

Saxbe Won't Be a Political Adviser

By Susanna McBee

Washington Post Staff Writer

Sen. William B. Saxbe (R-Ohio), who was confirmed by the Senate Monday to be the new Attorney General, says he will not seek a role as a political adviser to the President.

Saxbe made it clear in an interview that he will not attempt to follow the examples of such active political strategists as Attorneys General Herbert Brownell Jr., Robert F. Kennedy, and John N. Mitchell.

"I'm not going to call the political tunes for anybody," said Saxbe, who will be sworn in Jan. 4. "I'm poorly qualified," he added, noting that he had never been active in the Republican organization in Ohio.

Saxbe's comments indicated he will take a similar position to that of former Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson, who sought to take himself and his top aides at the Justice Department out of partisan politics.

Like Richardson, Saxbe

said he does not intend to give political speeches and does not expect his key assistants to do so either. He also said he does not anticipate any requests for political advice from Mr. Nixon.

In the past, some attorneys general have been powerful political figures themselves. Brownell ran the campaigns of Thomas E. Dewey and President Eisenhower; Kennedy ran his brother's campaign, and Mitchell headed Mr. Nixon's efforts in 1968 and part of 1972.

Saxbe will be the fifth leader the Justice Department has had in the last two years. Mitchell resigned in March, 1972. Richard G. Kleindienst served until last May when Richardson was sworn in, and since Richardson's resignation on Oct. 20, the department has been led by Acting Attorney General Robert H. Bork.

Reflecting his strong feeling that his first duty is to bring stability to the department, Saxbe conferred with heads of divisions, boards,

and bureaus at the department Monday morning.

He told them he wanted them to stay and praised Bork for preventing a mass exodus after Richardson's departure.

He said, according to a source who attended the session, that his reputation as a "hip-shooter" may be deserved, but he insisted that hip-shooting is better than not shooting—that is, not making decisions—at all.

In the interview later, he said he intends to name an associate attorney general—as Richardson did—as well as a deputy attorney general.

While he does not expect the department to become politicized again, he said he thinks a current trend "to

take politics out of everything is going to be a short-lived phenomenon.

"If you don't have political patronage, you're going to have personal patronage, and this leads to the insulence of office when there's no electorate leaning on you. I feel I have an obligation to do a good job because if I don't, it will reflect badly on the Republican Party."

Saxbe said one of his first priorities will be to step up the department's attack on organized crime. Although its "crime-busting" efforts in recent years have been "more effective," he said, he does not think that "organized crime in this country has been hurt as yet. The department ought to do more."