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Ehrlichman: The Man Who Minds the Store

By Vera Glaser and
Malvina Stephenson

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WHILE President Nixon and Dr. Henry Kissinger star on the world stage, John Ehrlichman is the key man on the home front.

As the President's re-election race looms, the hefty, dark-haired chief domestic adviser in the White House assumes new importance.

When Nixon deplaned from his recent Russian trip, Ehrlichman was on hand with 4 detailed pages to update the boss on "maneuverings" on major issues during his absence.

In an exclusive interview Ehrlichman described how the to men, with the White

House chief of staff, Bob Haldeman, sitting in, studied the summaries in a six-hour session at Camp David.

The reports, "fly-specked" with marginal notes by the President, were on such explosive issues as busing, welfare and taxes.

"We didn't get lunch until 4 p.m. When he starts things like that, he likes to go straight through," Ehrlichman recalled.

Politics was on the agenda, too. With a confident, genial air, Ehrlichman chuckled over a suggestion that Nixon might not run again.

"I can say with a measure of authority that indications were to the contrary at Camp David," Nixon's aide asserted.

Although Ehrlichman and Kissinger have equal rank and access to the President, their styles differ.

Kissinger is bathed in publicity as he confers with heads of state or squires glamor girls.

Ehrlichman lives quietly with his wife and five children.

A week ago Sunday the Ehrlichman kids made breakfast for their parents, a longstanding family tradition on Father's Day.

In the White House, Ehrlichman's plush office once belonged to Lawrence O'Brien, now the Democratic Party's national chairman. Ehrlichman kept O'Brien's wood paneling but added gold carpeting, sumptuous

Williamsburg-period furnishings and a whole new political philosophy.

Now and then Ehrlichman bests the brainy Kissinger. Framed on the wall is a page of crosshatches and scribbles signed by Henry in humorous tribute to John's superior skill at ticktacktoe.

Ehrlichman denied he has a political role but said he talks regularly with John Mitchell, Nixon's campaign chief, "just to make sure we have accuracy" on campaign material.

Senator George McGovern (Dem-S.D.), who Ehrlichman hopes will head the Democratic ticket, was tagged "extreme. If he is the opponent, we're going to have some very stark differences."

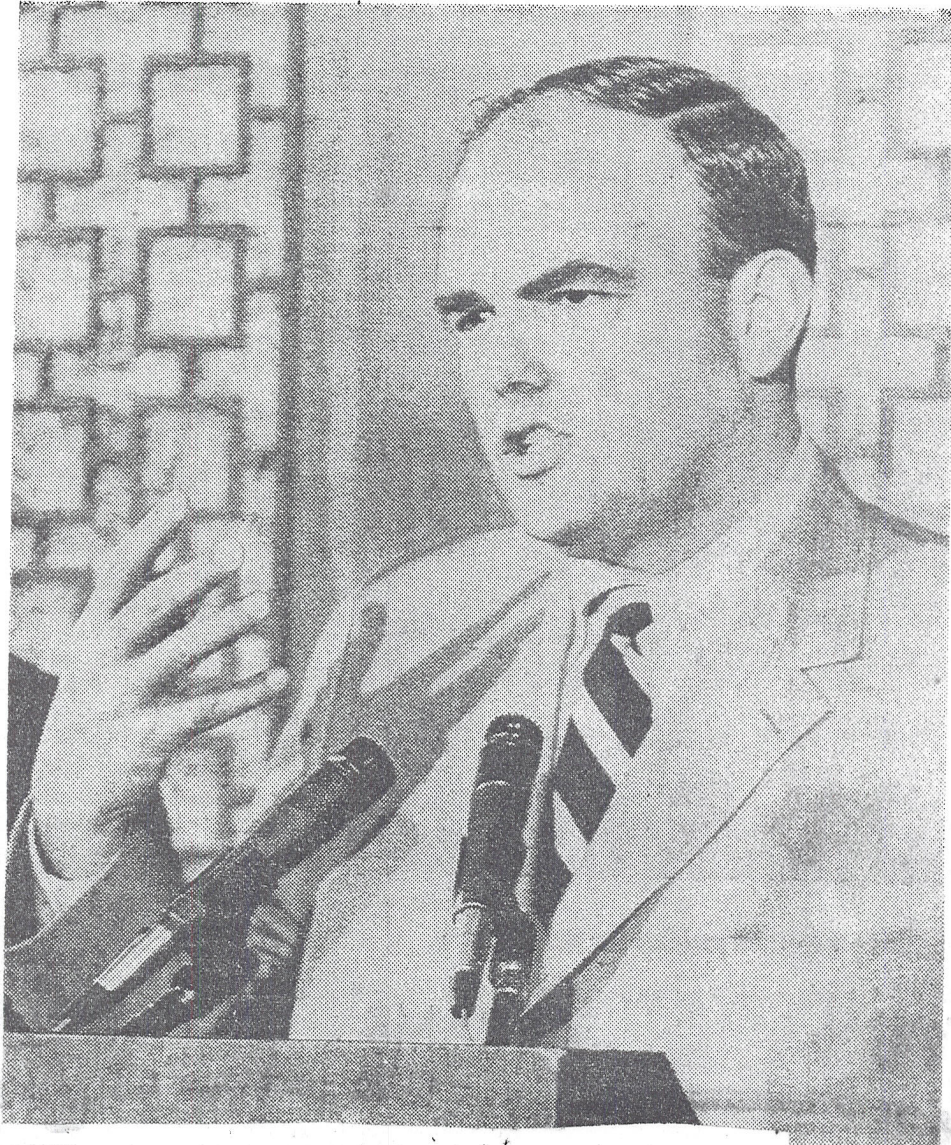
Although Nixon has praised Vice President Spiro Agnew on television, "he did not intend to close off any options," Ehrlichman said. The adviser skipped the opportunity to elaborate on Agnew but praised former Treasury Secretary John Connally as "winning and warm."

The high cost of living does not trouble Ehrlichman as potentially hurtful at the polls because he expects voters to choose on the basis of overall ability of the candidates. This puts Nixon on top, in the view of his aide.

Ehrlichman was in Stockholm recently as a member of the U.S. delegation to the World Environmental Conference. On his return he told Nixon the press had ex-



HENRY KISSINGER
Bathed in publicity



WHITE HOUSE ADVISER JOHN EHRLICHMAN

AP Wirephotos

The key man on the home front

aggrated the Americans' difficulties.

"They showed us as beleaguered and very defensive on Vietnam. That's not the sense I got," Ehrlichman said.

Although some regard Nixon as pro-industry and thus on the defensive regarding environmental cleanup, the GOP sees political pay dirt there.

"Sure, we're going to make the environment an issue,"

Ehrlichman said.

"Nixon is the first President who has really involved himself. We've moved good legislation, reorganized the executive branch to cope with it and trebled the anti-pollution budget."

Like other Nixon appointees, Ehrlichman will submit his resignation in November

to give the boss, if re-elected, "a chance to start with a clean slate."

Meanwhile Ehrlichman professes to be unconcerned about his press image.

"When I go back home and practice law," he said, "I'll either feel I've done what's right for the President or I haven't. I can't worry about criticism. You get it no matter what."