MR. BOSWORTH: Mr. Richardson, Watergate involved a good deal more than just Watergate. It involved to a large extent the whole issue of government surveillance of private and public people. How many electronic bugs are being operated by the Justice Department at this time?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: I can't give you an up-to-date number. We issued a total not long ago for the national security area, which I think was 108. There is an additional number under Title III of the Omnibus Crime Control Act, mainly in the area of organized crime. And, of course, the number refers, I believe, to the number that has been put into place over a given time, like a year. Some of them are extensions of earlier electronic surveillance, and the number includes both wiretaps and so-called bugs.

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MR. BOSWORTH: Have you called off any since you became Attorney General?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: Yes, some, and I have initiated a comprehensive review of the standards under which electronic surveillance in any form, either wiretapping or bugging, is carried out, and this means both under Title III and under the heading of national security. I think it is important that we understand as clearly as possible what the objectives are, what is being learned, what intelligence value it has, and on that basis establish as clear guidelines as possible.

MISS KELSO: Will it limit bugging then?

15 ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: I think it may have 16 the effect of limitation, but I can't predict that it would. 17 There has been an overall decline under this administration. 13 What I will be seeking to determine is whether the standards 19 that are being used and the guidelines are valid and, if not, 20 what modifications are needed.

21MR. O'Brien: You said there are 108 bugs22or taps in effect now?

23ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: Well --24MR. O'Brien25ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: We --

] MR. O'Brien : What I want to know is if any 2 newsmen are still being bugged or tapped. ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: There are none. ÷. MR. O'Brien : And for what purpose are 4 these other bugs or taps in effect? 5 6 ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: They come under the 7 heading of national security. All I can add to that is that since the decision in the so-called Keith case in 1971, there 8 have been removed any bugs or taps that have involved activi-9 ties that were considered to be threatening to the national 10 security but which involved primarily U.S. domestic activities. 11 There are no longer any bugs in that area. 12 MR. O'Brien : Do these bugs all involve 13 people from different countries, or other countries? 14 ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: They involve foreign 15 related activities. 16 MR. O'Brien : Mr. Richardson, today --17 ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: That is exclusive of 18 19 the organized crime bugs under Title III. That is not in that 20 number. MR. O'Brien Today on another program on 21 : 22 television, Senator Jackson said he believes that the energy 23 crisis is real and that he says an investigation is in order to find out why it developed. Will you plan such an investi-24 gation? And why do you think it developed? 25

ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: I wouldn't expect to undertake an investigation of the overall problem of the energy crisis. There is a government-wide committee now in effect that is charged with not only trying to find out what happened and why, but also to prescribe remedies.

The part of it that my department is most directly concerned with and which we are investigating involves the use of combinations in restraint of trade or to fix prices or to squeeze out competition, and the possible effects that that kind of action may have had in bringing about the present crisis.

MR. O'Brien : Did your investigation determine that there was in fact any of this going on, to squeeze out competition?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: The investigation isn't complete. We did bring one major action the other day against one of the major oil refiners and distributors and an independent refiner because we were concerned that if the arrangements that had been entered into between them went forward, the result would be to squeeze out independent distributors.

MR. Melancon: Charlie?
MR. BOSWORTH: Back on Watergate, Mr. Richardson.
What stock do you put in the President's explanation now with
the investigation by the Senate that the cover-up took place
at least in part to protect CIA operations, in particular in

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ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: I don't think I should try to comment on the significance of the evidence or try to go beyond what he has said. The matter is under investigation so far as my department is concerned, and the responsibility rests with the special prosecutor, Mr. Cox.

MR. BOSWORTH: Do you think he should have made that statement, true or false, considering the effect it has had upon the opinion of the United States in Mexico?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: I think that the President certainly should be free, particularly given the extent of the hearsay and the innuendo that has involved him or seemed to involve him, to give any account that he felt would contribute to public understanding of his role and his attitude.

MISS KELSO: New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison, who has been indicted for public bribery by the Justice Department, has said that the Justice Department is out to get him because of his investigation of the Kennedy assassination. What is your reply to that?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: The Justice Department doesn't indulge in the objective of getting people. The actual status of the matter is one which I have no thorough familiarity, but I can categorically assert that we don't do business that way.

MISS KELSO: Have you any ideas for changes in the Organized Crime Act which was written by former Attorney General John Mitchell? Have you done any study of that? Have you any ideas of need for change in that act?

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ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: I am in the process of 5 reviewing the revisions of the Federal Criminal Code as a 6 whole that are now pending before the Congress. There are 7 three competing bills. Actually, the organized crime legisla-8 tion now on the books primarily goes back to 1966-67, before 9 10 Mitchell was Attorney General. There were some modifications 11 in 1970. I am not sure yet what further changes I think are 12needed. The law now on the books is certainly much more adequate as a tool for enforcement of the law against organ-13 ized crime than anything we have had before recent years. 14

MR. O'BRIEN: Getting back to Watergate for just a 15 moment, our own poll shows that more and more Americans 16 believe that President Nixon knew something about either the 17 bugging itself or the subsequent cover-up; but the same poll 18 shows that fewer and fewer Americans believe that even if he 1920 was involved that he should be impeached. What action, if any, do you think should be taken against the President if it 21 should be shown that he was involved? 22

ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: You don't seriously expect me, Mr. O'Brien, as a government lawyer and head of the Justice Department, to make legal judgments or comments based

on opinion polls. I can't think of anything farther from the judicial process than polls which in turn are based on all kinds of conflicting and competing statements, many of which would not be admissible in a court of law.

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MR. O'BRIEN: All right, then let's put it another Suppose that your special prosecutor, Mr. Cox, should wav. find that the President was involved, what is he supposed to Is he supposed to propose action against the President do? or what?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: He will have to decide 10 what action is indicated and that could, of course, include 11 whatever steps he believes are required to bring information 12 to the attention of the House of Representatives. This is 13 certainly within the range of his role. 14

On the other hand, I think it should be emphasized that he does not now have before him evidence that comes any-16 where near justifying such action. 17

MR. O'BRIEN : Mr. Richardson, it has been 18 charged that the Justice Department in the field of civil 19 rights and desegregation cases has slowed down a bit. Do you 20 feel that that is the case? 21

ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: In civil rights cases 22 generally? 23

MR. O'BRIEN Yes. 24 : ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: No; I don't. 25. As a

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matter of fact, I issued just the other day, on June 1, a]. 2 summary of civil rights actions by the department for the preceding month. I didn't, of course, have much to do with 1 it except for the last batch of complaints that were issued. 1 But the division has been active and I think is doing a good 5 1ob. 6 : It hasn't, however, been as 7 MR. O'BRIEN active as it has been in the past. 8 ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: The total number of 9 cases brought in May of this year was the highest number ever 10 brought by the department. 11 In May. MR. O'BRIEN : 1.22 ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: It was the highest 13 number ever brought in any month. The total for the first six 14 months of 1973, I believe, is also a new record for civil 15 rights law enforcement actions. 16 MR. Melancon: Charlie? 17 MR. BOSWORTH: You have held three Cabinet posts 18 within the past year, that means three major divisions of 19 government have had big shakeups. Under those circumstances, 20 is the government actually functioning within those divisions, 21 and, if not -- or, if it is, who is running the ship of govern-22 ment? 23 ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: Well, it is certainly 24 functioning. The agencies of government keep going under the 25

direction in large part of career people. And, of course, when there are changes at the top, not everybody changes at once. Somebody in my position, whether as Attorney General, Secretary of HEW, or Secretary of Defense, is to a large degree concerned with what ought to be the long-term directions of policy, what ought to be the priorities within the agency, what are the things that should claim resources in priority as against other claims. And of course, what you try to do in one place may get interrupted. This has been the story of my life, in a sense, that I stay long enough to get a really clear idea or at least think I have a clear idea what needs to be done, then I get moved somewhere else.

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But the general business of the agency goes on anyway.

15 MR. BOSWORTH: Within the Justice Department now, as 16 you get oriented, what is your first priority?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: I think most broadly 17 stated, it must be -- and this brings us back to the very 18 beginning of the program -- to make some contribution, whatever 19 we can, to the strengthening of confidence in government 20 generally and in the administration of justice particularly. 21 I think we have the opportunity through federal leadership in 22 the Department of Justice to improve the administration of 23criminal justice, both through federal agencies and through 24 the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration at the state and 25

local level.

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2 Having been a United States Attorney and a State Attorney General, and I think by the way I am the first U.S. . • Attorney General who ever has served in both of those jobs --1 I have a strong interest in making whatever contribution we 1, can to the effectiveness of law enforcement at the state and 6 local level. 7 MR. Melancon: Iris, we have three minutes. В MISS KELSO: I am interested in what you said earlier 9 about limiting the amount of bugging that the Justice Depart-10 ment carries out. What is the main reason you are taking 11 these steps to limit them? 12: ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: Well, I didn't really 12 say, Iris, that my objective is limiting for its own sake. My 11 objective is to establish as clear guidelines for what we do 15 as we can, so that we can explain to the oversight committees 16 of the Congress and so far as possible to the public generally 112 why we do what we do, and what the limitations are. Until we 18 have spelled out these guidelines, I can't be sure that we are 19 doing too much now. 20

In any event, I certainly think we should only use these forms of information collection when there is a clear and compelling justification. They do represent intrusions on privacy and therefore on individual rights, and we just shouldn't do it unless there is a compelling need.

MR. O'Brien : 'Mr. Richardson, some people ' seem to feel that because you so obviously have the confidence of the President, having held three Cabinet posts, and because you tend to represent the middle ground of the Republican Party, that you might be a Presidential candidate in 1976. How do you respond to that? ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: 1976 is a long way off. MR. O'Brien candidate. ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: Well, at the rate 10 11

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things happen these days, I in any event long ago decided that I was going to take things one at a time, and I have got plenty to do right now.

MR. O'Brien Who would you see as the : 14 frontrunner today for the 1976 nomination? 1.5

ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: I think it is too early really to pick out frontrunners. I am sure you would have to say that among the potential candidates anywhere in sight, the Vice President is certainly the most obvious prospect.

MR. Melancon: Well, Mr. Richardson, I am sorry to 20 interrupt, but time has caught up with us. It has been a real 21 pleasure to have you in New Orleans and with us on our program. 22 We sure thank you for being here. 23

ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARDSON: Thank you very much. 24 The questions have been searching and to the point. 25.

1	MR. Melancon: Thank you.
2	Our guest has been the United States Attorney General
. ,	Elliot Richardson.
1	We would like also to thank our panelist reporters
5	tonight, Charlie Bosworth, Iris Kelso and Tim O'Brien, all of
6	Channel 6 News.
7	And thank you for being with us tonight on NEWSWATCH
в	NEWSMAKER. Please be with us again next Sunday, right after
9	the Channel 6 News Report for another edition of NEWSWATCH
10	NEWSMAKER.
11	Good night.
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