

An Obscure Front-Runner for Interior

If Senate Republicans have their way the new Secretary of the Interior will be Kent Frizzell, a hitherto little known official who has served as the Department of Interior's solicitor for the past 2 years and who is now also the department's acting secretary. Although regarded as competent by those who have worked with him closely, Frizzell's public record appears to be so modest and obscure as to permit no sure judgments as to the kind of secretary he would make.

Twenty or more Republican senators, or better than half of all Republicans in the Senate, have now written letters to President Ford urging him to nominate Frizzell. Moreover, White House Press Secretary Ronald Nessen acknowledged recently that Frizzell was clearly the front-runner among candidates for the job, although Nessen added that the President was "in no hurry" to pick a man for the job.

The dominant sentiment among the Senate Republicans seems to be that the leadership void at Interior should be filled immediately, and that this can be best accomplished by naming the man who is already on the job in an acting capacity. Secretary Rogers Morton left Interior on 1 May to go to the Department of Commerce. The controversial Stanley Hathaway was not sworn in until 13 June, some 3 months after his nomination. Then, little more than a month later, Hathaway resigned after being hospitalized in a state of "depression." To make matters worse, Interior has not had an under secretary since mid-January when John C. Whitaker was hospitalized with a heart attack.

In a joint letter to the President, four of the five Republicans on the Senate Interior Committee—Clifford Hansen of Wyoming, Paul Fannin of Arizona, Dewey Bartlett of Oklahoma, and Mark Hatfield of Oregon—said that Frizzell was fully qualified and "eminently confirmable." "He will need no learning time to confront the backlog of decisions facing the secretary," they said. These senators, together with senators Robert Dole and James Pearson of Frizzell's home state of Kansas, are the backbone of his Senate support.

Frizzell, who is 46, has been a state senator and state attorney general in Kansas, and, in 1970, he ran a losing race as the Republican nominee for governor. In 1971, President Nixon appointed him to the U.S. Department of Justice as the assistant attorney general for land and natural resources. Frizzell held this position for about a year, and is perhaps best remembered at Justice as the official who acted as the government's chief negotiator with the American Indian Movement leaders after their uprising at Wounded Knee in 1972.

Frizzell was at Justice when two major court actions were initiated against polluters, namely the action against the Reserve Mining Company on Lake Superior and the one against the Ford Motor Company. Although the basic policy decisions to bring these actions were made at a higher level, Frizzell is said to have moved expeditiously once told to proceed.

The picture of Frizzell one gets from talking with some of his former colleagues at Justice and with environmental lawyers is that of an affable, competent, but not very forceful individual who is in no sense an obvious choice for a Cabinet post. But one Justice Department attorney, who counts himself as much more of an environmentalist than Frizzell, said he thought Frizzell would be responsible and effective.

Although some of Interior's past solicitors have been at the heart of policy-making, there does not seem to be much visible evidence that this has been true in Frizzell's case. Top staff people on the Senate Interior Committee have gained little impression of him, one way or the other. "He hasn't been the front man on any issue that I can think of," said one.

Leaders of several national environmental groups have urged the President to nominate someone of demonstrated leadership and competence in mediating the growing conflicts between conservation and development. They have asked him to consider three Republicans who, in their view, meet that test to a high degree: former governor Tom McCall of Oregon; Governor Dan Evans of Washington; and Russell Peterson, a former governor of Delaware and currently chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality. But environmentalists will be more surprised than not if the job does not go to Frizzell, who has the advantage of already having a foot in the secretary's office.—L.J.C.

"Dungan is wonderfully open and sensitive, but he's not one of the crowd. For instance, he doesn't understand that you can't be a fully fledged faculty member unless you are given the opportunity to earn respect as scholar."

While Dungan's not being a member of the educator's club is often mentioned, his background in public administration is probably more important. He spent four formative years on the staff of the Budget Bureau before joining Kennedy's staff in 1956. William O. Baker, of Bell Laboratories, on the Board of Higher Education since it was created, says that DHE's record on planning, budgeting, and "cost-benefiting" is unusually good when compared with the performance of other government departments in New Jersey and in other states.

DHE does do analyses of the institutions in terms of such things as the amount of lab space, hours of teaching, and so forth. According to Baker, the board uses this information in making its policy decisions, but what is indicated by "these parameters is not confused with quality."

Compromise in Computers

DHE doesn't win all the battles. The chancellor, for example, espoused the idea of setting up a computer system under DHE control to serve all higher education in the state. Rutgers argued that the big computer is to the university now what the library was a generation ago and that the loss of control would deprive the university of an essential resource. The board recruited a high-powered advisory committee, enlisting experts from Bell Labs, RCA, and other sophisticated research organizations and industries in New Jersey. As a result, a computer science network was set up with the center located at Rutgers science campus across the Raritan River from the main campus in New Brunswick. An association of institutions was created under the compromise, but in practical terms it is Rutgers' show, and the state colleges do not seem to have made any great gain in research capacity or in being able to tap in on Rutgers' computer research capabilities.

Like other states, New Jersey has a master plan for higher education, but New Jersey's plan is a deliberately flexible one—Dungan calls it a "rolling" master plan. The basic three-tiered structure of the New Jersey system is substantially complete. The state is now reasonably well served by 19 community colleges jointly funded by county and state governments. Eight state colleges provide 4-year college programs. Graduate and professional education and research are the province of Rutgers, which has branch campuses in Newark and Camden, and of the New Jersey College of