

Mollenhoff Resigns As Prober for Nixon

5/31/70

By a Washington Post Staff Writer

SAN CLEMENTE, Calif., May 30—Clark R. Mollenhoff, the controversial "presidential ombudsman," has resigned from the White House staff, effective July 15, to return to newspaper work.

The surprise announcement was made here today with release of Mollenhoff's letter of resignation and President Nixon's letter accepting it "with regret."

Mollenhoff, who worked for the Des Moines Register and Tribune 28 years before joining the White House staff last August, will become chief of the paper's Washington bureau, succeeding Richard L. Wilson, who is retiring.

Wilson, it is understood, will continue to write his column.

Mollenhoff had the title of special counsel to the President. He was charged with investigating wrong-doing or questionable ethical conduct of administration officials and bringing it to the President's attention before there was a public scandal.

White House Deputy Press Secretary Gerald Warren de-



CLARK R. MOLLENHOFF
... returning to paper

nied that there had been any pressure on Mollenhoff to resign. But some Republican senators have objected to his controversial statements, and some White House staff members also have been opposed to his continuance on the staff.

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Mollenhoff's letter, dated May 28, told the President that "this last chance" to return to his old paper "is too good an opportunity to let slip by despite the great experience it has been to work as 'presidential ombudsman' in your administration."

He said he had hoped it might be possible to continue on the staff "for many months," but that Wilson's retirement "makes it necessary for me to take the step now."

"My decision to resign is in no manner an opposition to your policies, and it is certainly not an indication of any dissatisfaction with our personal relationship," Mollenhoff wrote.

In reply, the President told Mollenhoff that his work "has alerted us to many potential

problem areas and has been important in demonstrating that good government can be good politics for any administration.

"I am sure that this experience has demonstrated to you that we are trying to come to grips with the great issues of our times in an honest and forthright manner."

As a member of the Register and Tribune's Washington bureau Mollenhoff concentrated on exposing corruption and wrong-doing in government, industry and labor. He won supporters and opponents by his sharp and critical questioning of officials and his persistent digging for news.

After Mollenhoff joined the White House staff, he continued to express his opinions sharply and forcefully. He was given authority to examine

some income tax returns, a fact which provoked vigorous criticism from the press and some members of Congress.

He spoke out against student extremists and played a leading role in the administration's unsuccessful attempt to win Senate confirmation of the President's nominations of Judges Clement F. Haynsworth and G. Harrold Carswell to the Supreme Court.

He was alleged to have leaked information charging that scenes depicting war action in Vietnam were posed for CBS cameramen.

In his letter to Mr. Nixon, Mollenhoff said that the President placed no restraints on his work "except to be accurate, fair and firm as I had been in the past in dealing with Democratic and Republican administrations."