

Nixon Scraps 'Super-Cabinet' Put Together 4 Months Ago

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By Lou Cannon
Washington Post Staff Writer

President Nixon yesterday scrapped a Super-Cabinet reorganization plan that he had unveiled with high hopes only four months ago.

At the time Mr. Nixon called his proposal a method of eliminating "wasteful, musclebound government in Washington."

Yesterday, White House press secretary Ronald Ziegler announced the abandonment of the Super Cabinet. He said the President had now decided that he wanted "a direct line of communication with each member of the Cabinet."

Throughout its brief existence, the Super-Cabinet has been under attack within the administration—and on Capitol Hill—for purportedly isolating the President from his own cabinet appointees.

"We were creating another layer of government that wasn't needed," Interior Secretary Rogers C. B. Morton said yesterday.

The reorganization gave three Cabinet members—Health, Education and Welfare Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger, Secretary of Agriculture Earl L. Butz and Housing and Urban Development Secretary James T. Lynn—the status of "counselors" with broad authority in the fields of human resources, natural resources and community development.

Each of the three men was given the chairmanship of a Domestic Council committee and instructed "to provide much of the advice

and supervision for which Presidents in the past have had to turn to domestic policy establishments within the White House.

"The counselors will also be able to resolve with their colleagues at the secretarial level many interdepartmental issues which have heretofore required arbitration by the President or his staff," the President said in announcing the reorganization.

In practice, some Cabinet members complained privately, the system helped build higher a "Berlin wall" around the President which separated him from his own Cabinet appointments.

Morton said that he worked well personally with Butz but that the coordination accomplished by the new system was already being carried out by the Office of Management and Budget and the Domestic Council.

"You have to search pretty hard to find a real reason for the reorganization plan," he said.

The reorganization was a favorite idea of deposed domestic affairs adviser John Ehrlichman, who was one of five high-ranking staff members who was named a presidential assistant under the same reorganization.

The other four assistants were H. R. Haldeman, who also resigned in the wake of the burgeoning Watergate scandal, plus Henry Kissinger, foreign affairs adviser; George P. Shultz, economics affairs adviser, and Roy L. Ash, executive management.

Despite their official removal from the government,

both Ehrlichman and Haldeman are still working at the White House.

"They're leaving relatively soon," a spokesman said. "Both men are wrapping up their transitional work and that should be completed within a matter of days."

White House sources said that neither Haldeman nor Ehrlichman was involved in the decision to abandon the reorganization and return to the traditional system of individual relationships between the President and Cabinet members.

When asked why the system was being discarded, Ziegler said: "Some members of the White House that were here have left."

One White House staffer said that Ehrlichman was "the key to the system—it couldn't work without him."

Mr. Nixon has never held Cabinet meetings on a regular basis, though he has sometimes promised to do so.

In December, 1970, the President said he planned to hold Cabinet meetings every two weeks even if there was no fixed business to discuss. Mr. Nixon's promise after widespread reports that Cabinet members felt neglected.

The President held only 13 Cabinet meetings in 1969 and 14 in 1970. After his promise of regular meetings Mr. Nixon held 21 Cabinet sessions in 1971, but the number dropped to 11 in 1972.

He has held eight Cabinet Meetings this year.