

A New Pilot Takes Over GOP

By Morton Mintz

Washington Post Staff Writer

Shortly before 11 p.m. Thursday, following the President's press conference, a self-described "moderate conservative" got a phone call at his home on Foxhill Road from a man whose political philosophy and "views and attitudes on critical issues," he says, are "remarkably similar."

The phone call was made by Richard M. Nixon to Clark MacGregor, counsel to the President for congressional relations since Dec. 1, 1970, and a congressman from Minnesota for 10 years before that.

They talked for about 25 minutes, first about matters relating to the press conference, then about the status of various pieces of legislation.

Then, MacGregor said in a phone interview yesterday, Mr. Nixon broke "the news:" that MacGregor was to succeed John N. Mitchell as campaign director of the Committee for the Re-election of the President.

The next day, in an hour-long meeting with MacGregor in the Oval Office at the White House, the President emphasized that the decision to appoint him was made by Mitchell and Francis L. Dale, the committee chairman and a Cincinnati newspaper publisher, and that he, of course, "shared" in it.

Asked of his relationship with the President and his authority to speak for him will be comparable with Mitchell's, MacGregor said the President emphasized that he, Mitchell and Dale all agreed that "I will have the same authority, privileges, position and emoluments" as Mitchell.

MacGregor's annual sal-

ary at the White House is \$42,500. Monday morning, when he starts work at 1701 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, it will be \$60,000.

The conversation in the Oval Office did not touch on "political controversy," "problems related to the campaign," or campaign

Sunday, July 2, 1972

A 3

Helm

Clark MacGregor, Liaison Man

fund-raising or strategy or tactics, MacGregor said.

These are "nuts and bolts" to which Mr. Nixon has paid "little or no attention," he added, noting that he delayed discussion of them until he met yesterday with Mitchell.

What the President did discuss were his "hopes for specific accomplishments in his second term, if he is re-elected," and his remarkable achievements "in Moscow and Peking, MacGregor said.

A White House associate said he views the choice of MacGregor to head the Committee as a signal from the President that he believes the campaign will become increasingly oriented toward issues.

MacGregor, especially because of his role as the President's principal agent on Capitol Hill, is extremely knowledgeable about the issues.

He is, moreover, extraordinarily precise, a quality that tends to reduce the possibility of errors and boo-boos. During the interview he repeatedly demon-

strated this precision by, for example, citing the date on which he bought his house (June 1, 1967), the date on which the eldest of his and his wife Barbara's three daughters was married (last July 3), and the correct pronunciation of the Vermont village (East Corinth) where she lives and the number of musicians for which their second daughter had composed a work (six).

When the reporter commented appreciatively on MacGregor's command of detail, he said that the President has a similar command and appreciates the use of specifics. "We have a lot in common," MacGregor said.

MacGregor, who will be 50 on July 12, was born and raised in Minneapolis, served three years in the World War II Office of Strategic Services after enlisting as a private, and was graduated from Dartmouth College and the University of Minnesota law school.

After 12 years in private law practice in Minneapolis, he was elected to the House

in 1960. In 1968 he split from the majority of the Minnesota Republican organization, which was supporting the presidential candidacy of Gov. Nelson A. Rockefeller, to endorse Mr. Nixon.

MacGregor followed up this early endorsement by becoming Mr. Nixon's Midwest regional floor manager at the GOP National Convention in 1968 and, in the 1968 fall campaign, acted as a "surrogate campaigner."

Two years ago MacGregor ran for the Senate against Hubert H. Humphrey, saying that Minnesota was entitled to a senator "who will work with the President on his program of peacemaking and domestic reform."

A few weeks after MacGregor's defeat in the November election, Mr. Nixon whose relations with Congress were widely regarded as poor, put MacGregor in charge of congressional relations.

"Someone characterized the person who holds my job as one who sits in the cockpit of controversy, and

that is true," he told a news conference after a year in that job. "But more often I am the conduit of cooperation . . . a real conduit of cooperation between the President and the Congress."

Generally, he had impressed Capitol Hill as that kind of "conduit" after only a few months. One senior Democratic senator said in February, 1971, "Good God, the President has finally discovered that there is a Congress." Sen. Charles McC. Mathias (R-Md.) said MacGregor "understands Congress and doesn't mistrust it."

Others, at least at that early point, were less impressed. One GOP senator said that MacGregor's best accomplishment had been to persuade the sometimes aloof John D. Ehrlichman, assistant to the President for domestic affairs, to wear a button saying, "I care about Congress."

MacGregor, unlike John Mitchell, is outgoing, friendly and not identified with divisive tactics such as the "Southern Strategy." Nonetheless, he has demonstrated that he can play rough.