

Putting the White House Back Together Again

In a sudden burst of emotion, Sen. Barry Goldwater of Arizona, the usually unemotional 1964 Republican presidential nominee confided to a colleague that he would "gladly" give up his seat in the Senate to become Richard Nixon's White House staff chief if the President asked him.

What Goldwater was telling his Republican friend was that Mr. Nixon must give his innermost staff the solid political professionalism so dangerously lacking the past four years. One obvious place to look for that professionalism, Goldwater was saying, is among Republicans in the Senate or House.

Goldwater's sensational offer came shortly after he heard that Mr. Nixon had picked four-star Gen. Alexander Haig as his "interim" White House chief of staff.

At the same time, and without Goldwater's knowledge, an informal committee of Nixon aides who predate the H. R. Haldeman-John Ehrlichman regime—some inside the White House and some outside—has been conducting its own private investigation of what the President should do to begin restoring order, decency and political

action to the White House. Their answer in part: persuade a Republican member of the House with long service and high standing within the party to move to the White House.

One suggestion: Rep. John Rhodes of Arizona, a popular conservative who is also chairman of the House Republican Policy committee.

Still other proposals from the highest levels of the Republican Party have bleakly but frontally warned Mr. Nixon that he cannot temporize in building his new White House staff, or risk not installing a chief of staff both acceptable and responsive to Republican officeholders and other party professionals. Otherwise, he will lose what chance he has to recapture the allegiance of his own party in his battle to step back from the brink of disaster and start all over again.

Thus, one former member of the first Nixon Cabinet who stands high with both party brass and rank-and-file is quietly pushing a two-part solution to the President's immediate problems of staff and the matter of an independent Watergate prosecutor: put a party regular acceptable to the congressional wing in charge of the White House

staff; and name an elder statesman from the Democratic Party, thoroughly familiar with the importance of protecting the interests of the presidency, as chief Watergate prosecutor.

The aim is the same in both cases: the President must begin the tedious, tortuous task of restoring the integrity of the presidency and do so at once.

Instead, Mr. Nixon's first decision on staff failed to satisfy these party elders. Despite the universal admiration here for Gen. Haig's work both as assistant to Henry Kissinger and, in his present job as Army vice chief of staff, no Republican, professional wants an active-duty general in the regular White House political structure.

Gen. Haig himself is fully aware of that fact. As a loyal subordinate to the Commander-in-Chief, however, he is not in position to say no. Haig, according to one White House staff aide, is hoping to return to the Army within six weeks at most, sooner if possible.

But there is no assurance that Mr. Nixon will let him go. Moreover, Republican politicians who have closely watched Mr. Nixon's performance since his first public recognition on April 17 that Watergate had turned

ugly, are becoming more and more disenchanted. They are asking why Richard and Nixon appears so reluctant to put his official family under the direction of a Republican professional, particularly when George Bush, so highly respected by Mr. Nixon that he has served both as United Nations ambassador and Republican Party chairman, is clearly available.

These same politicians are appalled that Mr. Nixon has sought not one word of advice from two other widely-admired Republicans: former Defense Secretary Melvin Laird and former White House counselor Bryce Harlow.

Indeed, as we have reported, before the view from the top of the Republican Party makes Mr. Nixon's clean-up smack of expediency, as though he still did not comprehend what has happened. That is the only reason why Barry Goldwater would give even an instant's thought to the alien prospect of moving himself into the White House as Mr. Nixon's chief of staff.