

Haldeman's

By Douglas Watson
Washington Post Staff Writer

John J. Wilson, lawyer for former White House chief of staff H. R. Haldeman, yesterday called Sen. Daniel K. Inouye (D-Hawaii) "that little Jap" during a recess in the Senate Watergate hearings.

The crusty, combative Wilson made the comment after the morning committee session when a United Press International reporter asked Wilson if he believed Haldeman had been questioned fairly by Sen. Lowell P. Weicker Jr. (R-Conn.).

"Oh, I don't mind Sen. Weicker," Wilson said, "what I mind is that little Jap," nodding in the direction of Inouye, a much-decorated World War II hero who lost his right arm fighting with the U.S. Fifth Army in Europe.

Inouye was heard to remark over national television last week, "What a liar" on what he apparently thought was a dead microphone after questioning Wilson's other client, former White House aide John D. Ehrlichman.

Wilson is the only counsel to appear before the Senate Watergate committee representing two key witnesses — Haldeman and Ehrlichman.

Committee chairman Sam J. Ervin Jr. (D-N.C.) has suggested that Wilson may have a third, unofficial but more important client — President Nixon.

Wilson's "little Jap" comment was made in the hearing room and heard by two United Press International reporters.

In midafternoon when a Washington Post reporter asked Wilson whether he had made the remark, Wilson said, "Are they quoting me on that? That's terrible. I thought we were having a private conversation. Now, I deny it."

Another reporter said, "The reporters heard you say it."

"Let them say so," said Wilson.

Inouye, who was not present at the time, later declined to comment except to say, "I think his statement speaks for itself."

At the close of yesterday's hearing after Haldeman had made his final statement, Wilson tried unsuccessfully to have the committee expunge Inouye's incomplete questioning of Haldeman on a California court decision that President Nixon's 1962 gubernatorial campaign there violated state law.

Ervin, who earlier had disallowed Inouye's ques-

tioning as being too "far back," denied Wilson's move to expunge the questions that Inouye had managed to ask before being cut off. Ervin said Wilson could submit his request in writing for later consideration.

Wilson angrily noted to the committee that the absent Inouye had called Ehrlichman a liar on national television.

Wilson at one point referred to "John Haldeman," momentarily confusing his two clients. Haldeman testified yesterday and Ehrlichman was a committee witness for five days previously.

After the afternoon hearing ended, Wilson confirmed he had called Inouye "that little Jap," but said, "That's just the way I speak. I consider it a description of the man. I wouldn't mind being called a little American." Wilson did not apologize to Inouye.

Instead, he heatedly criticized Inouye for the "liar" remark and Inouye's attempt to question Haldeman on the California court decision.

Wilson has played an important role in a week and a half of hearings as attorney for the two top White House aides, Haldeman and Ehrlichman, and a frequent defender of the President.

After one of many exchanges this week between the two septuagenarians, Ervin told Wilson he had "praise for the legal dexterity of the attorneys for the White House that they can let another lawyer (Wilson) do their work for them without drawing their salaries."

"Thank you sir," the peppery Wilson replied without hesitation. But Wilson and a White House spokesman each said this week that Wilson is not working as a lawyer for President Nixon.

This apparently is not as clear to members of the Watergate committee who have watched the 72-year-old Wilson often go beyond defense of Haldeman or Ehrlichman to argue what seems to be the President's case.

No other private Watergate defense lawyer has met privately with the President. Wilson did so twice in April, at the time Haldeman and Ehrlichman were becoming his clients. Wilson has declined to say what he and Nixon discussed at the meetings, one of which was an hour long.

Since then Wilson apparently has had frequent contact with White House attorneys Leonard Garment, J. Fred Buzhardt and Charles

AUG 2 1973

Lawyer Calls Inouye



Associated Press

John J. Wilson is "one of the best . . . and one of the toughest," a colleague says.

Alan Wright. Wilson recently told a reporter he talks to Buzhardt "from time to time."

Wilson's relationship to President Nixon apparently has not even been clear to his secretary, Helen Ehlinger. Asked whether Wilson was representing the President, she said, "I'd like to know that myself."

How well Wilson has done in his duelling with the Watergate committee is, of course, a matter of opinion. But it's clear he had had more to say and played a bigger role in the hearings than any previous counsel. His aggressive interruptions appear more than once to have thrown majority counsel Samuel Dash off stride in his interrogation.

Wilson hasn't shown any special deference to Ervin's four years' seniority in age.

On Tuesday he quickly attacked a suggestion that there might be a conflict of interest in his representation of both Halderman and Ehrlichman.

Then Wilson snapped, "I say that without qualification on the basis of more years of practice of law than any one of you sitting on that committee, including the chairman."

Wilson has been practicing law in Washington since 1922 after earning a law degree from George Washington University at age 20.

Senior partner of the old establishment law firm of Whiteford, Hart, Carmody and Wilson, he has long had a reputation among lawyers in this city as a tough, tenacious courtroom opponent.

But the public spotlight had only occasionally been on Wilson before he got a telephone call in April from

Ehrlichman asking Wilson to represent him. Wilson has said he had never met Ehrlichman, Haldeman or President Nixon before then.

Joseph L. Rauh Jr., a Washington attorney, former national chairman of Americans for Democratic Action and a longtime liberal spokesman, charged in an interview this week that for President Nixon, Halderman and Ehrlichman, "It's so obvious that Wilson's the go-between to keep their stories straight."

Wilson angrily and effectively rebuffed a suggestion by Sen. Lowell P. Weicker Jr. (R-Conn.) that it may be improper for Wilson to be representing both Halderman and Ehrlichman at the same time.

The American Bar Association's Code of Professional Responsibility seems to support Wilson, saying, "A law-

'That Little Jap'

yer may represent multiple clients if it is obvious that he can adequately represent the interests of each and if each consents to the representation after full disclosure of the possible effect of such representation on the exercise of his independent professional judgment on behalf of each."

A lawyer, however, might be required by legal ethics to drop one of his two clients if one is indicted for perjury on testimony in which they disagree.

Being on nationwide television hasn't changed Wilson's style. "The aggressiveness he's shown is certainly similar to his demeanor in court," said Harry L. Ryan Jr., a partner.

Several local attorneys interviewed had nothing but praise for Wilson. Robert M. Scott said Wilson is "one of the best damn lawyers and one of the toughest. He's smart, a hard-worker, a stickler, a fighter."

John L. Laskey said Wilson is "tenacious as hell" and typically displays "a narrow-minded affinity with his client."

But Rauh gave a much different opinion, charging that Wilson "was the best possible choice for Nixon. He's brilliant, unscrupulous and reactionary. He fits all the things that they want."

Wilson, who has clashed with Rauh in past courtroom battles, shrugged off Rauh's attack, saying they share "a mutual hate."

Rauh said that Wilson in the past had been the "general counsel for segregation in the city" through his opposition to desegregation.

Wilson confirmed Rauh's charge that in 1958 he spoke against desegregation of the D.C. Bar Association, but Wilson said he did so because he didn't believe blacks or women should be admitted as members of the D.C. Bar as long as they had their own bar associations.

The Watergate hearings are hardly Wilson's first big case. In 1952 he successfully represented the steel industry against a national takeover of the steel mills. Ervin noted that in contrast to his present position, Wilson then argued against a broad interpretation of presidential power.

"If the President does not have any inherent power under the Constitution to seize steel mills to carry on the war," Ervin maintained, "he has no inherent power to steal a document from a

psychiatrist's office in time of peace."

However, last week Wilson and Ehrlichman engaged in a prolonged constitutional debate with members of the Senate Watergate committee. They stressed the doctrine of "inherent powers" as a justification for President Nixon to authorize illegal acts such as the break-in at the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist.

Ehrlichman said that despite contrary testimony, he never had specifically authorized the break-in, but only covert operations in general. But Wilson went beyond defending Ehrlichman to argue President Nixon's right to authorize the break-in to protect national security.

When Ehrlichman became the first Watergate witness to invoke executive privilege in refusing to testify about a "1971 investigation" by the White House plumbers, Wilson indicated he would be willing to seek permission for the committee members to learn what was being kept secret, if they would be sure to keep the secret.

The offer wasn't accepted. But that Wilson felt he was in a position to make it says a great deal about his relationship with the White House. It may not be official, but it's real.

This week Ervin noted that instead of objecting directly to the committee that Haldeman should not be required to testify on the White House tapes he heard, the President's official lawyers drafted a letter for Wilson to present the committee.

"What is wrong with that?" the unapologetic Wilson shot back.

"I am not saying anything wrong. It just shows there has been a little what we call in North Carolina, 'canoodling together,'" Ervin said.

Wilson said he's working at least 16 hours a day these days, checking in at his law office at 815 15th St. NW before and after each day's hearing on Capitol Hill. Work has slowed somewhat in the 11-lawyer firm as television sets are kept on to view the boss in action.

Wilson's office is furnished in typical legal fashion with brown leather furniture and a glass-topped mahogany desk. On the wall is a 1926 display of members of the Washington bar in their wingtip shirts.

There's also a 1962 photo of Wilson and then Chief

Justice Earl Warren laughing together on the occasion of Wilson's selection by the D.C. Bar as "lawyer of the year." The Warren photo is displayed although Wilson's politics have been described as to the ight of McKinley. A partner has called Wilson "a very conservative Republican."

Besides his main office, Wilson has a small back office where he often retreats when he wants to be left alone to work. "The busier he is, the happier he is," said Mrs. Ehlinger, his secretary.

Wilson was an assistant U.S. attorney here from 1931 to 1940, arguing more than 60 cases before the U.S. Court of Appeals. In private practice, he helped Sen. Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.) win a libel suit against publisher Ralph Ginzburg. He also successfully defended an assistant attorney general in the Truman administration against conflict-of-interest charges.

Wilson's longest case lasted 20 years before he won a settlement for a Swiss client over the recovery of controlling stock of General Aniline & Film Corp., the subsidiary of a German chemical cartel seized by the the U.S. government during World War II.

Several times Wilson has been asked by the U.S. District Court judges here, including Chief Judge John Sirica, who heard the Watergate case, to represent the court in appeals of their decisions to the Court of Appeals.

Wilson and his wife Alice, who will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on Sept. 25th, have no children. They live in a condominium apartment at 3900 Watson Pl. NW.

Wilson lives in the affluent style made possible by his legal success. He has a chauffeur and likes to vacation at the posh Homestead Hotel in Hot Springs, Va.

Wilson is general counsel for the National Bank of Washington and a member of the board of trustees of George Washington University.

On July 26 he celebrated his 72d birthday and 50 years of legal practice by appearing before the Watergate committee as usual.

But Mrs. Wilson said being able to watch her husband in action on television these days has been a special treat for her. "I've been married to him nearly 50 years, but only twice have I gone to the courtroom to watch him," she said.