

Watergate Impact Found Slowing Work in Capital

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By JOHN HERBERS APR 27 1973

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WASHINGTON, April 26 — The trauma of the Watergate case appeared today to have slowed some operations of the Federal Government.

"We call Haldeman's office and get some assistant on the telephone," said one official in the Office of Management and Budget in reference to H. R. Haldeman, the President's embattled chief of staff. "But then we don't get any resolution to our question."

Some parts of the Government—foreign policy, the military, routine business—were reported going on pretty much as before. But there was evidence that some decisions on public matters were piling up as much of the White House staff, which has been central to the entire operation of Government, was barely functioning.

One staff member said that for three days last week virtually everyone in the Executive Office Building stood in the

halls and talked about the Watergate scandals and the officials alleged to have been involved. The main business at the White House for several days has been discussion of "how to salvage the institution" [the Presidency], he said.

Ronald L. Ziegler, the White House press secretary, sought to minimize the damage that the disclosures were inflicting on government.

"The President is getting in very early and staying very late," he said. "The work of the Government is going on. The work of the White House staff is going on."

A check of the agencies and departments, however, showed that in some the work was not going on as before. A Treasury official, for example, said that his department was having trouble getting approval of some minor legislative pro-

Continued on Page 14, Column 4

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Continued From Page 1, Col. 7

posals because of "personnel problems across the street," meaning the White House.

An Assistant Secretary in one of the departments said: "It stands to reason that the whole situation has got to delay things that move through the White House staff process, for example, appointments, which are staffed almost exclusively out in the White House. But when it comes to issues, the agencies deal through supercrats like George P. Schultz [Treasury Secretary and counselor to the President] and there may not be any delays."

Casper W. Weinberger, Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare and counselor to the President, said, "The fallout is not affecting the operations of H.E.W." Mr. Weinberger, as a White House aide who has not been linked to the Watergate affair, has considerable authority to proceed on his own.

Some Work Unaffected

The National Security Council, headed by Henry A. Kissinger, the President's chief adviser on foreign affairs, appears to have been less affected by the scandals than other White House offices. The work of the Departments of State and Defense have gone on much as before, even though meetings of the lowest ranks gather frequently to discuss Watergate matters and speculate on what will happen.

Appointments of ambassado

and other officials, however, have been held up because of the Watergate situation, sources in the State Department said.

The staffs of Mr. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman, the President's chief adviser on domestic affairs, appear to have been damaged most by the disclosures, because those two officials are under investigation in the case and are reported preoccupied with their defense.

One Assistant Secretary in a domestic department said:

"There's no question that this has had a sapping effect on everybody. People are staring at the walls wondering what it means. The big unanswered question is just how disabling it is going to be for the executive branch in its relations with the legislative. In the short term at least, our effectiveness with the legislature has got to be impaired."

Predictions Are Made

On Capitol Hill, Congressional leaders said that there had not yet been much change in White House-Congressional relations, largely because Congress was still in Easter recess. There were predictions from both Republicans and Democrats, however, that the dominance that the White House had displayed in appropriations and other matters could be greatly altered when Congress resumed.

One Republican leader, who asked not to be identified, said that it was questionable that the Republican minority could sustain the kind of power that President Nixon had demonstrated before Eas-

ter, when solid Republican support helped to sustain the President's veto of the water and sewer grant program and beat back a Democratic move for a mandatory rollback of prices.

"I don't think you can have a severe loss of credibility in the White House," he said, "without it having some impact on people who otherwise, in a pinch, might go along with the White House on a given issue."

Meantime, President Nixon, even while spending most of his time on the Watergate matter, was continuing to keep close watch on Government operations, according to several sources. Tomorrow, he will make an address in Meridian, Mass., for the dedication of a training school at the Naval Air Base there. And on Saturday he will meet with his top economic advisers on what to do about inflation.