

Ruby Fires Belli and Hires New Counsel

- Tolson
- Belmont
- Mohr
- Casper
- Callahan
- Conrad
- DeLoach
- Evans
- Gale
- Rosen
- Sullivan
- Tavel
- Trotter
- Tele Room
- Holmes
- Gandy

HOUSTON, March 19 (AP) — Percy Foreman, a criminal attorney who says he can afford to choose his clients carefully, said today he has agreed to replace Melvin Belli as chief counsel for Jack Ruby.

Foreman is president of the National Association of Defense Lawyers. He has handled more than 700 criminal offense cases and has lost only one defendant to the electric chair.



Foreman's announcement in his Houston office followed the dismissal of Belli by Ruby and his family. Belli, a California attorney, had been Ruby's chief counsel.

Foreman said he signed a contract today with Eileen Kaminsky, a sister of Ruby, and with three of Ruby's brothers, Hyman Rubenstein, Chicago; Earl Ruby, Southfield, Mich.; and Sam Ruby, Dallas.

"We wanted Foreman in the first place," said Mrs. Kaminsky. "We preferred him to Belli. But Foreman was contacted by another man and there was some misunderstanding about what part Foreman would take in the case, so we went with Belli."

Foreman said he understood that Joe Tonahill, Jasper attorney and Ruby's assistant counsel at the Dallas trial, is to file an appeal of the conviction Saturday.

"If Tonahill fails to do so, I'll file one Monday," Foreman said.

The sister and brothers refused to detail how or why

Belli was dismissed but said the action was taken in a letter from Jack Ruby and another sister, Eva Grant, mailed to Belli last night at his San Francisco office.

"I'd rather not discuss contents of the letter, but what would you do if you got a verdict like that?" asked Mrs. Kaminsky.

Belli "put on a great big circus," said Rubinstein.

"We didn't like the things he said about Dallas and Texas," said Earl Ruby.

Belli bitterly criticized Dallas, the jury, the judge and the district attorney's office after the death verdict.

Walter C. Craig of Phoenix, Ariz., president of the American Bar Association, said Belli's comments would be investigated by the Committee on Professional Grievances. He called Belli's words "intemperate and abusive" and "a discredit to him and to his profession."

Belli, leaving Mexico City for his San Francisco home, commented to Mexican lawyer Victor Velasquez today that "public opinion and especially my fellow attorneys should not judge me until my handling of the trial in all its technical details are generally known."

Asked if Tonahill and Phil Burleson of Dallas would be retained for the remainder of the case, Foreman replied: "I haven't been hired to work with anybody. I was hired to take charge of the appeal. If I think I can work with these other lawyers, I will keep them."

Foreman said he would not have taken the case "if I didn't think I could reverse it (the conviction)."

Foreman said his appeal would allege two major errors in the trial court:

Oswald slaying on television to sit on the jury.

2. The court permitted hearsay evidence from a Dallas police officer who told the jury Ruby had said after his arrest that he killed Oswald to prove that "Jews have guts."

He said the foreman of the Ruby jury had been quoted after the trial as saying this statement by the policeman was a compelling reason for the jury voting the death penalty.

Foreman declined, however, to criticize Belli's handling of the case.

"It would be unethical for me to do that and I don't approve of the American Bar Association criticizing Belli in such a public manner," Foreman said.

File 6-117

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NOT RECORDED
128 MAR 24 1964

MAR 20 1964

59 MAR 25 1964

1. The trial court permitted persons who witnessed the