

# White House Tries Videophone

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When Pearl Bailey recently visited the White House she was intrigued by a futuristic-looking object in the office of presidential assistant John D. Ehrlichman.

Obligingly, Ehrlichman punched a few buttons, and to Miss Bailey's amazement, the face of presidential counselor Robert H. Finch suddenly appeared on a screen and the three of them chatted as if they were all in the same room.

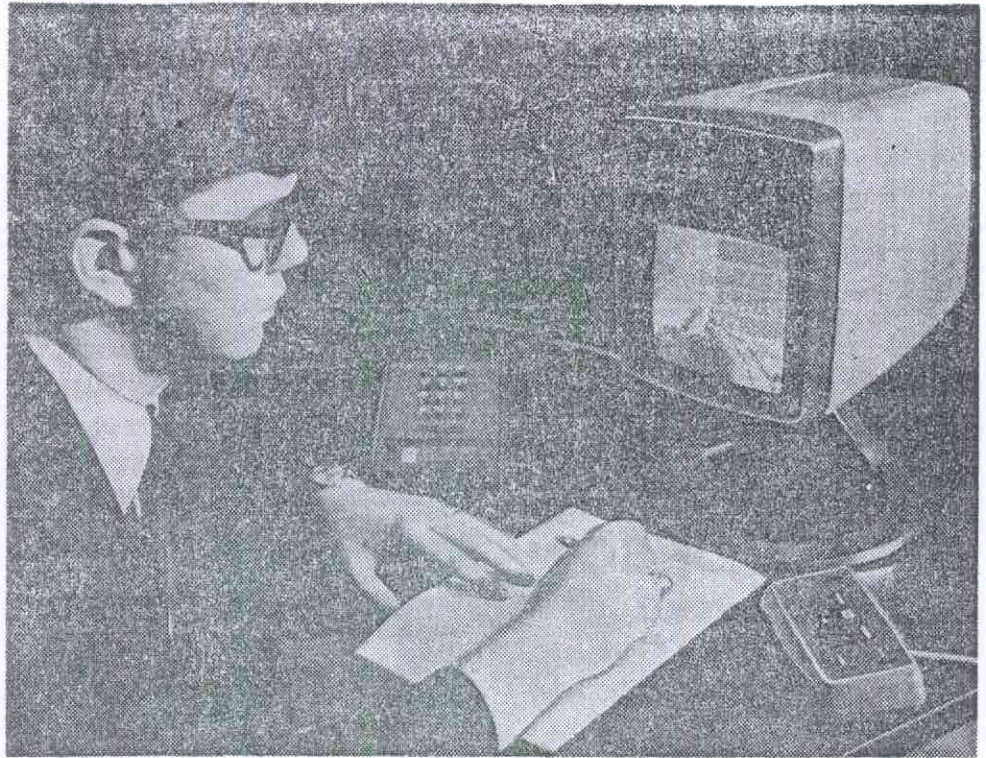
Some aides were referring to the gadgets this week as the newest status symbols in the White House hierarchy. C & P Telephone Co., which provided ten "Picturephones" free of charge to President Nixon's top assistants, says they are just "an experiment."

In addition to Finch and Ehrlichman, others who have the video-telephones are presidential counselors Bryce N. Harlow and Daniel P. Moynihan; presidential assistants Donald Rumsfeld and Peter Flanigan; George P. Shultz, director of the Office of Management and Budget, and presidential press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler.

Mr. Nixon doesn't have one, and reportedly didn't want the gadget. White House chief of staff H.R. Haldeman had a Picturephone briefly, but ordered it removed without explanation.

An aide to Finch said that the device, with its gleaming circular base and small television-like screen never ceases to intrigue visitors.

Finch, who is well known for his lack of mechanical ability, doesn't use his gadget too often "Hell, I



Bell System Photo

Latest status symbol at the White House by a Bell Laboratories aide. is the "Picturephone," demonstrated here

don't even know how to run the thing," he said.

Ziegler reportedly is among the biggest fans of the picture phones.

After a month of seeing as well as hearing his colleagues, Ziegler said last night that the only amusing thing about the device are "the pictures you see on it."

The phone has been helpful, he said, in group discussions that require input from a person not in the room. "When you tune him in on the set," Ziegler said, "It's as if he joined the group."

The device also transmits documents, and by flipping

a few switches, a zoom television lens magnifies a page or a paragraph.

The screen is encased in a gray plastic box, and each set comes with controls that gives each aide the pushbutton power to circumvent video eavesdropping.

The caller can also spruce up before tuning in another person by pushing a "view self" button that causes his own image to appear on the screen.

Another button darkens the screen if the call is made at an inopportune time.

To get both sound and

picture there has to be "mutual consent," an aide explained.

The telephone company plans to introduce the picturephone into the Washington area in the spring.

Although the White House aides aren't willing to offer a public endorsement on the basis of a month's usage, one acknowledged that it added an extra dimension to communications.

Among those getting along without the extra dimensions: White House communications director Herbert G. Klein.

He doesn't have one.