

Saxbe Expects Justice Post

By Carroll Kilpatrick
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Sen. William B. Saxbe (R-Ohio) said yesterday after a lengthy meeting with President Nixon that he was "relatively sure" the President would nominate him to be the next Attorney General.

Saxbe met with the President for more than an hour to discuss pro and con, the proposal that he be named to succeed Elliot L. Richardson, who resigned Oct. 20.

Later in the day, the senator returned to the White House to meet with acting Attorney General Robert H. Bork.

Asked why he was willing to work with the President after having criticized him on numerous occasions, Saxbe said:

"I have been around here five years, bitching about what I would do if I had the opportunity. All at once, they give me the ball. Should I throw it away? It is not something you just walk away from. I may strike out."

After his morning visit to the Oval Office, Saxbe said that he and the President "asked each other questions, and got attitudes and opinions."

The senator said he was satisfied he would have the independence needed to do a good job and would have the President's cooperation.

"I am also satisfied that the President has acted honorably in the situations that have arisen since Watergate," Saxbe said. "This was a thing that I wanted to

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know, and I have satisfied myself."

Asked why he was persuaded that Mr. Nixon has acted honorably since Watergate, Saxbe said, "We went over a number of instances where I had questions." These included "some of the traumatic things that have happened in regard to Watergate, some of the revelations and some of the people who have given testimony" and charges of former presidential counsel John W. Dean III, he said.

"I believe him," Saxbe

said of the President's answers to his questions.

"Did he show you a summary of the tapes?" a reporter asked.

"No, he didn't," the senator replied. "I am sure I could have them at such time as I want to look at them, but obviously now isn't the time."

White House deputy press secretary Gerald L. Warren would provide no information when asked if Saxbe would be nominated.

Saxbe said he thought the matter would be resolved "within the next day or two," but that he did not want to leave the impression he had it "in the bag."

In their lengthy conversation, Saxbe said that Mr. Nixon "reported some people who didn't think I would make a very good Attorney General, and I reported some people who didn't think I should take it."

But the senator, a first-term who has announced that he will not seek re-election next year, said he was confident he could do a good job and would accept the challenge if offered. He is a former attorney general of Ohio.

Asked if the President had made an offer, he said, "The offer was implied

when I walked in there, because we had an understanding that I was there to talk about being Attorney General and he was there to talk to me about it."

Alexander M. Haig Jr., White House chief of staff, was the only other person present.

The appointment of Saxbe would cost the Republicans a Senate seat—at least until November, 1974.

Sources close to Ohio Democratic Gov. John J. Gilligan said the leading prospect for appointment to the seat is Cleveland businessman Howard M. Metzenbaum, a Democrat. Metzenbaum ran unsuccessfully for the Senate in 1970 and has indicated his intention to seek the Saxbe seat next year.

Former astronaut John H. Glenn Jr., who lost to Metzenbaum in the 1970 primary, wants to challenge him for the nomination again, despite Gilligan's efforts to persuade him to run for lieutenant governor instead.

The governor's associates said there was a possibility that if the conflict between Glenn and Metzenbaum could not be worked out, the appointment might go to a third person.

When a reporter asked if the President had commented on Saxbe's sharp criticisms of him, the senator replied: "Yes, and I said, well, that he would have to take me warts and all."

Saxbe said in December when the President ordered heavy bombing of North Vietnam that he thought Mr. Nixon had "taken leave of his senses."

Only Sunday, he was quoted by the Knight Newspapers as saying flatly: "Nixon is through, finished, in terms of his effectiveness over the next years."

Saxbe said his outspoken comments would not "reduce my ability to work and cooperate with the President."

When asked if he would like to be Attorney General, the senator replied:

"I think I would. It is a challenge; a challenge that I like. It is a personnel job. It is a management job. It requires an understanding of lawyers, and I have probably hired a thousand lawyers in my days as attorney general (of Ohio).

"I feel very strongly that the Justice Department is the very heart and soul of our country, because government without law is tyranny, and I would like to re-establish a real sound belief in our system of justice and in our country."