

STANDARD
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A GOP Political Hopeful

WASHINGTON — Out of the chaos and legend of the Watergate scandal, a new political star has risen in the person of Elliot Richardson, the man charged by President Nixon with scouring away the sordid scum and restoring a bright image to his administration.

In the short span of four years and four months, Richardson has served his President and his government as Undersecretary of State, Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, Secretary of Defense and now Attorney General.

THAT IS A RECORD unparalleled in the history of this nation, even for men like Averell Harriman and the late James F. Byrnes who spent years moving from one important government post to another.

It is a record that could — if Richardson is successful in ridding the Nixon Administration of the terrible odor of the Watergate fiasco — propel the Massachusetts Republican toward his party's 1976 presidential nomination.

There is a special irony in this development, of course, because two weeks ago Richardson was written off as a prospect for future political office in his home state. That judgment was made after he, as Secretary of Defense, ordered the closing of the Boston Naval Yard and other military installations as part of the administration's economy effort.

But politics change with lightning swift-ness these days. Richardson still may not be the darling of voters in his home state. But he is now a Republican of national importance and influence.

Along with Spiro Agnew, John Connally, Charles Percy, Ronald Reagan and Nelson Rockefeller, he must be given serious consideration for the Presidency.

Prior to entering the Nixon Administration, his association and experience in politics was with distinguished men whose philosophy ranged from moderate to liberal — former Senator Leverett Saltonstall, the late Secretary of State Christian Herter, the late Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter and the late Federal Judge Learned Hand.

Richardson's credentials, while not impeccable, are impressive. A brilliant law student at Harvard and a winner of the Bronze Star for heroic action in World War II, Richardson is an enlightened international who has also demonstrated a compassionate interest in domestic problems.

While he has in the past been criticized for intemperate campaign practices in Massachusetts, the new Attorney General is a good many cuts above the plodding and plotting provincials who perpetrated the Watergate exercise and then sought to cover it up.

RICHARDSON STILL HAS a long way to go to become as well known as Agnew, Rockefeller, Connally, Reagan or even Percy. But that is not an insurmountable task because he possesses a political freshness that most of those warhorses lack. At 52, he also is a good deal younger than Rockefeller, Reagan and Connally.

It is possible that Massachusetts may field both presidential nominees in 1976: Richardson for the Republicans and Ted Kennedy for the Democrats.