

L.A. Lawyer Heads List For Watergate Prosecutor

Washington

Warren Christopher, a Los Angeles attorney and former Justice Department official, surfaced yesterday as a leading candidate for nomination to be the special prosecutor in the Watergate affair.

Christopher, 47, deputy attorney general under both Nicholas Katzenbach and Ramsey Clark in 1967-1969, moved into the spotlight after U. S. District Judge Harold R. Tyler Jr. withdrew his name from consideration.

Tyler said in New York he was "reluctant to resign as an active judge" to take on the assignment as special prosecutor, a prerequisite for the post under the guidelines laid down by Attorney General — designate Elliot L. Richardson.

Richardson told newsmen he had discussed the matter with Tyler and the 51-year-old judge turned it down for purely personal



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WARREN CHRISTOPHER
Eastland praised him

reasons.

Richardson said Monday that he had narrowed his list of more than 100 persons to four — Tyler; Christopher; David Peck, 71, a Wall Street lawyer and former justice of New York's appellate division; and William

H. Erickson, a 49-year-old justice of the Colorado Supreme Court. He said he will talk to the three remaining.

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There were indications that Tyler was Richardson's top choice for the job of special prosecutor who will investigate and prosecute the Watergate affair and other illicit activities arising from last year's presidential election campaign.

The name of Christopher, a top honors graduate of Stanford law school and a former law clerk to Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, came up during yesterday's hearing when Senate Judiciary Chairman James O. Eastland (Dem-Miss.) asked Richardson about Christopher's credentials.

Later, Eastland told newsmen after a private meeting with Richardson that Christopher would be a good choice.

"He'd run the show or quit," Eastland said.

Christopher also received resounding support from Senator John V. Tunney (Dem-Calif.), in whose campaign he played a major behind-the-scenes role in 1970.

"He'd be totally impartial, independent and very fair," Tunney told newsmen.

During his fourth day before the committee, Richardson said initially he did not think much of the break-in of the Democratic headquarters in the Watergate last June.

"I was among the many people who didn't take it very seriously," he told Senator Edward M. Kennedy (Dem-Mass.). "I thought it was a bush league operation."

"I thought of it in terms of the Watergate caper."

"My own sense of seriousness has certainly deepened as disclosures have come about. It has reached the point of seriousness as questions of confidence in government have been raised."

"It is on the basis of that that the case will be pursued," Richardson said.

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