

Attorney Quits U.S. Bar Group

Attorney Melvin Belli publicly resigned from the American Bar Association yesterday.

He also poured more vitriol on Dallas and the Texas jury that voted the electric chair for Jack Ruby, killer of Lee Harvey Oswald, accused presidential assassin.

Facing 13 television cameras and an uncounted number of press and radio reporters in his rococo Montgomery street office, the flamboyant San Francisco lawyer called Dallas "the murder capital of the world."

Replying to criticism of Bar Association president Walter E. Craig that he had been "intemperate and abusive" when the Ruby death verdict was returned last Saturday, Belli said:

"I cannot continue in the American Bar Association if I am to continue to believe in justice and due process."

Belli said that although he would accede to the request of the Ruby family to withdraw as chief defense counsel, he stood ready to be of assistance on the appeal

Belli in S. F., New Salvo At Dallas

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from the death verdict if he is asked.

He described Percy Foreman, of Houston, who was hired by Ruby's family to replace him, as an "adept counsel."

He said he believed he had been dropped as Ruby's counsel "principally because of the tirade" that poured from him when the verdict was returned.

JURY

"Something welled up in me when that jury came in—smug and self-satisfied," he said.

His outburst that the trial was "a kangaroo court" and that "Dallas is a festering sore spot" brought criticism not only from Bar Association President Craig and the Ruby family but from Dallas newspapers and Texas Governor John Connally.

"The people in Dallas are wonderful, individually," he told the press conference. "Yet there is something sick when they get together."

'IMAGE'

"There seems to be a built-in transistor in their heads to protect the Dallas image."

He asserted that once he lost his fight to get the trial transferred out of Dallas, he knew what the result would be.

"There are 178 errors in the appellate record," he said. "I expected this verdict but I hoped against expectation."

"Many lawyers told me that Oswald wouldn't have gotten over 20 years if he had been tried for the assassination of President Kennedy, because Kennedy was hated in Dallas," he continued. "I couldn't believe it when they told me that."

Asked what his fee was for defending Ruby, Belli said, "Zero."

He said he asked for a fee and had been promised a "substantial" one, but so far has been paid nothing and that he even footed the bill for expenses.

The death verdict, he concluded, was "a defeat, utter and complete defeat, for medicine, for law, for tolerance."

"It was a victory for bigotry," said Belli. "You can't be angry about it—you just feel devastated."