

Pack 1/25/66

Bundy Keeping Scalpel Sharp

By Marquis Childs

NEW YORK — Having changed his base of operations from the White House to the Ford Foundation, McGeorge Bundy still lives close to the cutting edge of foreign policy. His divorce from Washington four months ago has altered in no way the authoritative, dissecting-room manner that was one reason he was so effective as Special Assistant to two Presidents on national security affairs.

That title, as director of his own "Little State Department," covered a variety of services he performed for Presidents Kennedy and Johnson. Not the least of these was to bring into focus widely differing views on complex issues and show an appropriate path through the tangle. No one in the White House today fills the same function.

As president of the largest of the foundations, dispensing \$250,000,000 a year, he exercises a more restricted power. But this has not daunted his faculty for shearing away the irrelevant to get at what he considers the heart of a problem. The scalpel is used as deftly as in the White House phase when a Bundy memorandum was an instrument to induce reason in the unreasonable.

Is the mounting cost of the Vietnam war an insurmountable block to abolishing the slums and quieting the Negro rebellion here at home? These proposed demands seem to put an impossible strain on American resources, giving rise to a more and more heated controversy over priorities. Not so at all, says Bundy.

"You can, of course, put it as a complicated problem in political calculus. But there is no reason why we cannot find \$15 billion a year for the Vietnam war and \$15 billion for the poverty campaign. It implies taking resources through taxes at a mild sacrifice and distributing them."

IN THE SAME fashion in his only public appearance since he left the Government, Bundy applied the Bundy logic to the problems of the Western Alliance. Appearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, speaking for himself alone, he dismissed the moribund proposal for a multilateral nuclear force and advised the Germans

to recognize the permanence of the post-war boundaries of Poland. It was a typical Bundyism, demolishing with carefully honed phrases myths that had already begun to show signs of age.

He has just returned from Europe where he met with many of the officials he came to know in the White House days. But as a private citizen—or more accurately a semi-private citizen—he is careful not to break any confidences. Resolutely he has set himself against passing public judgments on the incidents or the individuals figuring in the crowded years he spent at the center of power.

His discretion owes something to his innate reserve, the temper of a Boston Brahmin and a former Harvard dean. But it also relates to what has become a remarkable phenomenon of the time—the big foundations serving as half-way houses between public and private life. Increasingly, public men move from the foundations to government and then back to the foundations again.

These great accumulations of wealth and brains are pillars of the Establishment that since World War II has sustained the foreign policy of Democratic and Republican Administrations alike.

NO ONE WHO knows Bundy can doubt that, things being the same, he will return to government at a now unforeseeable date. It could well be as Secretary of State. He will certainly not by any act of indiscretion foreclose that option.

This is not to say, as he makes plain, that the foundations are comfortable rest houses rather like the monasteries in which the scholars of the Middle Ages escaped the turbulence of their time. Dispensing \$250,000,000 a year intelligently is a demanding task. It is no accident that Bundy's principal preoccupation at the moment is how to employ wisely Ford funds being allocated to help the Negro move into the main stream of American life.

Bundy has just signed up one of the ablest men in government, David Bell, director of the foreign aid program. At Ford he will direct the Foundation's programs abroad. He leaves the AID post at a point when the whole program is being cut back in an atmosphere of sour distrust.

As an Establishment figure, supremely self-confident, it has rarely been said that modesty is one of Bundy's virtues. Yet talking privately he stresses the unpredictability of most of the large events of his years in the White House. This is a chastening lesson for those who exercise power and a warning to be prepared for the unpredictable.