

Barbara Watson Honored by State Dept.

Post 12-14-74

Ousted Official Gets Efficiency Award

Barbara M. Watson, the State Department's highest ranking black official, received a \$1,500 award for efficiency yesterday as she prepared to relinquish her post to a Ford administration appointee.

To some associates, it was ironic that Miss Watson should be honored at this time with a departmental award that goes annually "to the person who most effectively contributes to sound management in the State Department."

Simultaneously, the Senate yesterday confirmed Miss Watson's successor as administrator of the Bureau of Security and Consular Affairs, Leonard F. Walentynowicz, a Buffalo, N.Y., lawyer.

The two events were "in no way connected," State Department officials said.

Sen. Jacob K. Javits (R-N.Y.), however, for months had blocked the Walentynowicz nomination, which was first made by President Nixon last March, because of the abrupt way in which Miss Watson's dismissal was handled.

The Walentynowicz nomination, resubmitted by the Ford administration, was cleared on Thursday by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, after Javits decided to press the issue no further.

Miss Watson, a liberal Democrat appointed to the State Department by the Johnson administration, routinely submitted a pro forma resignation after the 1972 election.

The White House announcement last March of her intended successor reportedly was the first she knew that she was being replaced.

Last September the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People charged that an "unconscionable effort" that was "clearly an effort of the far right," was being made to remove one of the highest ranking black officials in the government.

Miss Watson, a former New York attorney and daughter of the first Negro judge elected in that state, joined the State Department in 1966, and never entered into the public controversy about her replacement.

She said yesterday, with no tinge of rancor, "I'm a presidential appointee and I serve at the pleasure of the President. I've enjoyed enormously my work with the department."

Miss Watson said she was "quite surprised and very gratified" by receipt of the department's Replegle Award, presented by acting Secretary Robert S. Ingeroll, and by "a very charming luncheon" given in her honor by Ingeroll.

"I certainly regret all this alleged controversy," she said. "There certainly was no problem on my part . . . This is a prerogative of the President that I respect." Her term of office ends Dec. 31.