

The New White House Counsel

Leonard Garment

5/11/73
By JAMES T. WOOTEN

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 30—
Into a job made vacant by scandal and into the conservative-oriented power core of the White House comes Leonard Garment, an anxiously brilliant, iconoclastic liberal for whom variety has always been not just the spice but the absolute joy of life. "That's what I call supreme loyalty," one of his closest friends said today after learning that Mr.

Man
In the
News

Garment, a 48-year-old special consultant to the President, had reluctantly accepted the post of special counsel to Mr. Nixon, a position that became vacant with the dismissal today of the Watergate-tainted John W. Dean 3d.

That exclamation served merely to underscore the responses of almost everyone who has ever known the President's new lawyer. Not that any of them has any doubts about his ability to handle the new job or the President's wisdom in making such appointment—but rather that they all unanimously regard the man and the job as essentially incompatible.

"Especially under these traumatic circumstances," said another of his old acquaintances.

Their premise is their appreciation of Mr. Garment as a quick-witted, fun-loving fast-talking raconteur whose instincts are apt to be dulled by the rather austere atmosphere of the White House in these less-than-pleasant days.

Another Side

Yet, with due respect to his friends' familiarity, there is another side to Mr. Garment that may have presented itself forcefully to the President last weekend when he secluded himself at Camp David and pondered his shake-up of the White House inner-corps.

The two met in 1965 when Mr. Nixon joined the law firm of Mudge, Rose, Guthrie & Alexander in New York, Mr. Nixon's first venture into the world of high-priced,



Fred J. Maroon

A liberal guest in a conservative house

high-powered private practice.

Mr. Garment had been a member of the firm since his graduation from Brooklyn College in 1949 and a partner since 1957. They saw each other frequently, worked together often and talked a great deal about the firm, its personnel, the law, American politics, success and failure, cabbages and kings—and, as a result, they came to be impressed with each other.

Mr. Garment, the musically inclined son of Jewish immigrants and a Democrat who had voted for John F. Kennedy in 1960 and Lyndon B. Johnson four years later, admired what he called Mr. Nixon's "receptiveness to new ideas" and, in turn, the future President was drawn to the younger man's quick and solid intelligence, his legal skills, his imagination and his fertile creativity.

Consequently, when Mr. Nixon's 1968 Presidential campaign began gearing up

in late 1966 and early 1967, Mr. Garment was brought almost immediately into the inner circle as a talent-scout, recruiter, promoter and impressario.

For example, one day at the Harvard Club in New York City, Mr. Garment told a new member of the law firm that he would make an excellent campaign manager for Mr. Nixon. His name was John N. Mitchell.

Later, he planted the same idea in the mind of Mr. Nixon—a concept to which he still clings despite recent intimations about Mr. Mitchell's subsequent involvement in the Watergate scandal.

During the campaign proper, Mr. Garment played the role of intellectual gadfly, probing the organization for some semblance of liberalism, twitting here and there, at its stodgy austerity—and all the while maintaining his own credentials as a man committed to causes and concepts essentially outside the candidate's major thrusts.

He was the kind of man, according to Richard J. Whalen, the author of "Catch the Falling Flag," who would "sit up all night on the kitchen floor rapping with Dick Gregory," the black comedian and antiwar activist.

After Mr. Nixon's election, Mr. Garment returned to New York and their old law firm while the new President moved into the white house and Mr. Mitchell took over the Department of Justice.

In the summer of 1969, after a brief stint as the firm's Washington representative, Mr. Garment became a special consultant to the President.

He became the new Administration's most visible Liberal with the exception perhaps of Daniel P. Moynihan. Mr. Moynihan, who is now serving as Mr. Nixon's Ambassador to India, was brought to the White House by Mr. Garment.

Yet, despite his past relationships and his close friendship with the President, Mr. Garment remained, for all practical purposes, outside the circles of power, a liberal guest in a conservative house.

Occasionally, he would be called upon to answer black

criticisms of the Nixon Administration or, perhaps, to sit in on discussions with militant Indians or, later, to visit United States military bases in Europe to find out what was wrong racially. But, for the most part, he was much less influential as a White House man than he had been as a partner in the law firm.

For instance, he raised vehement objections when Mr. Nixon nominated Clement F. Haynsworth Jr. and subsequently, G. Harrold Carswell to the Supreme Court, and no one seemed to notice.

Moreover, while Father Theodore Hesburgh, the President of the University of Notre Dame, who was chairman of the United States Commission on Civil Rights, was falling out of favor at the White House, he and Mr. Garment were becoming fast friends—a relationship that was trained by the priest's dismissal from his post but that is still extant.

"And the same was true in the 1972 campaign," said another White House aide. "He was there and he was heard, but nobody really listened—and damned if he still wasn't among the most loyal of the troops."

It may have been that trait—loyalty—that persuaded the President to name him to a post that Mr. Garment specifically told Mr. Nixon he did not want and would accept only on a temporary basis.

One source suggested that Mr. Garment "tried everything he knew to talke the 'old man' out of offering him that job," but eventually accepted when the President cited his need for loyalty.

So, whatever his past slights, snubs and slurs, Leonard Garment, who has no middle name and who once played clarinet in Woody Herman's band, will arise tomorrow at the \$250,000, 17-acre Virginia farm he rents from the Fairfax County Park Authority for \$275 a month, his wife and two children good-by and drive the 11 miles to the White House where he will become the Nixon Administration's third Counsel to the President.

His predecessor, Mr. Dean, and the first man to hold that job, John D. Ehrlichman, will not be there to greet him.