

Archibald Cox's Opinion of John Dean

"Archie Cox was particularly firm in his personal determination that Dean be prosecuted no matter what. Dean became an *idée fixe* for Cox. True, as a witness Dean would cement otherwise weak cases against Haldeman and Ehrlichman. But Cox preferred, if forced to choose, to take the relatively sure shot at Dean rather than the long shot against Dean's superiors. When the Saturday Night Massacre loomed close, it might have been propitious for Cox to make a deal with Dean and secure Dean's testimony against President Nixon as another weapon to hold the President off. Even then, Cox's determination did not waiver. With all the uncertainties of Watergate that swirled around him—the weakness of evidence against Nixon's top aides without Dean's testimony, the possibility of Presidential culpability, the problems of obtaining White House evidence and of dealing with "national security"—Cox saw Dean's guilt as the one enduring constant. During a particularly difficult period Archie remarked to us, 'If everything else goes down the drain the one thing I can cling to is Dean's venality.'

Ben-Veniste, Richard and George Frampton. *Stonewall, The Real Story of the Watergate Prosecution* (Simon and Schuster, 1977), p. 107.

Once Cox had been fired in the Saturday Night Massacre, however, prosecutors reached a plea bargain with Dean, allowing him to plead guilty to a single felony, in exchange for becoming their lead witness against his former colleagues.