

Jaworski Defends Plea Bargaining

Washington

Leon Jaworski, responding to the first serious public criticism in his seven months as special Watergate prosecutor, defended plea bargaining yesterday as a fair, legal and necessary way to prosecute persons charged in Watergate criminal cases.

Jaworski also defended the results of the bargains the prosecution has negotiated — the guilty pleas of one after another former Nixon re-election campaign aide or White House official.

He flatly rejected "what we're hearing, that the accused are getting off too lightly."

"That's not the case at all," he said in an interview.

The public record of the prosecution's work shows, he pointed out, that many defendants have pleaded guilty to felonies that were punishable by up to five years and in one case ten years in prison.

Jaworski made his comments in response to recent newspaper editorials, magazine articles and public comments of some lawyers, all questioning the plea-bargaining policies of the prosecution.

Jaworski has also been criticized because some of the defendants who have pleaded guilty have received

relatively light sentences — Herbert L. Porter's sentence of five to 15 months with all but 30 days suspended is an example — while defendants who have gone to trial, such as the original Watergate burglars, have had long sentences, and many other criminals in less celebrated and serious cases have received still longer

terms.

Yet the actual bargaining with the Watergate defendants was legal, as the law now stands; the sentences, as Jaworski points out, were imposed by judges who could have imposed heavier sentences.

So, when critics charge that it is unfair that a youth from an urban ghetto is sent to prison for four years for a car theft or mugging, say, but Porter gets only 30 days for making false statements in the case of the Watergate coverup, Jaworski has a simple response.

"Two wrongs don't make a right," he said.

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