

Mitchell to Resign Soon, Rumors Say



By
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The Justice Department grapevine has it that Attorney General John N. Mitchell will announce his resignation within the next 10 days. That will be followed, the word is, by a similar announcement from FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover sometime in January.

Justice aides base the speculation on Mitchell in part on preparations for a "major" press conference scheduled for Dec. 21. The Attorney General rarely uses the full-scale "on the record" Washington press conference format, the last one being about 11 months ago. They think Mitchell will use the December news conference to announce formally that he is leaving to head Mr. Nixon's 1972 re-election campaign.

Insiders speculate that Hoover—the source of at least two retirement rumors a month for the past decade—really will do it this time.

They doubt he'll stay on until it is time to dedicate the new FBI building—there has also been a rumor to that effect—since that won't be until April, 1974. Besides, Congress is more likely to name the structure after a retired director than an active duty chief.

Justice employees also say the timing is right because political sniping at the 76-year-old Hoover is at an all-time low, and the climate is ripe for

him to depart without appearing pushed.

Long-time Justice workers think it's a good bet Mitchell, as columnists Evans and Novak wrote on Nov. 14, will try to name his deputy Richard Kleindienst as "acting" attorney general, until the election is over.

Don't Spend It Yet!: The January federal pay raise rider had its ups and downs, mostly downs, in the House yesterday. Rep. H. R. Gross (R-Iowa), who could have directed the Pearl White Silent screen thrillers, won a point of order on the floor that sent the entire Phase II control bill back to a Senate-House conference.

Gross objected to different language—one word—in the Senate and House reports covering January federal-military salaries. Because of his objection, which was correct in a parliamentary sense, the bill was bounced back to Senate-House conferees who had to be reappointed. They are expected to produce a "clean" report that retains the provisions for raises next month of about 5.5 per cent.

But there is still a chance Mr. Nixon could veto the economic control package because of the \$1.1 billion unbudgeted pay cost and try again next year for an extension of his wage-price authority.

Federal workers, at least those calling this office, seem to assume the raise is in the bag and want to know where new pay tables can be obtained. The answer is that there are no such tables and

won't be until Mr. Nixon signs on the dotted line.

Sources close to the President indicate he is still unhappy with the pay raise rider (he wanted the boosts delayed until July 1). Their advice to government workers is not to spend the money until it shows up in their paychecks.

Health Plans: Rep. Jerome Waldie (D-Calif.) says the government was "unresponsive" to the report of an independent actuary it hired, who recommended 1972 premium rates for Blue Cross-Blue Shield of no more than 25 per cent. Instead, Waldie charged yesterday, the government agreed to a total premium increase of 34 per cent, which will raise employee rates 47 per cent.

Waldie says the firm later shaved its own estimate and, had CSC accepted it, it could have cut further the increases scheduled to go into effect Jan. 1.

The Price Commission has since questioned the boosts and is holding them up. Civil Service says it approved the Blue Cross proposal, which originally was for a 53 per cent increase, only after being

satisfied the company was losing money, despite a built-in guaranteed profit of \$5 million.

Meanwhile, Sen. Frank Moss (D-Utah) has called for a Senate investigation into federal health plans, which cover 8 million employees and family members. Moss charges that the raises planned by several carriers — notably Blue Cross — are unreasonable. He's a ranking member of the Post Office and Civil Service Committee, and is likely to get an investigation. Waldie's group plans a similar probe on the House side.