

# Saxbe--Part-time GOP Maverick

Washington

The date was October 11, the place Columbus, Ohio; and the question put to the senior U.S. Senator from Ohio was whether the Nixon Administration was corrupt.

The senator's answer: "I don't know whether its one of the most corrupt, but it's one of the most inept. They just couldn't plan a scenario as ridiculous as what's been going on, and if it keeps on, they're going to have to get 'em clown suits."

The scenario has gone on, but now, clown suits or not, the senator has decided that he would like to be part of the Nixon Administration — and the administration has decided it would like to have him. Yesterday, President Nixon announced his nomination of Senator Bart Saxbe of Mechanicsburg, Ohio, as attorney general.

For those who see irony in it all, the senator had a partial explanation: "You sit around the Senate for years and think of what you can do. You shoot your mouth off. They hand you the ball. You can't go home and sit on the porch."

There were other explanations. As local politicians were quick to point out, the President will likely get some credit from the public for picking someone who has criticized him. Also, the fact that Saxbe is a senator may help in his confirmation.

More significantly, however, the 57-year old Republican is not such an opponent of the President as his popu-



AP Wirephoto

ATTORNEY GENERAL - DESIGNATE SAXBE  
He believes in capital punishment

lar image as a free-speaking maverick might indicate.

Saxbe has made some sharp remarks — most notably, after the resumption of the bombing of North Vietnam last December, that Mr. Nixon "appears to have left his senses." And he has not voted a straight Administration line in the Senate. Nevertheless, on votes crucial to the Administration, Saxbe has often been loyal.

He voted against the confirmation of one Nixon appointee to the supreme court, Clement Haynsworth, but voted for the confirmation of two others — Harrold Carswell and William Rehnquist.

As for the present crisis, the senator has shifted his stance from being dubious about Mr. Nixon's possible role in the Watergate affair to being sure, as he put it, that "he was not implicated." In an interview Wednesday, Saxbe said his newfound belief was "based on four hours of discussion with General Haig and two and a half hours with the President, of complete candor."

The senator also seems to have come to share some of the President's thoughts about the dismissed Watergate special prosecutor, Archibald Cox. Cox, the senator said, "just wanted carte blanche" to rummage through the President's private files. No one should be allowed to "paw around over voluminous records of

the President. . . just for the hell of it." he said.

Saxbe and President Nixon also seem to have similar views in the general area of law enforcement — though the senator, whose political opponents have often accused him of equivocating on major issues, hesitates to link himself too closely to the Nixon law-and-order line.

He said, "It would be fair to say that between a hard-liner and a soft-liner, I would be classified as a hard-line, on law enforcement." He believes in capital punishment, for instance, considering it a deterrent to crime.

It confirmed, he said, that the first thing he would try to do is "get our own house in order." But, he said, he will not adopt the apolitical stance advocated for former Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson, who had said that no high Justice Department official should be involved in politics, and that the department should be "depoliticized."

Saxbe has had a long political career, including membership in the Ohio legislature from 1947 to 1955 and eight years as Ohio attorney general.

"We have to demonstrate that politics does work," he said, "and the last thing I want in this country is a faceless, nameless apolitical government."

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