



18th Century Nixon Man

Washington

THE YOUNG lawyer who drafted the White House's new domestic security plans in the summer of 1970, Tom Charles Huston, is a fervent, scholarly conservative who wishes he had lived in the 18th Century.

His intellectual heroes are Cato, the Roman moralist, and Thomas Jefferson; the portrait on his office wall here was of John C. Calhoun, the Southern theorist of states' rights and nullification of federal statutes.

His explanation of the proposed counteroffensive against anti-Nixon insurgents three years ago used the language of a stern public philosopher, not a law-and-order fanatic.

"The real threat to internal security—in any society—is repression," Huston

explained the other day in a telephone interview from Indianapolis, where he has been practicing law for the last two years. "But repression is an inevitable result of disorder. Forced to choose between order and freedom, people will take order.

"A handful of people can't frontally overthrow the government," he continued, recalling the troubled mood of spring, 1970, a season of widening war in Indochina, terrorist bombing at home and civil strife at Kent State in Ohio.

Security was actually just a sideline for Huston in an intense, ultimately frustrated two-year term of service with the Nixon administration.

The lawyer, who was born May 9, 1941, the son of an insurance man, in Logans-

port, Ind., remembers a teen-age phase as a "Stevenson Democrat." But by the time he graduated from high school, he was a conservative ideologue, a "Jeffersonian Republican," a believer in individual responsibility.

A campus conservative at Indiana University, where he won both bachelor's (1963) and law (1966) degrees with high honors, Huston became the national chairman of Young Americans for Freedom in 1965.

In 1966, as the antiwar movement burgeoned among students, he organized the World Youth Crusade for Freedom, which sent campus leaders to tour Vietnam.

It was also in 1966 that he took his first political plunge. His personal endorsement of Richard Nixon for President was a somewhat controversial move at a moment when many young conservatives preferred Ronald Reagan; and it was early enough to attract the grateful attention of Nixon's close aides.

Accordingly, after the Nixon victory in 1968 and the end of Huston's two-year stint with Army intelligence, he was invited to join Nixon's stable of speechwriters.

His experience was in many ways disenchanting. "The administration's domestic programs were never rooted in any philosophical view of what a government ought to be doing," he recently complained. When the liberal Daniel Patrick Moynihan prevailed over the conservative Arthur Burns in the in-house White House debate over welfare reform, "it was all over for me," Huston said.

Yet things got worse, he felt, when the real winners in the White House proved to be not the liberals but the



TOM C. HUSTON
"All over"

"technocrats" and advertising men.

Then and now he argued that the Nixon administration's "New Federalism" did not go far enough in decentralizing power. It is not enough, he said, for the federal government to give the city of Indianapolis \$100,000 in a program "to fight rats any way you want to." Indianapolis should also have the right to decide whether it wants to fight a war on rats at all, he said.

For most of a year, from the end of 1969 till the fall of 1970, Huston worked on the security program—first as a researcher and writer, later as the project officer for the White House.

But by the spring of 1971, he recognized with regret that the spirit of pragmatism, not philosophical conservatism, was running the Administration, and he moved quietly back to Indianapolis.

He says he does not miss the capital, especially since the Watergate scandal burst on his former associates. But he still has a profound respect for President Nixon.

"The last thing I'd ever do is count Richard Nixon out," he said. "He's still the greatest living politician. If anyone can survive, he can."

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