

NOV 28 1970

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SAT

## Laird Being 'Mentioned' As Successor to Agnew

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Nov. 27

—The Great Mentioner, who places political personalities on the lists of persons commonly "mentioned" for national office, has not yet been found here. But a new sample of his work is gaining circulation: Melvin R. Laird for Vice President? The De-

Wash-  
ington  
Notes

defense Secretary himself heard the speculation and obviously finds it embarrassing. But the idea is spreading because he is so clearly one of the few prominent Republicans who could bring partisan vigor, experience and ability to a Nixon ticket without seriously offending the constituency that would resent the dropping of Vice President Agnew.

Mr. Laird is not among those who have been boasting of a Republican victory in this year's election. He has praised Republican colleagues like Senator-elect Lowell P. Weicker Jr. of Connecticut for running a positive platform of Administration achievements in Vietnam and other sectors. Laird partisans suspect therefore, that he did not relish the heavy White House emphasis on negative charges against the Democrats.

There is no indication whatever that Mr. Nixon is seeking a new running mate, but other Republicans are keeping the idea alive. The difficulty for them is that they cannot name a substitute for Mr. Agnew who could seek a broader appeal without alienating the Vice President's enthusiastic fans.

Mr. Laird has talked of staying at his tough Pentagon job for no more than one Nixon term. Barring other opportunities, he would probably try to return to the House of Representatives, where he enjoyed enormous influence.

After each Congressional election, the politicians uniformly agree that the figures for party gains of House and Senate seats are not really significant, compared to underlying shifts in ideology. Then they proceed to disagree about those shifts.

In an effort to detect ideological movement in the 1970 election, every one of the more than 800 candidates was rated by The New York Times beforehand in one of five categories, from full-fledged liberal to outright conservative. Then a philosophical index was calculated for both houses of the old Congress and the new one.

On a scale of 100 (from 0 as totally liberal to 100 as totally conservative), the composite Senate index moved from 54.7, or slightly right of center, to 55.5, or less than one point more conservative — considerably less in that direction than President Nixon contended it would.

The index for the outgoing House was 49.8, almost exactly in the center, but the election moved it to 47.4. This shift of 2.4 points to the left translates very roughly to a gain of about 10 House votes by the liberal bloc, in the unlikely event that a clear-cut liberal-conservative issue arises.

The authors of this rating system make no claims for infallibility or pinpoint precision; many politicians defy neat analysis and few votes involve simple ideological choices. But it does—well, it should—tell something more about the upcoming 92d Congress than the mere fact that it will have two more Republican Senators and nine more Democratic Representatives.

President Nixon's recent statement that he remains determined to put a Southerner on the Supreme Court conveniently ignored the fact that there is no vacancy there to fill. But if he is eyeing the current "Southern" seat held by 84-year-old Hugo L. Black, Mr. Nixon may have to be patient.

Justice Black has given no indication of considering retirement; some of his friends indicate, in fact, that he might like to surpass the mark set by Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, who sat on the Supreme Court until he was 90.

When a friend asked Justice Black the other day what he thought of the President's plan to name a Southerner to the next vacancy, he chuckled and replied: "It would be nice to have another one here."

A measure of permissiveness has spread to that most orthodox of publishing houses, the Government Printing Office.

Two years ago, that agency declined to publish a report on demonstrations at the Democratic National Convention of 1968 that was submitted to the President's Commission on the Causes and Prevention of violence on the grounds that it contained obscene quotations.

But now, despite contrary rumors, the G.O.P. is preparing for a fairly extensive public sale of the report of the President's Commission on Pornography and Obscenity, with advance orders reaching a 2,000 figure that officials called "out of the ordinary." Ready in two weeks, the report will sell for \$5.50. There are no illustrations.

Politicians normally scramble over each others' shoulders to claim credit for a particularly adroit and successful backstage maneuver, but this does not seem to be the case where the New York Senate victory of James L. Buckley, conservative, over Charles E. Goodell, Republican, is concerned.

Aides of Vice President Agnew disclaim any credit for conceiving the White House purge of Senator Goodell, despite their leader's enthusiastic participation in it. They say the author of the strategy was F. Clifton White, Mr. Buckley's campaign manager, who they say sold it to Peter M. Flanigan, a Nixon aide, who in turn sold it to the President.

Through his long tenure in the Democratic House leadership, Speaker John W. McCormack has been widely regarded as the voice of Roman Catholic orthodoxy whenever the tenets of his closely held faith appeared to have application in legislative matters.

But according to his intimates, it was the Speaker, now a mere two months from the close of his 44-year career, who personally ordered onto the House calendar last week the bill to provide birth control services for all women who cannot afford them. It passed 298 to 32.

Ray C. Bliss, who was dumped unceremoniously from the Republican national chairmanship by President Nixon soon after his 1968 election, is attempting a political comeback in his home state of Ohio.

Previously known for his mastery of mechanics rather than maneuver, Mr. Bliss is attempting to recapture the G.O.P. state chairman's job with a broken-field run through the forces of two bitter political enemies, retiring Gov. James E. Rhodes and Senator-elect Robert Taft Jr., each of whom has his own candidate for the leadership.

Senator Harold E. Hughes, one of the Democrats considering a try for the White House in 1972, was asked this week if he was sensitive to the argument that he, as a reformed alcoholic, might lack the "stability" to serve as President.

"I heard that constantly," he replied. "I personally would rather have a man in the White House that I know doesn't drink than one who does. The country should stop worrying about people who don't drink and start worrying about people who do."