

JUL 30 1970

MITCHELL DECRIES RUMOR ON '72 VOTE

Inquiry Seeks the Source of
'Lie' on Canceling Election

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 29 — The Justice Department is investigating to determine who originated the rumor that the Nixon Administration was contemplating canceling the 1972 elections and repealing the Bill of Rights.

Attorney General John N. Mitchell told reporters today, "We think we know where it started. There's an investigation going on, and we want to trace it more distinctly."

The rumor most recently reappeared when Scanlan's, a monthly magazine, printed in its August issue what was purported to be the second page of a memorandum on the office stationery of Vice President Agnew, mentioning two projects — "holding no national elections in '72" and "the Bill of Rights repeal."

This "confidential memorandum" has been denounced by Mr. Agnew as a fraud. Today, Mr. Mitchell called it "a complete fabrication" and "an example of Hitler's big lie technique," but he conceded that the underlying rumor had received wide circulation, particularly on college campuses.

Hopes to Disclose Name

"I don't think they believe it," he said of college students, "but they like to talk about it."

The Attorney General said that he believed the rumor could be stopped if the Justice Department could publicly identify the person or persons who originated it. Asked if he planned to do this, he replied, "Hopefully."

in a wide-ranging breakfast interview with reporters, Mr. Mitchell took a generally optimistic view when asked about the likelihood of further campus violence and the possibility that radical groups were organizing a national conspiracy.

"Only a very small group of students is interested in violence," he said. "I believe that this year the center of the student body is pushing the militants and radicals further into isolation."

The Attorney General predicted that the conspiracy trial of members of the Weathermen, a militant faction of Students for a Democratic Society, would contribute to this isolation. He said the trial would put the defendants "where the center of the student body can look at them, and I don't think many of the students will want to align themselves with that kind of individual."

Blames 'Small Group'

Generally, he added the campus problems are caused by "a relatively small group of nihilists, so we should not be against students or even against demonstrating students." He also discounted any national effort by radical leaders.

"The various groups acting in this area do not act in very close concert," Mr. Mitchell observed. "It is very difficult for them to agree among themselves. In my opinion, there is no over-all national concerted operation among these groups."

The Attorney General said, in response to a question, that he believed Dr. G. Alexander Heard, President Nixon's adviser on campus problems, had "overemphasized the war in Southeast Asia" as the underlying cause of campus disturbances.

"There are a lot of underlying problems," he said. "Students are now at a point in their lives when they are looking at our total system, at our educational, social and political system, and many of them feel they want changes in the system faster than they can be brought about in the normal process of things."