

St. Clair Wooing Justice Lawyers

By Jack Anderson

The White House is raiding the Justice Department for more lawyers to bail President Nixon out of his Watergate troubles.

Although platoons of attorneys are already working on the President's problems with taxes, impeachment, the Senate Watergate committee and the Special Prosecutor, our sources say the White House has asked for "at least a dozen" lawyers from Justice.

These lawyers, of course, are being pulled off important cases at Justice to assist the President at the expense of the taxpayers. Some top Justice officials are giving the White House names of prospects, but there is also an undercurrent of resistance to the presidential draughting.

For example, Assistant Attorney General Henry Petersen, whose criminal division handled the early Watergate investigation, has been privately hinting to aides that they would be wise to turn down the White House.

From bitter experience, Petersen knows that getting too close to President Nixon can mean political burns. At Nixon's request, he postponed acting on crucial Watergate information, and took a public roasting for it.

Petersen is also worried, say insiders, about possible conflicts of interest. Justice lawyers themselves have confided to us

that they are leery of taking the jobs at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue not just out of personal distaste, but because of ethical conflicts. One young anti-trust lawyer sent for a job interview with Nixon attorney James St. Clair had worked on the milk fund case while at Justice.

Other lawyers fear they will be doing "clerk and jerk" jobs at the White House, reviewing other lawyers' work and "jerk-ing" files and books from law libraries.

The White House's difficulty in wooing young Justice lawyers was obliquely conceded by St. Clair in a telephone interview with my associate Bob Owens.

St. Clair said he is "in the process" of hiring two or three attorneys from Justice. But the talent search has been going on for weeks, ample time to snare more than two or three attorneys if career lawyers were volunteering.

When Owens asked St. Clair who was going to pay the Justice attorneys, the shrewd Bostonian dodged. "I work at a disadvantage because I don't understand the bureaucracy," he said. The payroll, he added, was being left to "smarter people."

At Justice, a spokesman said when the loaned lawyers leave the Department, they will also go off the Department payroll. This would put them into the White House budget.

Plumbers' Friend—A Senate committee has charged that Health, Education and Welfare

Secretary Caspar Weinberger has set up his own "plumbers unit" in flagrant violation of congressional orders. HEW insists it's all a \$600,000 misunderstanding.

The facts are disclosed in private correspondence between Senate HEW Appropriations subcommittee chairman Warren Magnuson, (D-Wash.) and Weinberger's under secretary, Frank Carlucci.

HEW, the documents show, has long wanted its own gumshoes to probe internal fraud, contract cheats, falsified payrolls and conflicts of interest in the vast jerry-built bureaucracy. But HEW employees have feared this would mean a Big Brother operation.

Last August, as the Office of Economic Opportunity fell to pieces under the administration ax, HEW moved to grab the best of the OEO investigators.

One of those they passed over, despite his eagerness for the top HEW security post, was John "Fat Jack" Buckley who, Watergate sleuths revealed, had planted a Nixon spy in Sen. Edmund Muskie's presidential campaign. Buckley was on the federal payroll at the time.

Though Buckley's zeal went unrewarded, some 22 persons were hired, mostly from OEO. Plans were made to take on eight others. None of the workers had the approval of Magnuson, who controls HEW's purse strings.

In October, the Magnuson subcommittee specifically deleted

funds for all the added investigators, saying HEW's original 17-man security staff was all that was needed. Crimes at HEW could be handled by the FBI and other federal cops, as in the past, the committee reasoned.

But Carlucci went ahead with the plans anyway and, according to a confidential report he sent to Magnuson on February 7, conceded he had begun to "reprogram 30 positions (for) an Internal Investigation staff" at a cost of \$600,000.

When Magnuson got word of it, he fancied White House-style snoopers under every HEW employee's bed. The unauthorized gumshoes, he told Carlucci on February 26, constitute "a so-called 'plumbers' unit at HEW."

"We are absolutely at a loss to understand how (HEW) could proceed," snorted Magnuson. "This action to subvert the intent of Congress cannot go unchallenged." Magnuson ordered HEW to get rid of the new squad except for eight sleuths which he said HEW could keep "to show... we are not unreasonable."

At HEW, Nathan Dick, the veteran HEW security man who heads the investigators, told us emphatically his division "is in no way a plumbers unit." His mandate, he said, is not to snoop on HEW employees, but to weed out malefactors among HEW workers and contractors.

©1974, UNITED Feature Syndicate, Inc.