

Nixon's Aloofness Irks GOP Governors

By Jack Anderson

GOP governors are beginning to show the same sort of discontent over President Nixon that exploded on Democratic statehouses in 1966 against President Johnson.

At that time, Democratic governors blamed Mr. Johnson for the party's poor showing in the polls and angrily complained about his lack of liaison with state capitals.

In fact, Missouri's Gov. Warren Hearnes said bluntly that the party "might be better off with someone else" in the 1968 presidential elections.

Mr. Johnson labored mightily to woo the disgruntled governors with plane trips to the LBJ Ranch and frequent briefings. But the damage was done, and as late as March, 1968, only 14 of the 24 were back in the LBJ corral.

President Nixon's failure to maintain close liaison with the 32 Republican governors hasn't yet resulted in a wholesale fencekicking. But insiders in several GOP-controlled states have begun whispering their unhappiness over the off-handed treatment they are getting from the White House.

They were annoyed, for example, when Mr. Nixon sent Vice President Agnew to the Republican Governors Conference in Hot Springs, Ark., last December instead of making the trip himself.

They liked his plan, however, to return part of federal tax haul to the states, with no strings attached. They assumed he would lay the groundwork for action in January, but statehouse staffers have hotly told this column that Mr. Nixon has made no real move to get House hearings going.

Gov. Ronald Reagan of California, chairman of the GOP governors, has not openly criticized Mr. Nixon for his failure to keep in closer personal touch with the governors. But the vice chairman, Pennsylvania's Gov. Raymond Shafer, has sorrowfully told friends that the President has let him down and increased Democratic chances of taking over the Harrisburg state house in 1970.

Politicians Critical

Republican politicians in the states, while admiring Mr. Nixon personally as a savvy politician, are scornful of what one called "a stable full of lawyers and public relations men" in the White House.

Even liberal Republicans are impressed with conservative Harry Dent, an experienced political pro himself. But they regard such aides as Bryce Harlow, John Ehrlichman and Lyn Nofziger as inexperienced or inept.

Ehrlichman has come under special sarcasm for his Polyantha comments on what the White House is doing to solve

pollution problems. The truth is that the statehouses have been given pollution aid they don't need and have been denied the help they need most urgently.

The failure of the White House to help the governors in such crucial areas has got them perspiring over the 1970 elections. Thirty-seven gubernatorial candidacies will be decided, 26 of which are now held by Republicans.

Only in the Southern states has Agnew really done his work as the President's special envoy to state capitals. Liberal GOP gubernatorial candidates are particularly resentful about this twist on the so-called Southern strategy.

President Nixon has been in office only a year, so the governors' ferment has a long time to go before it produces the bitter wine of President Johnson's Christmas, 1966, gubernatorial revolt. But Republicans in the states are making birth-control jokes about Agnew's Hot Springs crack that "in 1970 this Republican Governor's Association is going to suffer from a population explosion unknown in our history."

Managing History

Lyndon Johnson tried to manage the news while he occupied the White House. After a year alone with his memories, he is now trying to manage history.

All Presidents, of course, have sought to present the best possible face to the public. But no President ever worked harder at it than LBJ. Once he summoned the government's top press agents to the White House and berated them for failing to build him up to hero dimensions. He told them petulantly: "You're not getting my picture on the front page the way you did President Kennedy's."

Mr. Johnson's first contribution to recorded history was produced while he was still in the White House. He issued a pictorial history called "The Living White House," which contains 63 pictures of LBJ and his family. George Washington, the father of our country, rated only two. Abraham Lincoln was allotted six pictures. More space is devoted to the wedding of LBJ's daughter, Luci, than to all the other eleven White House weddings combined.

If the reader flips through the pages of this publication too fast, he may get the impression that LBJ succeeded George Washington and was re-elected at frequent intervals thereafter.

Now Mr. Johnson, in a series of television interviews, is offering the nation some more history. As usual, this is the LBJ version of history.

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