

Access to the President

White House Takes Steps to Counter Charges Nixon Fails to Get Advice

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WASHINGTON, May 13—Some months ago, after a formal dinner at the White House in honor of Prince Philip, Kinkman Brewster Jr., President of Yale University, encountered a reporter he knew outside the mansion. "I talked to the President and Henry Kissinger [the President's national security adviser]" he said.

News

Analysis "I tried to get through to them about what's happening on the campuses. I don't think I did. Kissinger was mainly worried about what the right wing would do if we failed to get an honorable settlement in Vietnam."

The problem of "getting through" to the President is Topic A here now. The charge that Mr. Nixon has isolated himself is not new, but it has been revived by Secretary of the Interior Walter J. Hickel's letter complaining of inaccessibility and by the Administration's apparent miscalculation of the public response to the Cambodia decision.

Reports on Meetings

The White House, predictably, has moved fast to counter the allegations that Mr. Nixon has constructed a fortress Presidency. His press secretary, Ronald L. Ziegler, insisted this morning that the President regularly solicited advice from his aides, and he gave reporters data on Mr. Nixon's meetings with his Cabinet (18, about once a month), his National Security Council (40), his Urban Affairs Council (19), his Cabinet Committee on Economic Policy (12), and his chief economic advisers, the so-called "quadriad" (13).

For the first time in anyone's memory, moreover, the White House press office posted on the bulletin board the names of individual staff members who met with the President, prominently advertising the fact that Leonard Garment and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, two domestic aides who were not consulted before Cambodia, are now seeing him. And, at the State Department, Secretary of State William P. Rogers insisted that he did not know of anyone "with an important problem" who could not see the President.

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evidence accumulates

that the flow of information may not be so perfect as the White House pretends, and that information, when it is received, is sometimes pigeonholed or prematurely dismissed. Last September, for example, a young staffer named Chester E. Finn Jr., who worked for Mr. Moynihan, presented an analysis of the country's young people called "The Ecology of Youth" to a special Cabinet meeting.

His paper dwelt heavily on what he called the "crisis of authority" among the young, arising from two main sources: "a feeling that the political system is pursuing goals opposed by the young; second, the young do not feel they can affect these policies."

Impressed, Mr. Nixon ordered the paper read to a meeting of Republican state chairmen. But then the paper was shelved, along with a second document called "Towards a National Youth Policy," which suggested specific measures for improving relations between the Government and the young. Simultaneously, a working group of young aides who were meeting regularly to discuss the same problems, chaired by a Presidential special assistant, Emil Krogh, was unaccountably disbanded.

The youthful staffers in the White House—two have now departed, Arthur Klebanoff and Richard Blumenthal—never expected immediate access to the President but hoped that their views would be more quickly acted upon.

They were horrified to learn, for example, that the President had scheduled a speaking appearance at Stone Mountain, Ga., a Confederate memorial; after the Cambodia decision, they redoubled their efforts to persuade him to cancel it. They finally reached John D. Ehrlichman, Mr. Nixon's senior adviser on domestic affairs, who interceded with the President. Vice President Agnew was sent instead.

Meanwhile, department and agency heads have increasingly complained that their lines to the White House are snarled. Treasury and Budget Bureau officials have been particularly caustic, charging that some decisions (the President's small business message in March, his pledge to spend \$1-billion on desegregation) are made without full review by the agencies responsible for finding the money.