

Ford Initiates Policy Talks With Citizens

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The Ford administration had initiated a series of conferences with citizen and business groups with the dual purpose of eliciting advice and selling its programs.

"formalize their thoughts" on paper, and he forwards those to government policy-makers.

One such meeting—with insurance industry groups—has already been held.

Included are bimonthly meetings at the White House and what amounts to a White House "road show" traveling to cities around the nation.

The program was described yesterday by William J. Baroody Jr., newly appointed assistant to the President for public liaison, in a breakfast meeting with reporters.

A somewhat similar idea in the Nixon administration evolved into the operation of former White House aide Charles W. Colson, whose duties included drumming up political support for the administration's more controversial policies.

Baroody maintained that President Ford was institutionalizing the public liaison role more than previous Presidents, and that politicization would not occur.

Baroody worked in the Nixon White House as a deputy to Melvin R. Laird when Laird became domestic affairs counselor (he had been a top assistant to Laird when Laird was Secretary of Defense), and then as a special consultant.

"We've laid out a plan for roughly the next year," he said, detailing three kinds of organized citizen contacts the White House expects to be making.

One, he said, will be chats between the President and from one to perhaps four people.

"Then, every other Wednesday, we bring in roughly 20 chief executive officers or heads of major organizations, of just about everything organized you can think of," said Baroody.

The first two or three hours of these half-day sessions, said Baroody, are held in the