

FORD AD

# Rockefeller Acts to Gain Domestic Council Control

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By JOHN HERBERS FEB 6 1975

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 5—Vice President Rockefeller has proposed that two of his top assistants be put in charge of the White House Domestic Council and reorganize its functions, but the suggestion has run into resistance on the President's staff.

Under Mr. Rockefeller's plan, the council, which has been functioning largely as a day-to-day adviser to Mr. Ford on domestic policies, would turn its attention to proposing innovations that the President would consider for making long-range policy.

President Ford and Mr. Rockefeller have been discussing privately the question of what to do with the Domestic Council, and White House officials indicated today that no decision had been made.

However, the Rockefeller proposal has been received coolly within the White House because it would, in effect, give the Vice President control over an important segment of the

Presidential staff. It is important to Mr. Rockefeller, because domestic policy is the only area of government in which he has been promised more authority than is customary for a Vice President.

Mr. Rockefeller's proposal, as disclosed by Ford and Rockefeller associates, was that two members of the Vice President's staff James Cannon and Richard L. Dunham—be dispatched as a team to run the council staff, which numbers about 30 persons, and turn it into a body that would study long-range domestic problems and give the President options for solving them.

Mr. Cannon was legislative liaison and Mr. Dunham State Budget Director for Mr. Rockefeller when he was Governor of New York.

The council is now nominally headed by Kenneth R. Cole Jr., who is both director and an assistant to the President for

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domestic affairs. However, he submitted his resignation Dec. 13, effective March 2, and will be on vacation until shortly before he leaves to take a job in private industry. The council is headed in the interim by James H. Cavanaugh, the deputy director, who intends to stay.

President Ford has promised Mr. Rockefeller substantial authority in domestic affairs' In an interview with Newsweek magazine, published Dec. 9, Mr. Ford said, "I want him to be very active on the Domestic Council, even to be chair- man of the Domestic Council."

In the past, the President has been chairman of the council, and the Vice President has been vice chairman. The members are Cabinet officers and others in the Administration, but the real authority has rested in the staff.

The council as a body has not met in months, and the role of chairman, therefore, has not been important. The staff assists Cabinet-level committees of the council, and the director has served as adviser to the President on chiefly day-to-day operations of the Government in the domestic area.

Whether Mr. Rockefeller gets real authority on the council, it is agreed within the Adminis-

tration, will depend on whether he can appoint or direct members of the staff.

Mr. Rockefeller's role on the council has thus become a very delicate subject, both on the Ford and Rockefeller staffs.

Ford officials indicated that a decision might be weeks away, though they had known for months that Mr. Cole was leaving, and that if Mr. Cole's successor was both director and assistant to the President, as the organization chart shows, Mr. Ford might feel compelled to name his own man.

"After all," one official said, "it would be unusual for the President not to have his own man in there."

Under the present organization, the Presidential assistant on domestic affairs is one of nine aides with daily, direct access to the President.

#### Plan Is Termed Novel

Mr. Cannon and others involved declined to comment, but one Rockefeller associate acknowledged privately the novelty of the Vice President's Proposal—"Do you put this in the hand of a Vice President?"—but he said that there was also another aspect.

"The Domestic Council," he said, "does not do what its charter says. It is part of the White House operations staff. They have moved over to the

area where they're preparing papers, talking points, Memoranda. They're not focused on tomorrow, they're focused on today."

If the proposal to make the council a long-range planning body does not work out, the Rockefeller associate said, "We'll figure out some other way." But he added that this would not mean bringing the Rockefeller Commission on Critical Choices down from New York, because that would look too much like a shadow cabinet.

A Ford associate familiar with the council's work said that the council had concerned itself with some long-range planning, but over all "We have been engaged in more short-range than long-range action."

The Domestic Council was established by President Nixon in the spring of 1970 to serve as a domestic counterpart to the National Security Council, which had been a part of the White House staff since World War II.

Its purpose, as defined by Mr. Nixon, included "assessing national needs, collecting information and developing forecasts, for the purpose of defining national goals and objectives; identifying alternative ways of achieving these objectives and recommending consis-

tent, integrated sets of policy choices."

Under John D. Ehrlichman, then Mr. Nixon's assistant for domestic affairs, the council accumulated a large staff and became the chief instrument in the executive branch for making and carrying out domestic policy. In 1973, however, the staff was cut in half, and many of its functions were shifted to the Office of Management and Budget.

In the latter part of the Nixon Administration, the council functioned largely as an advisory body on short-range problems in the domestic area and had little authority. Mr. Ford has kept it intact while making changes in most other areas of the White House staff.

At no time has the Vice President had authority in the council. Although Vice President Agnew was by the council's charter its vice president, his duties there were largely ceremonial.

The directorship of the Domestic Council is one of two top domestic posts that President Ford has been slow in filling. It was decided and made public several months ago that James T. Lynn, then Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, would be made director of the Office of Management and Budget. He formally assumed the new post today.