

WASHINGTON

Merry-Go-Round

by Jack Anderson



WASHINGTON-The economic outlook is far more bleak than President Nixon is telling the public. His own experts are warning that the Arab oil embargo will send this country into an economic tailspin. Unless it is lifted, they predict a serious recession, perhaps even a depression, within the next two years.

The oil shortage will hit all the industries, from automobiles to plastics, that use petroleum products. People will have to be laid off work. They will tighten their belts. This means less money will be spent on consumer products, which, in turn, will cause more layoffs and belt-tightening.

Already, the surveys show that consumers are losing confidence in the economy. They are wary about the oil shortages. They have lost faith in President Nixon's leadership. They are worried about layoffs and loss of overtime.

Their natural reaction is to save money against a possible loss of income. Therefore, they don't buy the car or TV set or refrigerator that they might otherwise have purchased. The sale of durable goods has already leveled off.

Meanwhile, the experts predict the nation will be hit by electricity blackouts and cold homes as a direct result of the oil shortage. President Nixon's political instinct will be to cut back on factories rather than households. He doesn't want millions of voters shivering and blaming him.

But if the households consume too much energy, there won't be enough to operate our plants. This will result, inevitably, in plant closures and increased unemployment.

The warnings are dire. But President Nixon is still taking only half-measures.

Nixon's Undoing: The 19-point bill of particulars cited by the AFL-CIO as grounds for the impeachment of Pres-

ident Nixon leads off with the charge that he used the office for personal enrichment.

Probably no other White House scandal has so enraged the American people as the story of the President's taxes and estates. Despite a salary of \$200,000 a year, he paid a federal income tax of only \$792.81 in 1970 and \$878.03 in 1971. This is no more than a working man with the same size family would pay if he earned only \$8,500 a year.

One reason the President got away with paying such low taxes was because of the deductions afforded by his homes in San Clemente and Key Biscayne. Yet the taxpayers got stuck with most of the bills for these kingly estates. They have cost the taxpayers more than \$10 million, not counting the tremendous transportation bill the President and his aides have run up flying cross country.

Many of the expenditures can be justified as essential to the President's security. But the taxpayers have also been soaked for many luxuries and incidentals, such as stamping his golf tees with the presidential logo and furnishing his bathroom with his favorite soap.

His aides also wrangled some extras out of the taxpayers. At San Clemente, for example, the taxpayers had to pay for a Muzak system to pipe music into the offices of aides John Ehrlichman, Henry Kissinger, Dwight Chapin and Rose Mary Woods. The cost for this background music was \$992.94.

It may be the waste, more than Watergate, that will cause the President's undoing.

Batting Back: The President has been making overtures to Congress to head off the move to impeach him. He has been calling in the Republican members, a group at a time, to lay his case before them. At these sessions, he has been effective

in drawing off the steam that had been building up on Capitol Hill.

But in the privacy of his oval office, the President hasn't been at all conciliatory. It is his habit to go into seclusion to grapple with a great crisis. Our White House sources say he came out of seclusion the first of November with fire in his eyes.

He told aides that the American people like a fighter and that he is going to fight his way back to the top. He compared himself to the late President Harry Truman who never stopped battling when he sank in the popularity polls.

Nixon swore to his aides fiercely that he had no intention of turning the government over to those who have been out to get him. If he left the White House as his adversaries are demanding, he said, he would be cut to pieces by them.

He doesn't intend to let his adversaries shear him of his presidential powers, which would leave him unarmed and helpless. On the contrary, he is determined to stay in the White House and to use the powers of the presidency to defend himself.

Our sources say Richard Nixon made this perfectly clear.

Ironic Twist: Spiro Agnew often complained to his rich friends that the demands on a man in high office were too large for the salary. He

needed cash, he told them, to carry on in the style befitting a national office holder.

Because he accepted cash, he is no longer a national office holder. But the Agnew example dramatically illustrates the problems many politicians of modest means now face.

The laws governing campaign funds have been tightened, so that politicians can no longer dip into their campaign money to pay personal bills. They have to find some other way to finance newsletters, travel and other incidentals.

This has compelled some congressmen to raise slush funds to cover their incumbency expenses. It was a slush fund that got Richard Nixon into trouble in the 1952 campaign.

But slush funds have now become the only way some congressmen can pay for all the incidentals they used to take out of their campaign collections. Wyoming's Rep. Teno Roncalio, for example, is throwing a party billed as "Vino with Teno" to raise money. Others on Capitol Hill have planned similar fundraising affairs.

By a twist of irony, in other words, campaign reforms have forced some politicians to appeal to contributors for noncampaign funds and, thereby, to become even more dependent on rich patrons.