



WASHINGTON — The White House has secretly appointed wealthy campaign contributors to the standby corps, which would help run the country in case of war.

The fatcats, selected more for their political generosity than their executive ability, have been forced upon a reluctant National Defense Executive Reserve.

This is an elite reserve outfit of 3,600 private executives, who would immediately step into top defense jobs in 19 federal agencies if war should break out.

The White House tried to line up the most prestigious jobs for business executives who had contributed heavily to President Nixon's 1972 campaign. Or, as a confidential White House memo put it, there is "considerable potential opportunity to reward deserving Nixon executives with an NDER appointment."

The memo, addressed to presidential assistant Dan Kingsley, stated that the Office of Emergency Preparedness was quite willing to accept the campaign donors. Both the director, George Lincoln, and his deputy, Darrell Trent, "concur and are ready to start," declared the memo.

There was hesitation, however, from OEP official Margarete Cates who insisted on choosing qualified executives. The White House memo implied cautiously that pressure could be brought on her.

"Although not a political appointee, Mrs. Cates appears loyal and is under the direction of Darrell Trent," said the memo. The implication was that Trent could get her to comply.

The memo directed that the Nixon contributors "must be placed in a unit, unless their qualifications just don't meet the necessary requirements."

The only cautionary note appears to have been scrawled on the memo by Bill Horton, an aide to then White House personnel czar Fred Malek.

"Are these positions sufficiently prestigious so that the candidates feel recognized?" asks the note. Apparently the

answer was affirmative, for Mrs. Cates shortly got about 100 Nixon campaign contributors to place.

She thinks she accepted about 20, the most qualified of the Nixon appointees, for the program, she told us. The White House referrals are still coming in, she added. She also pointed out that the jobs are nonpaying.

FORD'S FUTURE: Much to the embarrassment of Vice President Gerald Ford, the favorite parlor game within

President Nixon's official family is to speculate whom the survivors will be if Ford moves up to the presidency.

Ford has ordered his aides and pleaded with his friends, please, to stop the guessing games. He doesn't want to appear to be crowding the President as Mr. Nixon gets closer to an impeachment vote in the House.

Still, the speculation goes on. One powerful cabinet member, who for obvious reasons doesn't want to be identified, told us he has already decided upon his own course in case Ford replaces Nixon in the White House.

The cabinet officer will deliver a letter of resignation to President Ford and will urge the new President to accept the resignation of everyone in the White House and cabinet.

A clean sweep is essential, he told us forcefully, to restore public confidence in the government.

WASHINGTON WHIRL: Secretary of State Henry Kissinger dialed Rep. Wayne Hays, D-Ohio, the other morning to return a two-day-old phone call. Sources privy to the incident says Hays answered in a sleepy voice: "Hello, honey." When he discovered it was Kissinger calling, the acerbic Hays snorted that he had wanted to talk to Kissinger a couple days earlier, not now. Then the phone went dead. Hays, with a broad smile, told us the story was "apocryphal" . . . Sen. Lowell Weicker, R-Conn., is steaming over the failure of President Nixon to answer his letter of February 5 posing 11 key questions on Watergate. A White House spokesman told us merely that the President was tied up on other matters.

President Nixon and Rep. Clarence Brown, R-Ohio, put on a big show recently of investigating the tornado damage to southern Ohio. What they didn't mention was that Brown had helped to kill a bill last year that would have given the tornado victims a \$2,500 forgiveness on federal loans and a three per cent interest on the balance. When the bill was passed over Brown's opposition, the President vetoed it. A supposedly impartial \$120,000 study of the controversial U.S. Information Agency will be conducted by Walter Roberts who, astonishingly, just resigned as associate director of the agency he will now investigate. He was chosen to investigate his own previous performance by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, which sees no conflict in the selection.