

GOP Law Firms Prospering Here

By Jack Anderson

The Republican occupation of Washington has created a bull market for attorneys with GOP credentials. Democratic lawyers, meanwhile, have seen their stock plummet.

The changeover has resulted in a new list of preferred attorneys for corporate executives seeking federal favors. Legal lights identified with the Nixon administration are prospering. Most Washington firms, of course, hedge against the political vagaries by maintaining connections in both parties.

High on the new preferred list, say insiders, is the firm of Rhyne and Rhyne.

Nestled comfortably among the complex of law offices clustered around the White House like ants around a half-eaten gumball, the Rhyne firm is headed by Charles S. Rhyne. He has been a Nixon intimate since they studied law together at Duke University in the late 1930s.

While his friend scaled the political heights, Rhyne climbed to the top in the legal world. His credentials are impeccable: president of the American Bar Association; chairman of a special ABA committee on world peace through the rule of law; creator of the ABA's "Law Day," conceived as America's answer to the Communist "May Day."

Keeps Ties Intact

All these achievements, say

fellow attorneys, have been parlayed into a booming law practice. At the same time, Rhyne has kept his political ties intact with his former schoolmate. In 1968, he headed "Citizens for Nixon."

The success of this effort was such that, among Nixon insiders, speculation was high that Rhyne would be named to the Supreme Court. In the aftermath of the Abe Fortas affair, however, crony appointments became too risky.

Rhyne has wasted no time sulking. Declares one disgruntled Democrat: "Nixon owes Rhyne a huge political debt. His is the firm to do business with if you want to get through to the present administration."

Rhyne and Rhyne are extraordinarily secret about their clientele. In the Martindale and Hubble legal directory, where most firms list their chief clients, the Rhyne firm offers only an extended biography of senior partner Charles S.

This column readed junior partner Brice Rhyne and asked about the firm's booming business.

"Listen," he said, "I think you better talk to my senior partner."

It was mutually agreed that Charles Rhyne was out of town for two weeks. So this column asked Brice, as a beginning, when the firm had been established. He wouldn't say. After much hemming and hawing, he finally volunteered

that the partnership had been formed in 1963.

Asked about the firm's practice, he said: "We specialize in federal agency practice and municipal law."

Then he stopped. "I can see the direction this is going," he said, "and I would rather just not comment."

From other sources, this column has learned that Rhyne and Rhyne represent several big corporations, including the giants of American aviation, before the federal regulatory agencies.

Kleindienst Firm Moves

Another Republican firm, transplanted from Phoenix only last December, already has more Washington clients than it can handle. This is Shimmel, Hill and Bishop, which happens to be the former law firm of Deputy Attorney General Richard Kleindienst.

Indeed, Kleindienst resigned from the firm exactly one day before he was named second-in command at the Justice Department. Senior partner Brice Bishop, in a refreshing bit of candor, explained the strategy to this column:

"My former partner, Richard Kleindienst, suggested and promoted the idea of a Washington office. We are a Republican-oriented firm. Our primary reason for moving here was so we could represent our clients' Washington interests. But we also moved here with the prospect in mind that

Richard Nixon would be moving into the White House."

Thanking him for his frankness, this column asked how the strategy has turned out.

"Our success in Washington has been satisfactory," Bishop said.

Like the Rhyne firm, Shimmel-Hill-Bishop specializes in helping clients that deal with the federal regulatory agencies. These clients include General Dynamics, Continental Airlines, Capitol Southwest Corporation, and the Toilet Goods Association.

Other Republican firms are also enjoying the new prosperity. For instance, the firm of Royall and Koegel, where Secretary of State William Rogers formerly practiced law, has experienced a boom in international business.

At least one Democrat is partaking of the Republican prosperity. He is Florida's former Senator, George Smathers, who has set up a law office overlooking the White House. The location is appropriate in view of his close personal friendship with the occupant, who took over Smather's home in Key Biscayne, Fla., and converted it into his first vacation White House.

For that matter, the durable Clark Clifford, Dean Acheson and Edward Bennett Williams—whose law firms seem unaffected by the ebb and flow of the political tide—aren't suffering for business in the Nixon era.