

# The New Broom at Work

Although his controversial surprise decision to pardon Richard Nixon eclipsed other developments, Gerald Ford moved on a number of fronts last week to show just who was boss in the new Administration. After a Labor Day weekend at Camp David, he opened the White House to a conference of economists and proclaimed that inflation would be beaten within two years; he polished up his proposal for amnesty for Vietnam war resisters, and he finally began reslotting some key Nixon holdovers including economic counselor Kenneth Rush, Republican party leader George Bush and White House chief of staff Alexander Haig. And that was only a start; a senior Ford aide promised a "steady stream" of similar announcements in the next few weeks, and another adviser said: "The beginning of the end of transition is upon us."

Ford went about the task of shifting the men at the top of his Administration with determination and dispatch—but also with a characteristically gentle touch. He named Bush to be U.S. envoy to China, nominated Rush as ambassador to France and, it was learned, began trying to clear the way for Haig's appointment as commander of NATO forces in Europe.

Even among the President's closest advisers there was disagreement over whether he was moving fast enough to sweep Nixon loyalists from the Administration. "I would clean out every last one of them—they're tainted merchandise," one Ford topsider told NEWSWEEK's Thomas M. DeFrank last week. "God-dammit," said another, "this President is not going to be mean. He doesn't feel anybody should be punished for doing his duty as ordered."

**Sniping:** The problem was one not merely of image but of potentially serious friction between the holdovers and Ford's own men. Privately, Ford's people complain that many of the Nixon men seem arrogant, uncooperative and antagonistic—and the newcomers are ridiculed in turn as unsophisticated, inexperienced and paranoid. After repeated sniping from holdovers about their relative disorganization, one Ford staffer blew up: "If we're so disorganized and you're so organized, why are we coming and you going?" And some Ford people fear that the Nixon men remain more loyal to their old boss's policies than to the new President. Top-level staffers at the State Department and in Haig's office, for example, pressed resolutely ahead with plans to fire State's top-ranking black—LBJ appointee Barbara M. Watson—despite Ford's wish not to offend her supporters in the Congressional Black Caucus. The President last week said he would personally review the issue.

The President was also piqued by the punitive tone of amnesty proposals for-

mulated—and then leaked—by the Justice Department before they were presented to him. "He does not appreciate his Cabinet officers discussing his report before they give it to him," one aide said stiffly. And Ford himself warned insiders last week: "I'm going to run an open Administration, but I don't like leaky boats."



Ford: Trapezing at Camp David

The President's most ticklish personnel problem was clearly General Haig. Despite pressure from aides and Congressional allies, Ford has refused to sack the man who helped manage the final phase of Nixon's Watergate defense. Ford was reportedly impressed by Haig's competence and perseverance in an uncomfortable position. Once the new Administration started settling in, however, Haig's Nixonian record seemed increasingly embarrassing. "He is no long-

er indispensable," said one insider, "and he knows it as well as we do."

Haig's early ambition was to be Army Chief of Staff—a post that opened last week with the death of Gen. Creighton Abrams—but predictable opposition from Pentagon brass made that unlikely. Only a colonel five years ago, Haig had already been vaulted over battalions of senior officers, and he had never commanded anything larger than a brigade before Nixon persuaded him to turn in his uniform. The NATO appointment—almost a diplomatic post in some respects—seemed to Ford's men a more appropriate way for Haig to earn re-entry to the military. Still, the news prompted grumbling from some NATO governments (notably the Dutch) and among Congressional Democrats. Wisconsin Sen. William Proxmire charged that recalling Haig to active duty for any post "would send a clear signal throughout the military officer corps that politics pays off—and in a big way."

**Delighted:** Some of the President's housecleaning was much easier. GOP chairman Bush—whose pro forma defense of President Nixon had been more or less required by his party post—declared himself delighted with his new China assignment. And even those who had hopes for a more experienced Asia hand acknowledged that Bush had displayed impressive diplomatic skills during his two years (1971-73) as the U.S. representative to the United Nations. Posting Rush to Paris was an even happier blend of political and foreign-policy considerations; although his credentials as an economic expert were always somewhat shaky, the 64-year-old Rush had served with distinction as ambassador to West Germany (1969-72) and in high State and Pentagon posts. Ford, it was learned, also hoped to name Sen. J. William Fulbright, the Arkansas Democrat, as ambassador to Great Britain while nominating former Nixon aide Peter Flanigan as U.S. envoy to Spain.

The reassignment of Bush also cleared the way for Ford to start asserting his control over the Republican National Committee, the essential vehicle for a Ford Presidential campaign in 1976. He named co-chairman Mary Louise Smith, 59, of Iowa as his choice for the party's top spot—a female first in Republican politics—and selected conservative Richard D. Obenshain, 38, Virginia's GOP chairman, to be second in command. That seemed to take some steam out of right-wing grumbling about the need for a third party—"There's nothing like a well-timed appointment to shut off that kind of talk," said one GOP topsider—and the conservatives were further mollified by Ford's announcement that Goldwater protégé Dean Burch would retain his post as a Presidential counselor with Cabinet rank.

Whatever the ultimate impact of Ford's decision to pardon Nixon, his early blend of political trade-offs, well-timed gestures and plain hard work had

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paid off so far. A new Gallup poll showed the President swamping Sen. Edward Kennedy—still the Democratic favorite—by 57 to 33 per cent in a trial heat. Only last May, it was Kennedy by 50 to 39 over Ford. And if, as Ford men suggested, he was finally beginning to feel the weight of the Presidency, nobody expected Ford to slow his pace in the foreseeable future. Said a harried senior staffer: "He's going to run us all out of gas before long."