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Merry-Go-Round

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Nixon Aide's Hostile Campaign



Jack Anderson

THE WORD HAS gone out from the White House to "nail" Jack Anderson and The Washington Post. This language was used, according to sources who heard it, by President Nixon's crewcut chief of staff, H.R. (Bob) Haldeman.

The sources are too sensitive to be identified, but they gave us details known only to the President's inner circle. They said the President's private remarks about the press are often bitter and belligerent. He has even been heard, in reference to The Washington Post, to explode angrily: "We've got to take care of those people!" But it is Haldeman, said our sources, who has translated these remarks into direct action.

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IN DEFENSE of the President, they contend his hostility toward the press is justified because of the abuse he gets in print. They spoke of a "double standard" that many Washington correspondents apply in writing about him.

But they contrasted his "touchiness" and "irritation" with Haldeman's "cold, calculated hostility" towards the press. Haldeman's idea of press relations, they said, is to tell reporters nothing. "He has an absolutely evil attitude relative to the press," acknowledged one source.

After he entered the White House, Mr. Nixon's attitude grew increasingly sour as the liberal press criticized his conduct of

the Vietnam war. He complained to his closest associates that "the papers peddling the Hanoi line give more space to the enemy than to their own President.

Our sources claimed the President wasn't particularly hostile at first toward us but rather regarded us as "hard-hitting but fair." Not until we exposed from their own most secret documents how he and Henry Kissinger had misled the public about U.S. policy toward the India-Pakistan conflict did the President turn his ire against us.

His anger at The Washington Post was fanned into a blind rage, said our sources, over its Watergate stories which exposed the White House involvement in the illegal espionage operations against the Democrats. Not long afterward, Haldeman gave out instructions to "nail" us and the Post.

The word was passed to the Justice Department, we were told, to try to make a case against us. Last week, Les Whitten was arrested while gathering news for this column.

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WHITTEN'S ONLY crime was digging out critical information about the Nixon Administration's mishandling of Indian rights.

We don't know what action the administration intends to take against the Post. It may be significant, or merely a coincidence, that one of the FBI agents who arrested Whitten mentioned The Washington Post.