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Rankin to Leave Counsel's Post Aug. 1

By MARTIN TOLCHIN

J. Lee Rankin, Solicitor General under President Eisenhower, whose appointment as the city's Corporation Counsel was an early coup for Mayor Lindsay, resigned yesterday, effective Aug. 1.

The apparently amicable departure was prompted by Mr. Rankin's desire to turn over the reins of the nation's second-largest law office to his protége, Norman Redlich, the first assistant corporation counsel, and to enter the private practice of law with his son, J. Lee Rankin Jr.

"I realized that if I'm going to practice with my son, I had to do it pretty soon, or there won't be any time left," said the 64-year-old lawyer, who had also served as general counsel to the Warren Commission.

As for the 46-year-old Mr. Redlich, Mr. Rankin said, "I wanted him to be Corporation Counsel, and I thought this was a good way to do it."

Appointment Announced

So did Mayor Lindsay, who announced that Mr. Redlich, a law professor at New York University, who is on leave, would get the $41,000-a-year post.

"This is one of the most important positions that any lawyer could hold in the United States," said Mr. Redlich, who had been summoned to the telephone from a tractor at his 100-acre country home near Stowe, Vt., where he was mowing the grounds.

Mr. Rankin's departure leaves only five members of the original 1966 Lindsay cabinet. They are Fire Commissioner Robert O. Lowery, Transportation Administrator Constantine Sidamon-Eristoff, Finance Administrator Richard Lewisohn; Donald H. Elliott, chairman of the City Planning Commission, and John S. (Bud) Palmer, Public Events Commissioner.

The New York Times

Norman Redlich

During his six and a half years in office, Mr. Rankin became the subject of a dispute involving his continued private practice of law, despite a City Charter provision that barred city department heads from engaging in other duties. Mr Rankin had contended that he was merely giving advice to old clients, but he voluntarily closed his law office.

His City Hall tenure has also included a thus-far unsuccessful attempt to curb increasing welfare costs mandated by Federal and state laws. Mr. Rankin invoked the 819 case of McCullough v. Maryland, in which the Supreme Court found "a plain repugnance in conferring on one government a power to control the constitutional measures of another."

Mr. Rankin argued that, "by requiring us to do things beyond our power, [the Federal Government] can destroy either the city or the state or both of them." The case is now on appeal.

Mr. Rankin considered as his most important contribution the establishment of a Consumer Protection Division, which has recovered $7.6-million for the city. He also took action to uphold the Federal statute allowing 18-year-olds to vote.

36 Lawyers on Staff

Mr. Redlich, who will now head the office of 336 lawyers, (second in size only to the United States Attorney General's office) is a native New Yorker who served as executive assistant to Mr. Rankin from 1966 to 1968. Mr. Redlich then returned to New York University to direct a project on urban affairs and poverty law, coming back in 1969 as first assistant corporation counsel.

The abolition of capital punishment has been of major interest to Mr. Redlich, who served as counsel to the New York Committee to Abolish Capital Punishment. The United States Supreme Court ruled yesterday that the death penalty, as imposed under current laws, is unconstitutional.

Mr. Redlich and his wife, Dr. Evelyn Jane Grobow Redlich, a pediatrician, reside in Greenwich Village with their three children: Bonny, 18; Carrie, 16, and Edwrd, 14.