

Drive Is Begun to Soften Mitchell's Image

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WASHINGTON, July 12.—A

campaign is under way in the Justice Department to soften the image of Attorney General John Mitchell—and to lower the voice of his wife Martha.

Next to Vice President Spiro Agnew, the Mitchells have been the most controversial members of the Administration's family.

Mitchell has been viewed as the architect of "Southern strategy," the chief advocate of Southern conservatives on the Supreme Court, the primary antagonist of political dissenters and civil libertarians, and the President's Svengali.

DISLIKES GIMMICKRY

Mitchell, his aides acknowledge, is a strong law-and-order conservative. But he is not the humorless ogre his critics make him out to be, they insist.

Mitchell has shrugged off his critics, sometimes with bluntness. And he has a distaste for public relations, regarding it as gimmickry and showmanship beneath his dignity.

But with urging from the White House, following the second rejection of a Mitchell Supreme Court recommendation and the furor over Cambodia, the attorney general gave grudging approval to the new public relations campaign.

HURTS THE PRESIDENT

Mitchell is said to have been unable to understand why he

had such a hard-nosed, forboding image. But he reasoned that whether it was justified or not, it reflected on and hurt the President. And he discovered he was damaging his own effectiveness and the legislation he sought from Congress.

One of his assistants said Mitchell's recommendations for "no-knock" and "preventive detention" provisions in anti-crime legislation were hurt because "cartoonists and editorial writers figured they would be the attorney general's personal club to crack down on civil liberties."

According to Justice Department sources, the new image effort represents a change in style and emphasis rather than a change in policy.

CHANGES TONE

As one aide put it: "We used to ask people to judge us by what we do, not what we say. That doesn't work. Now Mitchell is learning that what he says and how he says it is almost as important as what he does. His policies and his beliefs are the same, but he's saying things a bit differently."

In recent, widely publicized speeches, Mitchell strongly defended the Supreme Court against right-wing attacks, and the right of dissent even when it becomes unruly, militant and disruptive.

Next month Mitchell has scheduled a speech in St. Louis on freedom of the press,



Martha and John Mitchell

... a change in tone, if not time

and it is expected to please some of his strongest critics in the press.

Within the Justice Department two key staff changes have given impetus to the image-changing campaign.

One was the resignation of 29-year-old Kevin Phillips as Mitchell's top assistant.

Phillips was a leading advocate of the Southern strategy and wrote about it in a controversial book, "The Emerging Republican Majority."

Phillips, who seemed to some in the Justice Department to be more interested in pursuing his own career than serving his boss, was replaced by Richard Moore, a

white-haired former television executive who is content to remain out of the spotlight.

MORE PRESS MEETINGS
The director of public information — Jack Landau, a former reporter who was more liberal than his boss and somewhat defensive about his duties among his journalistic friends, also was replaced.

For the moment Landau is helping write Mitchell's new style speeches. But the new director of public information is John W. Hushen, 34, former press secretary to Senate Republican whip Robert P. Griffin of Michigan (who helped lead the fight to defeat one of Mitchell's Supreme

Court suggestions, Clement F. Haynsworth).

Hushen has drawn up a program to establish friendlier communications with the press, including conferences, background meetings with reporters, and more individual interviews. Recently, at a cocktail reception for Hushen, Mitchell chatted for five hours with reporters.

QUIETING MARTHA

Although it is not exactly a part of their official duties, members of the Justice Department have recently taken it on themselves to keep the attorney general's wife out of print, or at least out of the headlines.

Mitchell's change of tone, if not time, has apparently had no effect on Federal Bureau of Investigation director J. Edgar Hoover.

An FBI report to be released Tuesday lumps all student dissenters and radicals into one group and looks with suspicion even on those anti-war campus organizations founded to take part in congressional elections.

REFUSAL TO RETIRE

Mitchell says nothing to his staff about Hoover, but top Justice Department aides chafe at the 75-year-old FBI chief's refusal to retire.

The Washington Post, no admirer of Mitchell, ran a full story on the Texas speech. And commenting on it, the Post compared Mitchell favorably with Ramsey Clark, the target of stinging attacks by President Nixon during his campaign.

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