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Mitchell's Press Aide Quitting; Parting Described as Amicable

By CHRISTOPHER LYDON

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WASHINGTON, April 21 — Attorney General John N. Mitchell is looking for a new press secretary.

In a formal statement today, Mr. Mitchell said that Jack C. Landau, the Justice Department's Director of Public Information since the Nixon Administration took office, had asked to resign and return to journalism.

According to the statement, Mr. Landau's parting is amicable. "His service to me and the department has been exemplary," Mr. Mitchell said. "I had hoped that he would remain as long as I was Attorney General."

Mr. Landau himself was reportedly in New York and unavailable for comment.

Among reporters who cover the Justice Department regularly, Mr. Landau's departure did not come as a surprise. A former specialist in Supreme Court news coverage who described himself as a liberal, Mr. Landau had at times seemed uncomfortable and apologetic about Mr. Mitchell's reputation as a conservative. For six months or more, Mr. Landau appeared to have a diminishing role in policy discussions.

The news of Mr. Landau's resignation came less than two weeks after Mr. Mitchell hired Mrs. William Woestendiek as the press secretary for his wife, Martha.

The subsequent dismissal of Mrs. Woestendiek's husband from the educational television station here, on grounds of what the station called "sharp conflict of interest," stirred new controversy today.

Representative Torbert H. Macdonald, Democrat of Massachusetts, chairman of the House Communications Subcommittee, announced today that he would hold hearings early next week on the ouster. Mr. Woestendiek had edited WETA-TV's "Newsroom" show since it went on the air at the end of March.

Mr. Macdonald said he was particularly concerned about reports that the Ford Foundation, which has funded the "Newsroom" experiment in San Francisco, Dallas and Pittsburgh as well as in Washington, had forced Mr. Woestendiek out.

"The allegations are enough to make your headspin," Mr. Macdonald said in an interview. He said he was not yet convinced that the Ford Foundation was involved in WETA's decision to dismiss Mr. Woestendiek, but he added:

"The question is—if anything did happen—to what extent does foundation funding of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting involve a dead-hand influence on local stations?"

Fred Friendly, adviser on public television to the Ford Foundation, repeated today that neither he nor the foundation had had any hand in the Woestendiek case.

Mr. Friendly, formerly the president of the Columbia Broadcasting System's news division, commented, "I didn't spend all those years of my life keeping people with money out of newsrooms only to turn around and let that kind of pressure in now—from the Ford Foundation or anyplace else."