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Nixon delays Mitchell move

WASHINGTON—The real reason Atty. Gen. John M. Mitchell is delaying his resignation to take over President Nixon's reelection campaign is not his well-known reluctance to leave the Justice Department but a request from the President, who has not yet decided on the new attorney general.

Rowland Evans

and

Robert Novak

Originally scheduled to move into the plush offices of "The Committee for the Re-election of the President" at 1701 Pennsylvania Avenue the end of this month, Mitchell's new schedule will keep him at Justice at least until early February.

His appointments secretary, ordered by Mitchell several weeks ago to make no appointments for him beyond the end of December, has a new order: book him for appointments as Attorney General through January.

How much bearing the succession problem has to do with Mitchell's delayed departure is somewhat speculative, but a new name — Asst. Atty. Gen. L. Patrick Gray III— is now under consideration.

Gray, an intimate of Presidential counselor Robert H. Finch, is chief of the Department's civil division. Both White House moderates and some liberal Republicans in the Senate have been waging a quiet, backstage battle against elevating Deputy Atty. Gen. Richard G. Kleindienst to Mitchell's job. Their objections: Kleindienst's image as an abrasive, law-and-order hatchet man would hurt Mr. Nixon in the Presidential campaign, even if he were only made "Acting" Attorney General (avoiding a Senate confirmation battle).

Gray, on the other hand, has no political enemies on the right and, through his work as Finch's right-hand man when Finch was Secretary of Health, Educa-

tion and Welfare, total acceptability to the Republican center and left.

A footnote: Mitchell's long-delayed move into the Nixon campaign is raising problems. Top politicians and campaign contributors flocking to Washington to plan for 1972 find themselves conferring with Harry Flemming, Jeb S. Nagruder and other lesser lights; instead, they want Mitchell.

McGovern stumbles

As if he were not having trouble expanding his base, Sen. McGovern