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**SAXBE SAYS HE GOT
JUSTICE POST BID**

**Senator Meets With Nixon—
Asserts He Has Accepted
a 'Pretty Firm' Offer**

By **DOUGLAS E. KNEELAND**

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WASHINGTON, Oct. 31—
—Senator William B. Saxbe, an Ohio Republican with a reputation for outspokenness who is an occasional critic of President Nixon, said tonight he had been offered the post of Attorney General and had accepted.

In an interview in his Senate office, Mr. Saxbe made it clear that he could not say definitely until he had been formally "tapped" by the President.

Although he had replied affirmatively to questions about whether he had been offered and had accepted the job, he equivocated a bit on the certainty of the nomination.

"I believe, or I'd like to believe," he said, "that it's pretty firm."

After meeting this morning with the President, the 57-year-old Mr. Saxbe said that he was "relatively sure" he would be nominated.

However, after a discussion with the President, which Mr. Saxbe said lasted two and a

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half hours and the White House said was an hour and a half, the Ohioan said at an unusual news conference on a White House driveway that he did not want to be "presumptive and say I've got it in the bag."

Emerging into the noontime sunshine, Mr. Saxbe strolled over willingly to face 50 or more reporters and cameramen who had awaited him since his car was discovered in the driveway earlier in the morning. Ronald L. Ziegler, the White House press secretary, was at his side, smiling slightly.

Standing before the television cameras—his gray hat looking anachronistic in an era of almost universal bareheadedness—Mr. Saxbe said he thought "the offer was implied when I walked in there."

"I was contemplating going back to Mechanicsburg [his Ohio home], but this is a challenge I can't turn down," said Mr. Saxbe, who announced earlier this month that he would not seek re-election when his first term expires at the end of next year.

He said that the next move "will come from the President." He said he expected some action to be taken in the next few days.

At the daily White House

press briefing, which followed Mr. Saxbe's news conference by a few minutes, Gerald L. Warren, the deputy press secretary, said that he had no announcement to make today on the nomination of a successor to Elliot L. Richardson, who resigned Oct. 20 rather than dismiss Archibald Cox, the special Watergate prosecutor.

However, Mr. Warren seemed to be lending credence to Senator Saxbe's assessment of the situation when he added:

"I don't want to make it a mystery. I think it's less of a mystery than anything that's happened around here."

'Very Dstisfactory' Talk

Rarely, if ever, has a prospective Presidential appointee spoken so freely before his nomination has been announced.

At his news conferece, to which White House officials agreed after guards had first tried to chase newsmen from the driveway and lawn, Mr. Saxbe described what appeared to have been a long, free-wheeling discussion with the President.

"I had a very satisfactory discussion with the President," the Senator said. "We asked each other questions."

Last December, at the time of the renewed bombing of

North Vietnam, Senator Saxbe said that President Nixon appeared to have "left his senses."

In answer to a question, he said that the President had recalled that statement today.

"I said he'd have to take me, warts and all," Mr. Saxbe declared.

The plain-talking Ohioan has also been quoted as having compared the President's contention that he had no knowledge of the watergate break-in and cover-up to protestations by a piano player in a house of prostitution that he didn't know what was going on upstairs.

Advantage Seen

But many observers here felt that such outspoken displays of independence would be an asset in achieving Senate confirmation for Mr. Saxbe should he be nominated.

Both Mr. Richardson and William D. Ruckelhaus, the Deputy Attorney General who was dismissed when he also refused to oust Mr. Cox, had reputation for some independence within the Administration. After their departure, observers contended, Mr. Nixon cannot afford to appear to be naming a rubber-stamp Attorney General.