

Kleindienst's Stumping

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The way the Justice Department tells it, Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst has been criss-crossing the country for "nonpolitical but partisan" purposes.

"Non-political" because he scrupulously avoids attending fund-raising functions or rallies in support of particular candidates.

"Partisan" because he speaks on behalf of the Nixon administration and its claimed accomplishments in law-and-order.

During one recent trip, for example, the Attorney General interpreted the latest FBI crime statistics for the chamber of commerce in Cleveland, Miss., went on to speak about "the accomplishments of the Department of Justice" while re-

ceiving an award from Wayland Baptist College in Plainview, Tex., and then swung through his hometown of Phoenix, Ariz., to tell the Maricopa County Bar Association all about the administration's "war on drugs."

Kleindienst spent barely one day in his Washington office during the last week of September and the first week of October.

The rest of the time, he was on the road—including a virtual whistle-stop tour of chambers of commerce, bar associations and press conferences in California.

Officially, the Attorney General is listed by the Committee for the Re-election of the President as one of the "surrogates," or stand-ins, for President Nixon during the campaign.

But Kleindienst insists that he is really only a "quasi-surrogate," because of the limited nature of the topics on which he has been speaking, mostly dealing with law enforcement.

The limitation, while practical and logical for one of the busiest Cabinet officers, also has a particular political justification this year.

Administration sources say that the President's campaign staff, fearful of a negative residual effect from the protracted Senate hearings last year on Kleindienst's nomination, does not want the Attorney General to veer off into areas outside his law enforcement responsibilities.

One time when Kleindienst launched a broader campaign effort—in remarks denouncing Demo-

Labeled 'Non-Political'



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Richard Kleindienst talking to a caucus of lawyers in Miami Beach last August.

cratic candidate George McGovern's proposal to grant amnesty to Vietnam war draft evaders, prepared for delivery to a Texas convention of retired federal employees—he was edged off the program by Vice President Agnew.

The Attorney General has nonetheless managed to get in several strong swipes at McGovern without being upstaged or cancelled.

After telling the Economic Club of Detroit that the Democratic nominee is soft on drugs, pornography and the disclosure of secret

government documents, Kleindienst declared that McGovern's election "would be a disaster for the rule of law in America."

In contrast, Kleindienst said at a recent airport press conference in Memphis, that President Nixon has brought "hope and promise" to the nation and "a measure of tranquility to every citizen."

By actively campaigning and vehemently defending the administration of which he is a part, Kleindienst is following the same pattern as a number of other men

who have served as Attorney General during the past 20 years.

For example, President Eisenhower's first Justice Department chief, Herbert Brownell Jr., boasted in 1956 of the Republican administration's ability to contain "the Communist menace." Like Kleindienst, Brownell made several campaign appearances in California.

In 1960, William P. Rogers, then Attorney General (and now Secretary of State) boasted during the Nixon-Kennedy campaign that the Eisenhower administration

had the most outstanding civil rights record in almost a century.

Acting Attorney General Nicholas deB. Katzenbach did not hesitate in 1964 to address a "D.C. Lawyers Committee for Johnson and Humphrey" in clearly partisan terms.

Robert F. Kennedy and John N. Mitchell were perhaps the most political of all recent Attorneys general, although they did not stay in office long enough to take part in a presidential campaign while holding a Cabinet post.

One notable exception to the tradition of mixing top Justice Department responsibilities with campaigns was President Johnson's last Attorney General, Ramsey Clark. Many Democratic officials were critical of Clark, in fact, when he declined to answer the attacks on him by Republicans during the 1968 presidential race between Mr. Nixon and Hubert H. Humphrey.

Justice Department officials close to Kleindienst say that his active role this year stems in part from the fact that he is more comfortable in the political than in the administrative arena.

But they insist that after his unsuccessful, almost disastrous Republican candidacy for governor of Arizona in 1964, Kleindienst has no desire to run for elective office again. He is campaigning now, his colleagues say, only because he wants to assure President Nixon's re-election so that he can hold on to his long-sought and hard-earned job as Attorney General.