

Nixon Bent on Law-and-Order Court

By Jack Anderson

President Nixon is determined to reshape the Supreme Court and let his critics be damned.

No other subject brings his blood to such a quick boil. In the privacy of his oval office, he has used some hot terms to express what he thinks of his court critics in the Senate and the press. Once, he spit out an obscenity to suggest what the American Bar Association could do with its criticisms. Shocked aides had never heard the President use such a word before.

As the President sees the issue, the Supreme Court's emphasis on civil liberties at the expense of public order has created a permissive atmosphere, which has encouraged criminals and dissidents. This lenient attitude, he feels, has led to a breakdown of law and order.

He intends, therefore, to fill the court vacancies with judges whose law-and-order views are perfectly clear. He has emphasized to aides that he doesn't want to risk appointing another Earl Warren, whose constitutional views were unknown when President Eisenhower named him to the high court.

But Mr. Nixon is convinced that Senate liberals and the "Eastern press" are trying to thwart his court reorganization. "They will attack all my appointments to the court," he has huffed in private.

To avoid losing another Senate showdown, however, the President decided to leak information on the nominees he was considering. He hoped to determine from these trial balloons which ones would burst and which ones would float.

Great Leak

The Great Leak was assigned to Attorney General John Mitchell, who summoned 14 favored reporters into his ornate office last week.

By ones and twos, the invited reporters sauntered in from The Associated Press, United Press International, New York Times, Washington Post, Washington Star, Los Angeles Times, Wall Street Journal, Hearst Newspapers, Chicago Tribune, National Observer, Newsweek, Time and NBC.

The only holdover from ex-Attorney General Ramsey Clark's era, a white-coated black bartender, served up highballs, beer and gin (but no vodka). He was assisted occasionally by Deputy Attorney General Richard Kleindienst, who wandered around offering drinks. Mitchell's press aides, like so many see-hear-speak-no-evil monkeys, were lined up in a row on a couch.

Mitchell blamed liberal and labor critics for resisting court changes, but dodged most other questions. The reporters tried in vain to get the conference put on the record. The New York Times' Fred Graham pointed out that it had

been more than 270 days since Mitchell had held an open press conference.

"Why can't we put this on the record" Graham asked exasperatedly.

"We don't run this Department for Mr. Fred Graham of the New York Times" Mitchell retorted, blowing an angry cloud from his pipe.

Unsubdued, Graham shot back: "Why are we here? Let's get this on the record."

Newsweek's Bob Shogan asked a rambling question about whether there might "possibly" or "probably" be more nominees. Mitchell petulantly asked Shogan to define the words "probably" and "possibly."

Naughty Word

The Los Angeles Times' Ron Ostrow raised a question about a meeting that the White House had already announced dealing with the Supreme Court. But despite the White House announcement, Mitchell querulously challenged whether there had ever been such a meeting.

They were put under wraps, which allowed them to report on some of the proceedings but barred them from quoting anyone but anonymous "administrative sources."

Then the National Observer's Nina Totenberg, the brassy daughter of famed violinist Roman Totenberg, noted that the American Bar Association had not taken kindly to some of President Nixon's

suggested names. She asked Mitchell point blank: "Did the President say—the ABA?"

Blushing furiously, Mitchell mumbled something about ladies being present, although the question was asked by a lady. "The President," he said, "doesn't use words like that about organizations to which he belongs."

In any case, added Mitchell, "it's none of the ABA's damn business," to comment on anything except qualifications.

Asked what sort of philosophical balance the court should have, he replied with a straight face: "Oh, about eight to one" in Mr. Nixon's favor.

Washington Whirl

Indian Trading—The ways have been greased for 55,000 Alaskan Indians, Eskimos and Aleuts to get 40 million acres of Alaskan land under a native claims bill now awaiting final congressional action. This would seem to be a well-deserved settlement for the natives who have lived on the land for 6,000 years. But the behind-the-scenes lobbying has been done by greedy Alaskan land speculators and oil moguls. They plan to hornswoggle the natives, who have an average fourth-grade education, into turning the land over to them as soon as the bill passes. Conservationists have wisely urged land-use amendments to the bill to protect both the natives and the land from the exploiters.

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