

The Washington Merry-go-round

F Post 10/23/74

Jack Anderson

WASHINGTON — In the aftermath of Watergate, President Ford has ordered a quiet tightening of ethical standards to keep the White House free of scandal.

We have seen some of the secret paperwork on the effort. The documents stress "a break with the past Administration." The President's advisers are eager "to highlight the fact that this is now the Ford White House staff" and that the new President has a "personal commitment to the highest standard of conduct."

Yet at the same time, they hesitate to advertise their new ethical campaign. "Some will see it," they fear, "as an event staged for public consumption — a sort of honesty rally without balloons. However, if done with serious intent and minimal press fanfare, we think this danger can be minimized."

Under the direction of the President's new staff chief, Donald Rumsfeld, these moves are tentatively planned:

—There would be a "reviewing, upgrading and refreshing" of the "traditional procedures for preventing conflicts of interest." This isn't intended "to trap people but to create an ongoing sensitivity to these problems."

—Everyone who works in the White House, "from secretaries to counselors, whether on White House rolls or detailed, would be required to attend a staff conference" on ethical conduct. The President himself would open the conference "with a few brief remarks along the line of being 'cleaner than Caesar's wife.'" The conference not only would be repeated annually but would be videotaped for the indoctrination of every new employee.

—Statements outlining "the importance of proper conduct" should be delivered to the "entire staff." This would be accompanied by "standard of conduct rules."

—Financial statements from everyone on the White House staff would be updated and filed.

—All White House personnel, both those now on the staff and those who are hired, would be cleared by the special prosecutor's office. The purpose, according to our White House sources, is to insure that no one tainted with Watergate winds up on the President's payroll.

—A review is already "in process" of the proper disposition of gifts to the First Family and White House staff. The review even extends to "gift giving between White House personnel."

Two presidential counselors, Don Lowitz and Don Murdoch, have prepared a tentative agenda for the staff conference on ethics. After the President's opening remarks, Rumsfeld would discuss "everyday ethics."

He would instruct the staff members

how to handle individuals and companies with problems before the regulatory agencies. His advice, as proposed by the two counselors, would be: "Consult with the counsel to the President in every such instance. Generally, don't touch it."

Rumsfeld would also lay down the law on "politics and fund solicitation" and the use of "White House telephone and stationery."

Finally, Rumsfeld would warn the staff members that their "conduct outside of the White House" also had to be exemplary. "Regrettably, you are always on duty in the eyes of others."

SOLAR SCANDAL: The only inexhaustible and nonpolluting form of energy, heat from the sun, is being largely ignored because it holds no promise of giant profits for the nation's utility companies.

This is the discouraging conclusion of a secret Federal Energy Agency study on solar energy, one of a thick packet of draft documents we have obtained on every aspect of the energy crisis.

"Potentially, solar energy could make a significant contribution to the goal of long-term energy self sufficiency. . . ." says the document.

But Congress has authorized a piddling \$75 million to study the question. And "only minimal research and small feasibility studies will be conducted by private industry because the long-range markets are not competitive with other research and development investments," the report predicts.

If the nation would get serious about solar energy, the face of America would change as the nation declared independence from foreign oil. Giant 200-foot high windmills, one behind the other, would line the landscape, says the report.

Vast expanses of hot, arid desert land in the West would be covered by mirrors. The 10,000 square miles of California-Arizona desert "could theoretically provide . . . twice the present generating capacity in all of the United States."

Within a few years after the year 2000, says the report, "solar systems may be capable of supplying 15 to 30 per cent of total U.S. energy requirements" if the country ends its "business as usual" approach and accelerates sun energy.

"However, unless federal involvement increases substantially in the late 1970s," warns the FEA document, "it is unlikely that much development in solar energy will transpire even by 1990."

At present, solar energy is limited to about 25,000 solar hot water heaters and a few experimental houses and swimming pools.