

# The New Ehrlichman

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OLD SENATE hands furious over the first-term inaccessibility of President Nixon and his top aides were bug-eyed when John Ehrlichman dropped in for a long, cozy chat with liberal Republican Sen. Jacob K. Javits of New York in the Senate Office Building last Tuesday afternoon.

At President Nixon's specific orders, Ehrlichman, now freed from the day-to-day routine duties of running the Domestic Council, will be making more unannounced calls on senators and congressmen of both parties. His new role: To use his White House clout as one of Mr. Nixon's two most powerful lieutenants (H. R. (Bob) Haldeman, the White House chief of staff, is the other) to act as the President's emissary on touchy political matters.

Thus, two weeks ago Ehrlichman spent 75 minutes trying to persuade liberal Republican Sen. Charles H. Percy of Illinois to modify his demands for Senate confirmation of six top presidential aides.

Meeting in Ehrlichman's White House office, Percy and Ehrlichman did make a compromise of sorts: Percy dropped his demand to require immediate Senate confirmation of Peter Flanigan, the President's resident foreign trade expert, and Ehrlichman agreed that Prof. John Dunlop of Harvard, new head of the Cost of Living Council, should be confirmed by the Senate.

The Ehrlichman drop-in at Javits's

office dealt with matters less specific and more philosophic: Reaction by Republican liberals to Mr. Nixon's budget cuts and implications for party unity.

In still another long session, Ehrlichman had Democratic Sen. Henry M. Jackson of Washington to his office for lunch. That chat, Jackson told us, smoothed out some policy disagreements on environmental problems being handled by Jackson's Senate Interior Committee.

There have been others. Ehrlichman, a stiff-lipped inaccessible power-wielder during President Nixon's first term, comes through in his new role as almost charming. More important, he is getting across a fundamental point: The barrage of hostile criticism directed at the isolation of the President and his top staffers by politicians of both parties and all ideological persuasions was beginning to concern the White House. So, the second term is starting differently.

A footnote: Although Henry Kissinger's recent briefings before Senate and House on how the Vietnam war was ended won him a standing ovation by House members and only slightly less applause from senators, some Democrats on Capitol Hill were unhappy. The meetings were set by White House edict, not in answer to committee requests, and at places and times set by the White House, not the Congress.

JEB MAGRUDER, the deputy chairman of President Nixon's reelection

campaign who testified that the convicted Watergate bugging chief G. Gordon Liddy to "ethical" political intelligence, is considering running for California Secretary of State next year.

Some hostile Republicans perceive MaGruder's candidacy as a convenient excuse to ease him out of the administration job because of his remote connection with the Watergate break-in. In fact, however, former White House aide MaGruder remains the political protege and close friend of Haldeman. As such, he may well wind up with a good job in the administration.

At this writing, MaGruder is in California to consider his future—whether to stay in the Nixon administration or take a California position in private business. Some of his friends believe he should return to the administration to demonstrate his immunity to Watergate. Whichever course he takes, however, MaGruder—attractive and articulate at age 39—would still have plenty of time to decide to make his first attempt for public office. If he did, he would have considerable GOP support.

At the Watergate trial, MaGruder swore he knew nothing of the break-in and bugging at Democratic headquarters in the Watergate. He testified that he assigned Liddy tasks in political intelligence but told him they must "be handled in a legal and ethical manner." MaGruder swore he gave Liddy no intelligence-gathering assignments regarding the Democratic party.