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White House Centralization...

The designation of Secretary of Labor Shultz as President Nixon's chief aide in managing the vast Federal bureaucracy could represent a great extension in the responsibility and influence of a Cabinet officer who without question has been one of the brightest stars of this Administration.

Mr. Shultz has proved himself a man of courage and resolve, a political moderate with decidedly conservative views on such matters as Federal wage-price restraints but with deep commitment to positive use of Government's power to break down racial barriers and spur technological progress.

The still unanswered question in his shift to head the newly created Office of Management and Budget is whether the President will let him use that post to help shape governmental policies and priorities or whether he will be confined to what is essentially the role of super-housekeeping in carrying out policies made by the President's tight inner circle.

Mr. Nixon already appears to have given at least part of the answer by stressing that the new Domestic Council, headed by Presidential assistant John D. Ehrlichman, will be responsible for deciding *what* Government does. The Shultz office, according to the President, will be concerned with *how* those things are done and *how well* they are done.

The budget-making and administrative assignment is, of course, an extremely demanding one in its own right. Indeed, many have felt that the Bureau of the Budget, a subordinate unit in the new Shultz domain, was by itself a much too powerful agency. To its duties have now been added the challenges of trying to step up the effectiveness of the Federal establishment.

Important as these responsibilities indisputably are, the significance of the transfer will be determined by the amount of authority the President really wants Mr. Shultz to have. When the rug was pulled out from under Robert Finch as Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare less than a week ago, every White House effort was bent on making it seem that, in his new role as Presidential counselor, he would be a virtual Kissinger of domestic policy.

The Nixon explanation of the current reorganization appears quite unmistakably to assign that pivotal position to Mr. Ehrlichman, a man whose views are generally believed to be much closer to those of Attorney General Mitchell and Vice President Agnew than of either Mr. Shultz or Mr. Finch. But there is an important difference in the circumstances surrounding the move of the two Cabinet officers to direct assignments at the White House. Mr. Finch was on the downgrade when he changed his address; Mr. Shultz's talents have been winning steadily increased respect not only in the nation but in the group closest to the President.

On that basis there seems strong warrant for expecting that his new post will enable Mr. Shultz to provide welcome balance in White House councils on all aspects of policy, domestic and foreign, military and civilian. As formulator of the budget, he can do much to guide determinations—if Mr. Nixon will listen.

Responsibility for Government decisions has never before been so completely concentrated in the White House itself. The long-range decline in the powers of the Cabinet is now accompanied by a downgrading in the status of such theoretically nonpolitical professionals as the Council of Economic Advisers and the Budget Bureau. That makes it essential that the President draw on a broad range of advice inside his own official family before committing the vast authority he holds.

...but a Blow to Education

The abrupt dismissal of Dr. James E. Allen Jr. from the key post of United States Commissioner of Education is a reflection not on his leadership capacity but on disorderly governing procedures of this Administration.

Leaked insinuations that Dr. Allen, like his immediate superior, ex-Secretary Finch, had been a poor administrator are part of those by now routine attempts to justify high-level firings. Such charges would be more convincing in Dr. Allen's case had he been given an opportunity to administer much of anything. The fact is that "the inordinate influence of partisan political considerations"—to use Dr. Allen's own words—have persistently prevented him for more than one year from making key appointments without which the huge and unwieldy departmental apparatus simply cannot be made to function.

It was a mark of a loyal official that, trying to live with such demeaning frustrations, Dr. Allen repeatedly brushed aside suggestions that he protest interference by the President's political watchdogs.

But Dr. Allen's silently borne limitations were more than procedural. His long-standing commitment to school integration was repeatedly ignored, as his policies were undermined by the Southern strategists in the Justice Department and the President's entourage. Despite Dr. Allen's refusal to take his case to the public, it had become an open secret that Mr. Nixon prepared his controversial school desegregation statement without either the advice or the consent of his chief education official.

The President is, of course, entitled to seek counsel from those who reflect his own outlook. But when he chose his commissioner to preside over the Administration's education policies, Dr. Allen's views were an open book. His liberal and integrationist convictions had made him a nationally recognized force for progress, far in advance of the majority of the nation's public school officials. The integrity that marked his long career made it unlikely he would let himself be used as window-dressing.

The breaking point appears to have come with Dr. Allen's characteristically straightforward criticism of the President's Cambodian adventure and the war in Vietnam in general. Considering the depth of the academic community's anti-war feelings, especially among the nation's youth, to have expected the Federal spokesman for education to equivocate on this issue would have been to ask him to lose all self-respect, as well as the respect of his constituency.

The fact that acquiescence in politics and priorities which cut deeply into the support of education was apparently a requirement for continued tenure will not make it easier to find a man of strong sense of purpose to take Dr. Allen's place.