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Colby and CIA Morale

Part 1/2/75

The instantaneous decision of CIA Director William Colby to fire counter-intelligence chief James Angleton the moment Angleton came under fire from the New York Times caused consternation and worry about its impact on the Central Intelligence Agency at the highest levels of the Ford administration.

Contrary to rumors, Colby's abrupt ouster of Angleton was strictly his decision. Neither President Ford nor Secretary of State Henry Kissinger played the slightest role.

Indeed, there was shock in high government circles outside the CIA at the implications of Colby's quick decision. Even if the charges against Angleton's use of CIA's counterintelligence section for internal security purposes prove accurate, they fear Angleton's ouster could further corrode morale inside the embattled CIA. The three top Angleton aides who quit in protest to his sacking provide tangible confirmation.

President Ford's high command is worried by the potential disaster to U.S. intelligence capability and damage to policymaking if the CIA's men believe they will be sacrificed to his demands for blood.

Whatever sin the secretive, super-suspicious Angleton may have committed, his summary dismissal, even be-

fore judicious investigation of the charges against him may create just such a climate of fear inside CIA.

"If those boys get scared and start jumping ship," one high administration official outside the CIA told us, "every secret in the agency may be up for grabs by the media. If they see a witchhunt coming, they may want to save their own skins by quitting and spilling the beans."

That partially explains the pronounced conservative establishment bias on the President's blue-ribbon commission to investigate the agency. It was deliberately set in a conservative mold to reassure the CIA that no witchhunt is in store.

A footnote: Former California Gov. Ronald Reagan, a member of the blue-ribbon panel, was typically the very first to submit a request for full travel and expense allowances for the staff he wants to bring with him to Washington. As the favorite campaigner for conservative Republicans, Reagan's entourage consistently left his hosts puzzled.

If Vice President Nelson Rockefeller has his way, the two top staff jobs on the President's Domestic Council will be filled by two senior Rockefeller

aides during his last term as governor of New York: James Cannon, his agent and lobbyist in Washington, and Richard L. Dunham, state budget director.

President Ford has not yet said yes. But in view of repeated high-level indications that Rockefeller as vice chairman of the Domestic Council would have a large voice in staffing the council, Mr. Ford is expected to go along.

The Domestic Council rises in importance because the President intends to limit the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), under incoming director James Lynn, strictly to budget matters. That would end the pervasive control over policy built up by Jameson OMB Director Roy Ash. If Mr. Ford sticks to that, Rockefeller could emerge with power over domestic policy as head of the Domestic Council equal to Henry Kissinger's power over foreign policy as head of the National Security Council.

Presidential aides, however, made one strategic change in Rockefeller's early draft of the forthcoming executive order making Rockefeller vice chairman of the Domestic Council. The change, which may forebode a certain White House wariness over Rockefeller's potential power, would prevent the Vice President from calling meetings of the Domestic Council. Instead,

only the President can call the council into session.

Just before Christmas, crusty old President George Meany of the AFL-CIO added his formerly favorite politician, Sen. Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota, to the lengthening list of bread-and-butter Democratic liberals he would like to take into the woodshed.

Meany, vainly trying to turn the tide and defeat the trade bill, paid a personal visit to Humphrey Dec. 10 to plead his case against the bill—that it will export American jobs abroad.

Meany knew Humphrey supported the bill, but he asked him to let the Senate debate the measure. In full so that opponents could get their case before the public. Humphrey said the would.

Shortly after the bill reached the Senate floor, however, a cloture petition calling for an immediate end to debate was circulated and the bill, as preordained, quickly passed. When Meany discovered that Humphrey had signed the cloture petition, he was furious. Hubert Humphrey, the darling of organized labor when he was enthusiastically promoted for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1968, was added to Meany's lengthening grievance list.