



Ken Clawson *Part 9-13-71*

War of the Words In Justice Dept.

THE WORDS and phrases of FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover are sounding increasingly similar to those uttered by Attorney General John N. Mitchell, and with good reason.

For Mitchell has accomplished what decades of civil libertarians sought to do and failed. He has harnessed the robust public voice of the FBI and its 76-year-old director.

Mitchell performed this seemingly impossible task by simply requiring that FBI reports and press releases be filtered through his own public relations staff before being issued.

Mitchell's merry wordsmen, in the name of newsworthiness, have assumed their additional tasks with the gusto of a Ma Barker or Pretty Boy Floyd.

This has caused some strain between Mitchell's flacks and those employed by the FBI. The latter, who aren't called public relations men but who are, had been accustomed to having their releases and reports zip through the bureaucracy with about the same force as Director Hoover.

LAST THURSDAY night, the grumbling broke into the open when the FBI arrested six persons in connection with the bombing of 10 school buses Aug. 30 in Pontiac, Mich. Before making the arrests public, the FBI sent a copy of the proposed press release to Powell Moore, a Mitchell public relations man who was formerly press secretary to Sen. Richard Russell (D-Ga.)

Moore rewrote part of the release, indicating that one of the suspects was the grand dragon of the Michigan Ku Klux Klan.

In a subsequent telephone conversation with Tom Bishop, assistant FBI director, Moore was blistered for including the Klan membership in the release on grounds that it violated Justice Department guidelines on pretrial publicity.

Bishop also reportedly accused Moore of having

chief PR man. The release read, "FBI agents today arrested six individuals in Michigan, including the grand dragon of the Michigan Realm of the United Klans of America, Inc., Knights of the Ku Klux Klan."

THIS WAS only the latest clash. In June, when Hoover released his annual report on FBI activities, Justice's wordsmen snipped and crossed out some of the director's more inflammatory rhetoric concerning the Black Panthers, Students for a Democratic Society and other revolutionary groups.

Justice flacks responsible for that episode in editing believe the FBI retaliated last week. They say the bureau leaked the fact that Justice has been rewriting FBI interpretations of the nation's crime statistics to show that President Nixon's law and order pledge is becoming, although slowly, a reality.

MITCHELL's chief flack says the FBI is simply subject to the same scrutiny as other sections within the Justice Department.

"We are continually changing things, putting more emphasis on more newsworthy items and significant points that we find have been overlooked," Hushen said.

All of this attention to the written and spoken word emanating from the Justice Department contrasts somewhat with one of Attorney General Mitchell's more famous utterances when he assumed office. His "watch what we do, not what we say" statement is often quoted by Justice officials when they can't find words to express what they are doing.

A Republican who came to the Justice Department with Mitchell said that especially on the crime issue, "We found, surprisingly, that words came easier than deeds. What we are doing is saying what we are doing."

Mitchell isn't even saying that. President Nixon, believed by some to be isolated, has conducted six news conferences with the national press this year. It has been 237 days since Mitchell had one.

leaked in advance that the arrests were planned, adding, "What are you trying to do, get our agents killed?"

But Moore, who works for Mitchell in reality, as Hoover does in theory, stuck by his guns with the backing of John W. Hushen, Mitchell's