

Scandal May Curb Cabinet Pol

WASHINGTON — Soon after taking office as the nation's first postmaster general, Benjamin Franklin named 12 relatives to federal jobs.

That's the way it often was laughingly recalled by former Democratic National Chairman Lawrence O'Brien when he served as President Johnson's postmaster general.

The Postal Service became a semi-public corporation in 1970 and its top job was taken out of the Cabinet.

Yet long before that, presidents began filling the office of attorney general, too, with partisan political activists.

Watergate may have ended this.



ELLIOT RICHARDSON
Sen. Democrat

President Nixon last Monday shifted Defense Secretary Elliot Richardson to the

Justice Department, replacing Richard Kleindienst who had been caught in the web of the spreading scandal.

Most senators give high marks to Richardson or at least concede that this cultured, hard-driving 52 year old Bostonian shows more promise than did his predecessor.

Some senators are reserving judgment.

California Democrats Alan Cranston and John Tunney, for example, would be out of character tossing bouquets at President Nixon.

Like some of their cautious Republican colleagues, Cranston and Tunney are waiting until the Senate Judiciary Committee starts confirmation hearings

Wednesday on Richardson. Tunney, a member of the panel, anticipates sharp questions. He says the hearings may further develop proposals that the Federal Bureau of Investigation be made independent of the Justice Department.

Outsider Sought

The Californians applauded the "courage of a conservative" shown by Sen. Barry Goldwater of Arizona in co-sponsoring the resolution by Sen. Charles Percy (R-Ill.) demanding that Nixon name a special outside prosecutor to head the government's Watergate investigation.

Goldwater lamented the departure of Kleindienst, his

itical Choices

1964 presidential campaign director and Nixon's 1968 head of field operations.

It was because of those deep partisan roots that Kleindienst was viewed with misgivings by Cranston as he went when Nixon tapped him for attorney general.

Now Cranston and other senators wonder whether they ought to look for the same high standards in the choice of attorney general that the Senate seeks in nominees to the Supreme Court.

He says some members of Congress believe the President has a right to pick his Cabinet members without Senate challenge "provided only that his nominees are

not dishonest, nor incompetent nor guilty of an economic conflict of interests."

"Such a nominee" Cranston continues, "should be confirmed only after he has satisfactorily removed every reasonable doubt from the minds of those who fear that he might use his awesome powers of the law to silence, suppress or discourage political opinions or political action with which he disagrees."

The first political link with the attorney general's office came in 1841 under President William Henry Harrison, according to Library of Congress research conducted for Cranston.

Abraham Lincoln stopped

the policy less than 20 years later.

Woodrow Wilson filled the post with two men who had been key figures in his nomination.

The modern practice started with Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1933 with the nomination of Homer S. Cummings, a former national party chairman.

Harry Truman escalated this practice by appointing as his attorney general in 1949 the man who was Democratic National Chairman during 1947-49: J. Howard McGrath. Truman later removed McGrath.

"The unfortunate practice has stuck since," the senator says.

President Eisenhower

named as his attorney general Herbert Brownell, who had twice served as campaign manager for GOP candidate Thomas E. Dewey.

President Kennedy chose his brother, Robert Kennedy, who had been his 1960 National Campaign manager.

Robert Kennedy was retained for more than a year after President Johnson assumed office.

Kleindienst succeeded President Nixon's first attorney general, John Mitchell, former Nixon law partner who resigned as re-election campaign manager two weeks after the arrest of the Watergate conspirators.

Sydney Kossen