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Letters to the Editor

The Ruthless Interrogators

To the Editor:

The July 13 Op-Ed article by Alfred S. Julien, former president of the New York Trial Lawyers Association, on the Senate Watergate hearings, describing the glories of cross-examination, has helped me to understand courtroom practices that once puzzled me. After years of serving on juries and observing the behavior of attorneys, corporation counsels, district attorneys, etc, I now know why I have so little respect for this profession, and I am convinced that the jury system is where justice is done.

In describing the inadequacy of the Senators' "cross-examination" of Dean, Mr. Julien makes it clear that his view of the proper objective of such examination is not to seek the truth of what really happened but rather to use the skills of examination to undermine Dean's story, whether it is true or not.

I have often seen skillful attorneys

trying to destroy perfectly honest witnesses with cruel questioning designed not to reveal truth but to serve their sides of the adversary situation and enhance their professional status. If Mr. Julien could hear the comments of jurors in the privacy of the jury room, he might reconsider the beauties or the worth of cross-examination as he describes it.

The Watergate hearings are a process by which the jury of the whole American people is able to see and hear information at first hand without the intervention of classy lawyers with their manipulative skills, plea bargaining, badgering of the innocent and deliberate fogging of the truth. This jury is one not long or easily deceived.

It does not add to the luster of the legal profession that so many of the Watergate culprits belong to it.

PAUL WELLER
New York, July 16, 1973