

Energetic Rights Chief

Jerris Leonard

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WASHINGTON, May 15— Proudly displayed on the wall of Jerris Leonard's office is a newspaper clipping quoting his teen-age daughter as telling a testimonial dinner that her father, the head of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, "is far from perfect, but he is only human."

Man In a capital di-
in the vided and some-
News times confused by
the Nixon Admin-
istration's poli-
cies on race relations and
school desegregation, it is easy
to find supporters on either
side of this instant analysis
by Mary Alice Leonard.

The human side of the 39-year-old lawyer from Milwaukee is clear enough: He is young, vigorous, ambitious, hard-working, outspoken and a determined political partisan. It may be the last quality that disturbs some of those who are concerned with Mr. Leonard's imperfection.

"The transition in the Civil Rights Division has been pretty clear-cut," one longtime Justice Department observer said. "Burke Marshall was a strategist, John Doar was a field marshal and Jerry Leonard is a politician."

Some of those who work with the Republican Assistant Attorney General, without challenging his political alignment, contend that he is as energetic a field worker in the civil rights area as any of his predecessors.

Mr. Leonard's political background was a very promising one—until 1968. He ran successfully for the State Assembly at the age of 25 from a North Shore Milwaukee suburb and three years later was his party's whip. He moved up to the State Senate in 1960 and by 1963 was floor leader.

He helped Warren Knowles win the Governorship in 1964 and identified himself with Richard Nixon, then a touring campaigner out of office. Both these associations helped win him the nomination for Senate in 1968. He ran against Gaylord Nelson, but there his career went off the track.

In what was concededly a poor campaign, he lost while the Nixon ticket was sweeping Wisconsin, making Mr. Leonard available for appointive office in the new Administration.

John N. Mitchell, the Nixon campaign manager, became



Associated Press

*A determined political
partisan.*

Attorney General. He had worked with Mr. Leonard before on Wisconsin bond problems and had come to know him well and respect him. It was therefore only natural that Mr. Mitchell should offer him a berth in the Justice Department.

Contributing to his being chosen as the Civil Rights Division chief was Mr. Leonard's efforts as a state legislator on behalf of the open housing statute that Wisconsin adopted.

Outside the human rights area, Mr. Leonard tends to refer to himself as a "moderate conservative."

He was born in Chicago on Jan. 17, 1931. His father died when he was two. His mother moved to Milwaukee to get work, and he scrambled energetically through a Depression boyhood, working his way through Marquette University and law school.

He married Maryellen Mathie, a registered nurse, when he was a college junior, and they ran a nursing home for the elderly during his last two years in law school. Now they have four boys and two girls, ranging down in age from 15-year-old Mary Alice.

As an assistant Attorney General, Mr. Leonard tends to run a comparatively informal division, to the pleasure of some of his colleagues. He likes to keep his office door open and is likely to be making the coffee when aides arrive after 8 A.M.