

## Mr. Saxbe's Myths <sup>NYT</sup> <sub>4/10/74</sub>

The Attorney General's list of subversive organizations is, like all punitive rosters drawn up by fearful governments, a shameful page in the nation's annals. An Attorney General with the good sense to scrap that useless and vindictive document need offer no explanation or apology. How, then, is one to explain the thought process, if any, that prompted Attorney General William B. Saxbe to justify his sensible action by suggesting that the list had been rendered obsolete because Communism has lost its attractiveness to "the Jewish intellectual, who was in those [McCarthy] days very enamored of the Communist party"?

This and subsequent non sequiturs, while explaining nothing whatsoever about the need for the lists in question, offer some insight — however blurred — into Mr. Saxbe's mind. The picture that emerges is one of judgments formed of a jumble of stereotypes and ill-digested myths.

The discovery of Mr. Saxbe's lack of perception can come as no surprise. He is the man who once thought that the perpetrators of Watergate ought merely to be given "clown suits" for their "ridiculous" actions. At another time, he chose to disassociate himself from the call by Elliot Richardson, his predecessor, for a de-politicized Justice Department. Most recently, in a highly untimely get-tough response to Patricia Hearst's kidnappers, he was called "damn near irresponsible" by the victim's father, in a gross understatement.

It is fair to say that there has been no sign of malice in Mr. Saxbe's utterances — only a consistent show of

unrestrained obtuseness, mixed with ignorance. But his unthinking statements suggest strongly the limitations of mind that Mr. Saxbe brings to a once-revered post that demands judgment, balance, discernment — and common sense.