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Silbert Described As 'Professional'

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Watergate Special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski has described as "professional and fair" U.S. Attorney Earl J. Silbert's handling of the Watergate investigation.

Jaworski made the description in a letter to Sen. Roman L. Hruska (R-Neb.), who is a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee that is considering Silbert's permanent nomination as chief U.S. prosecutor here.

Jaworski applied the description to Silbert and his assistants, Seymour Glanzer and Donald Campbell.

However, Jaworski pointed out to Hruska that he was not making his appraisal on firsthand knowledge, but "on the appraisals of staff members informed on this subject, in whose judgment I have full confidence."

Jaworski's letter was in response to a request by Hruska for an evaluation of the Watergate investigation that was handled until last June 29 by Silbert, Glanzer and Campbell. They resigned and returned to their normal duties in the prosecutor's office here after the appointment of Archibald Cox as Watergate special prosecutor.

Silbert since was nominated by President Nixon to replace U.S. Attorney Harold H. Titus in the U.S. prosecutor's job here, but the Senate Judiciary Committee has not acted on his nomination pending a probe requested by U.S. Sen. Sam Ervin (D-N.C.) into Silbert's handling of the Watergate case.

Silbert, who prosecuted the original seven Watergate defendants, has been criticized by some for his handling of the original Watergate case. The Senate Judiciary Committee held three days of hearings on his nomination and questioned Silbert extensively during those hearings.

Another member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, U.S.

Sen. Philip Hart (D-Mich.) had earlier asked the special Watergate prosecutor to disclose whether he had uncovered any evidence of bad faith or malfeasance by Silbert during the early investigation.

Jaworski had replied to Hart that the special prosecutor's office had "no evidence of such conduct," a reply that apparently prompted Hruska's further letter to Jaworski asking for an evaluation of Silbert's role.

In a May 7 letter to Hruska, Jaworski said, in part, "It is the opinion of the members of my staff who are most familiar with this matter that the handling of this case by Mr. Silbert and his colleagues prior to the appointment of a special prosecutor was professional and fair."

"That assessment is in accordance with my understanding of the facts and circumstances that have been developed to date."

The Post also obtained copies yesterday of a letter that had been written in February to U.S. Sen. Birch Bayh (D-Ind.) by James F. Neal, who succeeded Silbert for a while as chief investigator of the alleged Watergate cover-up and is returning to prosecute the cover up case.

Neal, who said he spent several weeks reviewing the written record of the investigation and in conferences with prosecuting attorneys, said he concluded that Silbert and the other attorneys working on the case "were capable and honest."