

Saxbe to Alter Press Relations

Washington

Attorney General William B. Saxbe, faced with mounting criticism of his blunt and off-hand remarks to the press, may change or perhaps even abandon his routine of weekly meeting with reporters.

The attorney general will probably continue to see "groups of reporters" from time to time, Jack W. Hushen, the Justice Department's chief spokesman, said yesterday.

But, Hushen said, "there may be some modification" in the Attorney General's Wednesday morning "briefings" over coffee and doughnuts, which have produced some of his most controversial remarks.

The attorney general, according to Hushen, is "aware of what's being said, both editorially and within the department."

In the four months since he became attorney general, Saxbe has been criticized by

several national Jewish organizations, which accused him of anti-Semitism for a remark he made about "the Jewish intellectual" and the Communist party; by the president of the American Bar Association, for his remark that Patricia Hearst was a "common criminal," and by an assortment of newspaper editorials.

One newspaper, the Decatur Herald in Decatur, Ill., suggested last week: "If Mr. Saxbe insist on being so blunt perhaps it is time somebody was blunt with him — and told him in plain words to 'shut up.'"

The general view among the Justice Department's leadership, according to many top officials, is that Saxbe should tone down or eliminate his off-the-cuff comments and that the should consider gradually ending or somehow altering the briefings he has held with reporters.

New York Times