

Mr. Nixon's Attorney General

Attorney General John N. Mitchell is returning to the post from which he came and which, spiritually, he has never left: campaign manager for Richard M. Nixon. This is a post for which Mr. Mitchell is infinitely better qualified than the one he has held during the last three years.

When he appointed Mr. Mitchell, Mr. Nixon followed the regrettably growing tradition of downgrading the highest legal office in the United States Government by naming to it the President's principal political mentor. This was the kind of role that at one time was more characteristic of Postmaster General than of Attorney General. So far as could be observed during his term of service, Mr. Mitchell's advice to the President was in faithful conformity to a consistently right-wing "Southern strategy."

While personally affable—and with a better half who brought a touch of humor to the bleak Washington scene—Mr. Mitchell has for three years stood for retrogression in respect to practically every phase of civil rights, of civil liberties and of individual freedoms. In his search for that will-o'-the-wisp "law and order," Mr. Mitchell has almost invariably stood on the side of illiberalism or reaction. Of similar caliber is his record on Supreme Court nominations, voting rights, school integration, electronic eavesdropping, dragnet police methods and restraint on freedom of speech and press.

Unfortunately, it appears that nothing better can be expected of his deputy and prospective successor, the brash and eager Richard G. Kleindienst, whose record to date in the Justice Department and previously reflects an outlook strikingly similar to that of John N. Mitchell.