

ESSAY

By William Safire

WASHINGTON, Nov. 5—My campaign organization is in a shambles, there's all this bickering going on in the Cabinet, and nobody thinks I'm really a President.

So I better do something before Reagan announces his candidacy, or else it will look like I'm responding to that.

Rocky's got to go, that's first. I gave him his chance and he blew it. Now he's dragging us all down. I'll let him know he can get out with dignity now, because he's too proud a man to want to be dumped later.

That'll satisfy the right for a while, and give me a chance to get rid of Jim Schlesinger. He won't get on the team and cut the defense budget the way I want him to, and he took a shot at George Mahon. That means Defense won't have a chance on the Hill. Besides, I never liked Jim from the start; he patronizes me and that's got to stop. Remember Truman and MacArthur.

I have to take Henry down a peg, too, but still keep him on. He's always insisted he could never give up his N.S.C. hat, that it would ruin his prestige. He's bluffing, though—he wants to stay. But I can't have it look like I'm just Henry's puppet anymore.

So I'll tell Henry he can obscure the blow to his ego with Schlesinger's scalp. I'll tell him I want Jack Marsh for the N.S.C. job, and let him talk me into General Scowcroft — everybody thinks he's Henry's boy. Actually, Scowcroft was the Joint Chiefs' boy—he came to the White House originally after the brass was caught stealing secrets from the White House, and Nixon wanted to tell the Chiefs he still trusted them.

After a couple of months in that big corner office, of course, General Scowcroft will be my guy, not the Chiefs',

not Henry's. But putting him there will cool the Joint Chiefs off about Schlesinger, a nice added benefit. I'd better get the staff to stop calling him "General"—it's really wrong for a military man to be in charge of civilians in that job. Call him "Brent." No more uniforms.

Funny how these problems, which are so hard to solve one by one, can be easy when you put 'em all in a bag.

The big thing, as soon as Rocky steps down, is for me to put some Vice-Presidential candidates in the field. Rummy is dying to move, and I can't ask him to sacrifice his career running my campaign, so I'll slot him at Defense. He can use the money raise, too. He'll be good on the Hill, which is what the job needs and hasn't had since Mel Laird.

George Bush is another good prospect for a running mate. I'll make him take the C.I.A. George Shultz and Larry Silberman wouldn't touch it, and who can blame them; but Bush needs to come home from Peking, otherwise he can't be a factor for V.P. And I've got to have a man I trust at the C.I.A.

Rumsfeld, Bush, what about Elliot Roosevelt? Richardson! Watch that. Gotta get well on Watergate, take the sting out of the pardon. I'll get ol' Rog Morton to step down at Commerce, he wants out anyway, and lean on him to run my campaign. Be the first Commerce Department with its own foreign policy.

Hey, this is fun. I can even give Peking to Hugh Scott, which he wants. He collects Chinese porcelain. But that

would mean Shapp in Pennsylvania would appoint a Democrat to the seat. Better go slow on that. Not so much fun.

Okay, now how is this going to look? The pundits are going to make a big deal out of the victory of Kissinger over Schlesinger, and Henry will pretend he was really Jim's buddy, but not much of that is going to bother the folks.

What counts with the people is that I'm in charge. I hire 'em and fire 'em, and move 'em around. They'll be my team now, not a bunch of leftovers, even though nobody's new.

The decision will be seen to be mine, all mine, which is what Presidents do. Oh, there'll be the usual Henry-staged-this, Rummy-engineered-that, but the impression in the country will be—here's a president who's his own boss, who can dominate the headlines whenever he wants.

The other impression it will make is this: Here's a whole bunch of bright guys to talk about for Vice President. If necessary, they can all run for President and hold their delegations—Illinois, Texas, Massachusetts—away from Reagan. Rocky may cross me up and jump in for the top job at the end, but what little support he has will be used to stop Reagan.

So I'll give the old pot a stir. Get 'em all talking about us, not the Democrats. And if everything goes to hell in a barrel next spring, I can pull out and toss the nomination up for grabs—at least there'll be a lot of good guys around to fight for it.

Okay. It's vital for the Rockefeller announcement to come first. Then the reshuffle. If the hiring and firing starts to leak out first, then nobody will ever be able to figure out what I had in mind.