

Part 12-68
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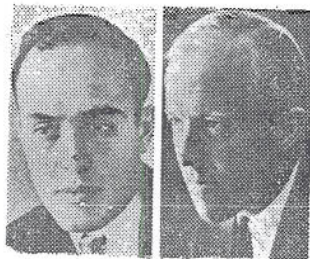
A Good, Gray Cabinet Exactly Fits Nixon's Intention to Hold the Reins

PRESIDENT-ELECT Nixon's surprise choice of William Pierce Rogers as Secretary of State, the supreme cabinet job, exactly fits the qualifications Nixon has established for the top officials in his Administration—proficient men conspicuously lacking in the kind of glamor that marked the Eisenhower and Kennedy Administrations.

Moreover, the selection of non-diplomat, non-foreign affairs expert Rogers is the most positive sign yet that Mr. Nixon is going to run the Government not through glittering experts with high reputations in their fields but through trusted old friends, some of them long-time cronies, whose loyalties to him are beyond question.

With Rogers at the helm of the State Department, for example, there is no question about who will run the Nation's foreign policy. Mr. Nixon himself will be in charge, far more so than if he had tapped a celebrated member of the eastern Republican foreign policy establishment, such as Douglas Dillon or New York Gov. Nelson Rockefeller.

The same yardstick can be equally applied to Mr. Nixon's Secretary of Defense, Rep. Melvin Laird. Laird has no constituency outside his own congressional bailiwick in Wisconsin and his highly respectful colleagues



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in the House. As boss of the Pentagon, Laird is peculiarly Nixon's man, and that is precisely the way the President-elect wants it.

THAT IS NOT to say that Laird at Defense and Rogers at state are not good choices. As we reported earlier in breaking the news of his appointment, Laird is totally inexperienced in large managerial jobs but he has major assets: a deep knowledge of the economics of the Defense Department, including a detailed understanding of competing weapons' systems; plus a calculated strategy on cold war geopolitical issues, which, as a shrewd politician, he will never exempt from domestic politics.

As for Rogers, his public exposure to foreign policy is limited to a brief stint as one of 10 U.S. representatives to the 1965 U.N. General Assembly and a specialized job there in 1967 as a temporary presidential envoy. But he goes to the State Department with two

advantages: an intimacy with the President that no Secretary of State has had in at least half a century; and a lawyer's approach to foreign policy ("lawyers are problem-solvers," a top State Department official told us, "And Rogers is a helluva lawyer").

Moreover, Rogers's appointment is being received in the elegant circles of Manhattan's Republican establishment with a profound sigh of relief. Although Dillon was the preferred choice, Rogers is well known from his days as President Eisenhower's Attorney General and highly regarded.

Beyond that, Mr. Nixon's major cabinet choices reflect another theme—they are not tied to policies of the past.

For Rogers, this is vitally important. There is reason to believe, for example, that a major easing of Red China's approach to the U.S. is now in the offing. Nixon men feel that Rogers will have far more flexibility to exploit potential breakthroughs like that than foreign affairs experts wrapped up in past policies.

THERE IS, finally, one other Nixon characteristic that his choice of top cabinet aides illuminates like a hot floodlight: his refusal to take chances with outsiders he doesn't know well or who

might have the slightest taint of divided loyalty.

With Rogers and Laird at the top and old-friend Robert Finch nailing down the key domestic-affairs cabinet post, Nixon will be surrounded by loyal intimates. Thus, Nixon promises to bring the most personalized Administration to Washington that the town has seen since Franklin Roosevelt's second Administration.

It would be easy but wrong to explain this by Nixon's disastrous experience with the very first appointment he made—that of Gov. Spiro Agnew, never a Nixon intimate, as his vice presidential running mate. The real explanation lies not there but in Nixon himself. A loner, uneasy with strangers, Nixon never has been comfortable outside his small circle of intimates. Thus, he is simply bringing the whole circle to Washington with him to make out of it what has all the earmarks of a good, gray-flannel cabinet.

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