

Mitchell Plays Foreign-Policy Role

By Jack Anderson

Senate liberals, already anguished over Attorney General John Mitchell's influence upon President Nixon, would gnash their teeth if they understood the full extent of his influence.

The inside fact is that the Attorney General now spends more than a third of his time plotting international rather than Southern strategy.

More and more, his advice deals with foreign affairs—the explosive Middle East, the expanding war in Indochina, relations with Russia. And more and more, the President depends on Mitchell's judgments.

Mitchell gets daily briefings from the CIA just as extensive as his fill-in from the FBI. With an almost photographic memory, he digests the facts and the nuances, ready to churn them out later in response to a White House phone call or a summons to the oval office.

More often than not, he is invited to the President's strategy lunches with Secretary of State Bill Rogers and Secretary of Defense Mel Laird. The Attorney General also sits in frequently on the President's discussions with foreign leaders.

Backstage Role

Nixon also named Mitchell to the National Security Council, the nation's highest policy-making body, which nor-

mally doesn't include the Attorney General. Not only has he become a power on this important council, but he has been assigned to oversee our supersecret intelligence operations.

There is little in Mitchell's background that might have prepared him for his new role. As a Wall Street lawyer, he specialized in municipal bond sales, an experience that gave him deep insight into city hall politics but not into the international intrigue that shapes world events.

Those who know him, however, agree that he has a steel-trap mind behind his diffident amiability. Equally important, he has no personal ambitions that would make the politically wary President Nixon suspicious of his advice. Mitchell repeatedly has told the President that he would prefer to return to his Wall Street practice.

Mitchell always delivers his advice in the blunt, frank terms that former law partners can use with one another. Result: when the Attorney General speaks, President Nixon listens.

Footnote: Mitchell's influence over the President is a mystery among influential Republicans on Capitol Hill, whose distrust of the Attorney General runs even deeper than press accounts have implied. Summed up one prominent Republican senator, who asked not to be identified:

"The disturbing thing to me is they've been narrowing their political base. There is a real unwillingness to broaden it.

"Instead of addition and multiplication, you get subtraction and division. The victor has to broaden his base. It's the first rule of politics, no matter what side you're on.

"John Mitchell managed Nixon's presidential campaign, and Nixon came up a winner. After so many years of drought, rightly or wrongly, he thinks Mitchell is a great political sage. Actually, Nixon started out with a 16 per cent lead over (Hubert) Humphrey and wound up winning by less than 1 per cent. My own feeling is that Mitchell nearly lost the election for Nixon."

News Footnotes

Republican infighting—Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kan.) has been cuttingly critical of Senators Marlow Cook (R-Ky.) and Margaret Chase Smith (R-Me.) for their alleged "defection" in the showdown over Judge G. Harrold Carswell's confirmation. Dole also has ambitions to replace either Senate GOP Leader Hugh Scott (Pa.) or assistant leader Bob Griffin (Mich.), whose leadership he has been quietly knocking.

Hanoi-Arab link—Arab commando leaders visited Hanoi earlier this month for a "solidarity" session with North Vietnam's new rulers. They drank toasts together and joined in denouncing Israel

and the United States. Diplomatic dispatches quote Yesser Arafat, leader of the underground Al Fatah, as declaring: "The historic meeting between the Palestinian and Vietnamese revolutionaries will exert an important and deep influence, because this influence is based on relations of militancy between revolutionaries standing on the same front line."

Blackmun's chances—The labor and civil rights leaders, who stirred up the opposition to Judges Clement Haynsworth and G. Harrold Carswell, held a secret huddle the other day to decide whether to oppose Judge Harry Blackmun's nomination to the Supreme Court. AFL-CIO President George Meany and civil rights veteran Clarence Mitchell, though unhappy over Blackmun's conservative views, agreed he was acceptable to them. Almost certainly, this means Blackmun's nomination should sail through the Senate without another storm. He will join Chief Justice Warren Burger, Justices John Harlan and Potter Stewart to form a solid, four-vote conservative bloc. The consistent liberals will be reduced to Justices William O. Douglas, William Brennan and Thurgood Marshall. On many issues, the conservatives should be able to win the crucial fifth vote from Justices Hugo Black or Byron (Whizzer) White.

© 1970, Bell-McClure Syndicate, Inc.