

A Snub for Top Black on Nixon's Team

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Washington

IF PRESIDENT Nixon wants to make points with black voters in 1972, he can start inside and topside — with Martha Mitchell.

Mrs. Arthur Fletcher, wife of the Administration's star black, feels Martha snubbed her when they were first introduced. Then Labor Secretary George Shultz was with them.

While cordially greeting Shultz, Martha ignored Mrs. Fletcher, wife of the assistant secretary of labor.

"I haven't given her a chance to do that again. Now I just turn away. She has the problem, not me." Mrs. Fletcher said in a joint interview with her husband.

Fletcher agreed that some in the GOP "have one helluva time trying to decide whether they're

really ready for a minority person to function right up there with them."

Neither takes seriously such jolts as dealt by Mrs. Mitchell. But while laughing them off, they recognize the political impact.

The Fetters are both witty and outgoing. On a quiet Sunday afternoon, in their handsomely-furnished home in Columbia, Md., Fletcher wore a black T-shirt over blue-and-white striped shorts. Mrs. Fletcher lounged in orange see-through harem pants.

Tomorrow Fletcher will resign his Labor post to become U.S. alternate delegate to the United Nations, a 90-day assignment.

Following that he is expected to barnstorm the Western states for Nixon in 1972, working closely with Martha's husband, Attorney General John Mitchell.

If Fletcher's plans work out, he will run in 1972 for the Washington Senate seat



MARTHA MITCHELL
A snub for a black woman?



ARTHUR FLETCHER
Long way from a Phoenix ghetto

now held by Democrat Warren Magnuson. Three years ago Fletcher shook up state politics by almost winning the lieutenant governorship.

A former pro football player, Fletcher, at 47, is a muscular giant of a man (6-foot-4, 240 pounds) who could sell an icebox to an Eskimo. His gift of gab sharpened as he fought his way up against hardship and discrimination.

If the election were held today, he believes Nixon would draw about the same among blacks as he did in 1968. That was about ten per cent of their vote.

The GOP's low stock with blacks is not all the Administration's fault, as Fletcher sees it.

"I understand some 86 blacks turned down appointments in 1969. That not only hurt Nixon, but the black effort itself," he said. "You have to be where the action is to bring about change and progress."

He conceded the Administration is starting late to woo blacks and it won't pay off as handsomely in 1972 as "if they had done it earlier in the ball game."

Fletcher does not believe going to do a Lindsay. I'm

staying here. I need to be able to broaden my base in the Republican party."

Born in a Phoenix ghetto, Fletcher knew grinding hardship and poverty. His mother had two college degrees but had to work as a maid. It took five years after his graduation from a Kansas college for him to find a job utilizing his abilities.

The constant frustrations broke the spirit of Fletcher's first wife. In 1960, when a white landlord refused to rent her a three-bedroom house, she jumped off the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge, leaving Fletcher to rear five children, now grown. (The Fletchers lived in Berkeley at the time, where he was teaching school, trying his hand at the restaurant business and being active in the local GOP.)

The new Mrs. Fletcher, a former bookkeeper, also has a grown child, and together they have eight grandchildren.

"One reason I have been able to do as much is that I have no static at home," Fletcher said fondly of his wife. "I can't help but feel that if I stay on the course I am on, there is going to be a windfall of opportunity down the roadway."