

# Hickel's Book Describes Firing, Arguments Over SST, Agnew

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The way Wally Hickel tells it, President Nixon seemed ill at ease and John Ehrlichman uncharacteristically nervous when Hickel was ushered into the Oval Office last Nov. 25 to be fired as Secretary of the Interior.

"Nixon looked out the window for some time. He talked about the new lighting that had been installed around the White House. He said that he had to dedicate it that evening . . .

"Finally I said, 'Mr. President, get to the point.'

"He again talked about all the work I had done for him during his campaign, and the things we had accomplished at Interior dealing with the environment and pollution. He said he had no criticism of my handling of Interior.

"Then he turned and said, 'Wally, you're a strong man, and so I'd like to be just as strong when I tell you what I'm going to tell you. I believe that's the way you'd want it.

"He said that he felt that 'there's a mutual lack of confidence.' He wanted me to go."

Hickel's account of his dismissal and of his other adventures and disappointments in Washington as a member of the Nixon Cabinet is contained in his autobiographical book, "Who Owns America?" pub-



WALTER HICKEL

. . . letter stirred furor

lished by Prentice-Hall. Though the official publication date is several weeks away, copies are on sale and news stories were being written yesterday on the contents.

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HICKEL, From A1

The book confirms the generally-reported outline of Hickel's differences with the Nixon White House and adds previously unpublished details from the Hickel standpoint. Presidential Press Secretary Ronald L. Ziegler declined to comment on the book yesterday and indicated that the White House will have nothing to say, at least on the record.

Among other things, the former Interior Secretary reports that:

- After being formally asked by Mr. Nixon for his views on the supersonic transport project, the White House ordered him to tone down the misgivings that he expressed in reply. According to Hickel, the White House sent his letter back with paragraphs of criticism of the SST marked for deletion. Hickel did as he was told.

- The White House pressured him to fire John O'Leary as director of the Bureau of Mines—but then told him to hold off the official announcement until after an important vote in Congress on the anti-ballistic missile system. Hickel quotes former presidential aide Bryce Harlow as saying that the administration would win two votes on the ABM by deferring the firing of O'Leary. Hickel gives no date for the incident. O'Leary was fired in February, 1970.

- On election night, 1970, Vice President Spiro T. Agnew was elated about the defeat of Republican Sen. Charles Goodell of New York. When a television network reported Goodell's defeat, according to Hickel, Agnew strode over to the TV set and said: "We got that son of a bitch!"

- Two days after the 1970 election, President Nixon told the Cabinet that the result had been "a victory." When someone mentioned that 11 Republican governors had "gone down the drain" in the balloting, according to Hickel, Mr. Nixon replied that "governors aren't important in national elections. The only people left who can deliver big blocks of votes are people like Daley," referring to Democratic Mayor Richard J. Daley of Chicago.

- Presidential assistant Henry A. Kissinger objected to Hickel's demand for

"full compensation" with "full consultation" for any land taken by the government from the Pacific islands people of Micronesia, where the United States is in charge under a United Nations trusteeship. Hickel quotes Kissinger as saying at a State Department meeting, "There are only 90,000 people out there. Who gives a dam?"

Hickel leaves no doubt that the major cause of his demise in the Nixon administration was his letter to the President in May of 1970, just after the U.S. invasion of Cambodia, saying that the administration appears to lack "appropriate concern" for the views of young people.

The letter, which leaked to the press, objected to Agnew's "continued attack" on the young and suggested that Mr. Nixon was isolated in the White House.

Hickel says in his book he wrote the letter because he was "screaming inside" after hearing the President tell the Cabinet of the invasion, and "sick at heart" about the reaction of young people to that and to the shootings at Kent State University.

After the public furor over the letter, he wrote, he was instructed not to attend church services at the White House on Mother's Day, he was barred from a White House briefing on California oil leases and was not permitted to report in person to the President about an official mission to Finland, Norway and Sweden.

After being repeatedly rebuffed by the White House, "my job was getting to be like walking in space with the knowledge that your oxygen supply was slowly being cut off," he writes.

Hickel says he campaigned for Republicans last fall at Mr. Nixon's personal request but less than a month after the election—on Nov. 25—he was urgently called to the White House for "a budget meeting" with presidential aides. When he arrived, he was ushered into the Oval Office to be dismissed from the Cabinet.

After Mr. Nixon said there was "a mutual lack of confidence," Hickel says he did not argue but replied "I'll let history decide." He said he did not shake hands with the President on the way out. "I didn't think of it," he says in his book. "I felt so clean and totally free."