

New Prosecutor Assesses His Job

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Like his predecessors in the office of Watergate special prosecutor, Charles Ruff is deeply concerned about the awesome power of government in criminal cases and the potential abuse of that power.

And Ruff, whose appointment to replace Henry S. Ruth in the Watergate post will be announced soon, has nothing but praise for the way Archibald Cox, Leon Jaworski and Ruth, who is resigning, wielded that power.

"There probably has never been a prosecutor's office that had more power," Ruff said yesterday. "And whether you agree or disagree with what was done, a lot of thought went into it; work of the highest quality was done by a remarkable group of lawyers."

Ruff, 36, was interviewed in his office at the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, where he has spent the last several months as acting chief inspector, working to police DEA's "internal integrity" in the wake of scandals that triggered one administrator's resignation.

The office did not appear lived in because Ruff, a full-time professor of criminal law at Georgetown University, never expected the job to be more than part-time and temporary.

Under an arrangement worked out with Deputy Attorney General Harold R.

Tyler Jr., Ruff said his Watergate job also will be part-time and the assignment is to go out of business whenever that becomes possible. Ruth resisted Justice Department efforts to stay in the post until all pending matters were completed.

Ruff will have a staff of two or three lawyers, compared with the maximum of 38 when the special prosecutor's office was pursuing Watergate crimes on all fronts, and seven or eight administrative personnel. Although the task is to wind the office down, the office has the capability of expanding to meet any unexpected need such as the opening of a new lead or inquiry, Ruff said.

Ruff declined to discuss at length his views on proposals for a permanent special prosecutor to handle election abuses and other matters considered too touchy for conventional Justice Department action. But he said he had told colleagues of his opposition to such an idea, his department and ce in the based chiefly on his confidence his worries about possibly weakening it with a rival institution.

Ruff, a graduate of Swarthmore College and Columbia University, spent five years in the department. As head of the Criminal Division's labor-management section, he was chief prosecutor in the 1972

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trial of former United Mine Workers president W.A. (Tony) Boyle who was convicted of making illegal campaign contributions with union money. Boyle was convicted last year of murdering UMW leader Joseph (Jock) Yablonski, his wife and daughter.

Ruff conducted the 1972 prosecution from a wheelchair, to which he has been confined since being stricken by polio in 1964. Associates say his affliction has not impaired his ability in the classroom, courtroom or committee meetings of the American Bar Association.