

# Cabinet Rivals for Nixon's Ear

By Jack Anderson

HINTS HAVE appeared in print that Attorney General John Mitchell, the professional pragmatist, has displaced Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Robert Finch, the professional politician, as President Nixon's closest adviser.

Actually, both are close to the President, Mitchell at his right ear, Finch at his left ear. Both men are advisers extraordinary who see the President frequently and hear from him even more frequently. Mr. Nixon is on the phone at all hours of the day and night to both of them.

Both are strong-willed men, Cabinet stalwarts who have become power centers inside the Nixon administration. Inevitably, a rivalry has grown up between them. Mitchell has been heard to refer to Finch scornfully as "Secretary Fink."

Mitchell favors what the political pros call "the Southern strategy." He seeks to woo the South without offending the North, moving boldly to maintain law and order but following a cautious civil rights policy acceptable on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line.

IN THIS WAY, he hopes to combine the strength of Richard Nixon and George Wallace into a national Republican majority. Mitchell is supported by South Carolina Sen. Strom Thurmond, whose mission will be to lure the Wallace crowd away from Wallace, and by Thurmond's man in the White House, Harry Dent.

The two men from Maryland, Vice President Spiro Agnew and Republican National Chairman Rogers C. B. Morton, also favor the Southern strategy. So does the President's legislative chief, Bryce Harlow, who must placate the powerful Southern committee chairmen on Capitol Hill.

Finch believes the Republi-

cans must appeal to the nation's moderate majority, the silent Americans, who have always swayed elections in the past. He is wary of trying to please both Southern conservatives and Northern moderates at the same time. He recalls, perhaps, the marriage proposal George Bernard Shaw received from Isadora Duncan.

"With your brains and my beauty," she wrote, "think what wonderful children we would have."

"But what if they should have your brains and my beauty?" replied Shaw.

FINCH IS a little afraid that attempts to please the South instead will displease the North, and vice versa, thus producing results opposite to what Mitchell seeks.

Both men have had their victories and defeats in the backroom maneuvering over policy. Most recently, Finch wanted to issue a statement opposing the anti-school-desegregation provisions that Mississippi Rep. Jamie Whitten inserted into the HEW appropriation bill.

Mitchell not only blocked the statement but paid a personal call upon House Republican leaders to make sure they didn't oppose Whitten. Result: The anti-integration features were approved by the House, a victory for the Southern strategy.

Not long afterward, however, Finch sold the President on a sweeping overhaul of the federal welfare system. Mitchell was appalled at the possibility that the program would double the number of people collecting welfare payments.

At a four-hour Cabinet meeting held at Camp David, the presidential retreat in the Catoctin Mountains, Mitchell led an assault on the welfare reforms. He contended that the nation is in a "conservative era," voters would rebel over a \$4 billion welfare program, and it would be a mistake for a Re-

publican President to increase welfare.

Vice President Agnew took up the cry, and almost everyone in the Cabinet agreed. Only Secretary of Labor George Shultz and antipov-erty boss Donald Rumsfeld sided with Finch. Yet Finch won the day.

Meanwhile, the President continues to listen, alternately, with his right ear, then his left ear.

## McCarthy's Marriage

MINNESOTA'S Eugene McCarthy, the sardonic Senator and puckish poet, denied our report that his marriage was on the rocks and that he had spoken to his wife Abigail about a divorce.

"You must be kidding!" he told the first reporter who reached him for comment.

We weren't kidding.

To avoid a public disagreement, however, the McCarthys have decided upon a private separation rather than a divorce. They are now living quietly apart.

Not long after writing about McCarthy's marital troubles, we rapped his former campaign manager, Thomas Finney Jr., for lobbying on Capitol Hill in behalf of the toy manufacturers.

McCarthy immediately phoned Finney.

"I wanted to call you up and express my sympathy," said the Senator gravely. He could understand, he said, how outraged Finney must be over being identified as the manager of McCarthy's 1968 presidential campaign.

"I'm glad," laughed Finney, "that you recognized what was the most insulting line in the column."

## Denial on Kennedys

ON THE SUBJECT of denials, former Rep. Perkins Bass has taken exception to this column's report that Sen. Edward Kennedy had accompanied his late brother, John F. Kennedy, to Chappaquid-

dick Island to use a secluded beach owned by the Bass family.

Bass seemed particularly eager to deny that he had ever met Sen. Kennedy or that his father, the late Gov. Robert Bass of New Hampshire, was "close to the Kennedys."

Sometimes it pays to look behind a denial. Bass happens to be lobbying for an appointment to the Interstate Commerce Commission, and it wouldn't help his prospects to become identified inside the White House as a friend of the Kennedys.

We stand by our story that John Kennedy used the Bass family beach while he was recuperating from his back operation; that he was accompanied at times by his younger brother Ted, and that Ted became thoroughly familiar with the beaches of Chappaquiddick Island.

We did not mean to imply, as the New York Times inferred, that the Bass beach was located directly at the end of Dyke Road where Sen. Kennedy and Mary Jo Kopechne met their accident.

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