

The Washington Merry-Go-Round

Official Powers Used to Get Votes

By Jack Anderson

A master plan for using the government machinery to win votes for President Nixon in 1972 is laid out in memos which the White House is still trying to suppress.

The memos, stamped for the "Eyes Only" of top Nixon aides, assign former White House staff chief H. R. Haldeman the job of seeing "that (government) programs are responsive to and coordinated with campaign needs."

One memo reveals that "we have already started a number of thrusts to ensure that the power of the incumbency is used." In plainer language, this meant that the President was using his power over the government to generate votes.

The master plan, at least in part, was put into effect. Grants were given to ethnic groups which supported the President. High-paying patronage jobs were offered to powerful politicians to lure them on the Nixon bandwagon. Government contracts went to the favored. Those who opposed Mr. Nixon were squeezed out.

The plan was drafted by White House efficiency expert Fred Malek, who is now the President's deputy chief budget officer. His 1972 co-schemers were Haldeman and John N. Mitchell. Mitchell was then preparing to step down as attorney general to become the President's campaign chief.

The Malek memos, dated February 16, 1972, are written in the high Watergate literary style which seeks to conceal from outsiders what it discloses to insiders. Yet a close reading shows how the White House planned to gear government policies to politics.

Under Haldeman's guidance, according to the memos, the White House Domestic Council was already "posturing the President correctly . . . on major issues" to gain maximum political exploitation.

Haldeman also was supposed to work through George Shultz, then the federal budget boss with control over the purse strings, to make sure that government departments cooperated.

"George's people will play a major role in seeing that departmental actions to the greatest extent possible are supportive of the re-election effort," Malek proposed.

Malek himself was to "strengthen responsiveness of patronage to campaign needs." This would include such tactics as throwing judgeships to powerful minority leaders. Malek also would guide government grants to opinion molders among ethnic, aging and other special groups.

In addition, Malek was to use his influence at the White House and his "intimate knowledge of campaign priorities" in "guiding campaign voting bloc efforts."

But outwardly, both Haldeman and Malek would remain on the White House staff, "keeping pressure on the programs discussed earlier and insuring that these programs are responsive to and coordinated with campaign needs," according to the secret political blueprint.

Malek would bring "relevant campaign and Domestic Council staff members together to ensure latter are totally familiar with policy needs and priorities of various constituent groups." They would play upon the problems of these groups, such as "payment of prescription drugs for elderly" to generate votes.

Malek would also use specially planted Nixon loyalists in the government departments to help the campaign. "My people would use the departmental political structure to make specific requests needed by the campaign," Malek explained, adding: "I anticipate no problem."

The busy Malek would work with state officials on "priority environmental projects or presidential policy pronouncements" to rally voters behind Mr. Nixon. The memo stresses that "much of the success . . . will depend on actions by the President and/or the administration."

My associate Les Whitten reached Malek at the White House. The plan, Malek insisted, was never fully put into effect. "That wasn't done," he said. The proposals were

merely "talking points," some of which never came up in his key meetings with Mitchell and Haldeman, explained Malek.

Contrary to his assurances, however, our investigation found that many features of the plan were implemented. We will write more about this in future columns.

PETROLEUM PLEDGE—

Plagued by leaks about its shenanigans during the oil crisis, Standard Oil of California is quietly asking employees to swear a solemn oath they will not leak out "sensitive information."

The ink was just drying on the loyalty oath form, however, when it was leaked to us by a Standard Oil of California employee, along with other "sensitive" Standard Oil information.

Under the instructions accompanying the loyalty oath, the employee swears not to "use or disclose sensitive company information . . . during or after employment in a manner that might be prejudicial to the best interests of the company—whether or not for personal gain." In fact, the employees are told to avoid even situations where it may look like they are leaking "sensitive company information."

The company warns that it "will protect its legal position by taking appropriate action in instances where it believes sensitive company information has been wrongfully used by an employee or former employee."