

Bittman to Leave Justice Department

BY WILLIAM KLING

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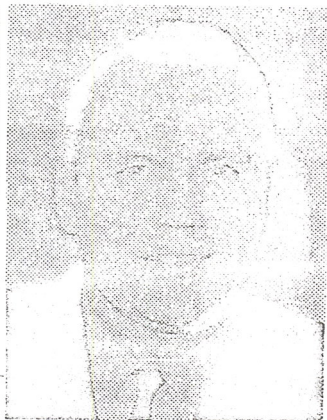
Washington, May 27—William O. Bittman, 35, the courtroom nemesis of big-name defendants, will leave the justice department next week to join a leading Washington law firm.

Milwaukee-born, Bittman received his law training and first law experience in Chicago, later becoming one of the department's top prosecutors.

When he enters private practice with the firm of Hogan & Hartson on Thursday, Bittman will leave behind a prosecuting record that includes against-the-odds convictions of James R. Hoffa, president of the teamsters union, and Robert G. Baker, former secretary of the Democratic majority in the United States Senate.

Replaced Ailing Prosecutor

Hoffa and six co-defendants had been on trial for five days in 1964 in the federal District court in Chicago on charges involving 621 million dollars in allegedly fraudulent loans from the teamsters pension fund when Bittman was called into



William O. Bittman

the case to replace the seriously ill chief prosecutor, Abe Poretz.

Then 32, Bittman already had been tagged as one of the most effective assistant United States attorneys in the Chicago office. A stickler for pre-trial preparation, he once was described by the late United States attorney, James P. O'Brien, as "a diamond in the rough" as a lawyer.

Twelve weeks after Bittman

entered the Hoffa case, a jury found the defendants guilty. Hoffa was sentenced to serve five years in federal prison. The United States Supreme court last week ordered a hearing to determine if admitted government wiretapping had contributed to the conviction, but the bugging by Federal Bureau of Investigation agents had occurred before Bittman entered the case.

Bittman was transferred to Washington and assigned to the Baker case, a hot one politically and potentially dangerous to the young lawyer's career.

Republicans were charging that Baker would be "white-washed" because of his close ties to President Johnson. Because of Baker's rise from Senate page to "boy wonder" millionaire, the case tunneled behind the scenes of official Washington.

After a two-year investigation and a lengthy Washington trial, Bittman won conviction of Baker for tax evasion, theft, and conspiracy to defraud the government. He won over Ed-

ward Bennett Williams, one of the leading defense attorneys in the country.

Baker, who has filed an appeal, was sentenced to serve one to three years in a federal penitentiary.

Linebacker at Marquette

Bittman is a blunt, pugna-cious, fiercely competitive prosecutor with a husky build that indicates why he was a linebacker on the Marquette university football team in his home town, where his father is an official for the labor department.

After a two-year hitch in the navy that interrupted his college career, Bittman returned to school and received his bachelor's degree from Marquette in 1956. Soon after, he was married to the former Carole Chilletti of Chicago.

Bittman was graduated in 1959 from De Paul university law school in Chicago and joined the United States attorney's staff there when Robert J. Ticken, now a federal referee in bankruptcy, headed the office.