

The Federal Diary

Political Appointees Getting Nervous



By
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Washington's political-bureaucratic community—at least a big chunk of it—is scared stiff.

Many top officials have buried their well-worn cloaks of aloofness and now are seeking out old and new friends in Congress and even the press, in an attempt to find out what happens next.

Nervous political appointees are studying staff-compiled data on Gerald Ford and/or Carl Albert, on the off chance that one of them may be the next boss and what-does-that-mean?

That they are scared is understandable. Survivors of the second Nixon administration purge of government thought they were home free for another four years. Top-level federal salaries, despite some justified breast-beating, are good and there are much worse places to live than Washington. Limousines are nice, so are big staffs and invitations to embassy and lobbyists' parties. Also, there are mortgages to be paid and kids to be educated and it would be difficult for many to have

their IOUs called in 36 months early.

While many of Mr. Nixon's appointees are disillusioned, probably many more aides are as loyal and hopeful as ever. But no matter how much one likes and admires the ship's captain there is a tendency to look around for a life preserver when water sloshes around the shoes.

"None of this stuff got to me," a top political appointee said, "until Time came out with that thing." The "thing" was an editorial—first ever for the news magazine—suggesting that Mr. Nixon resign. Then I began to wonder, he said, "if the whole thing was coming unwrapped."

When the President called for all appointees to submit resignations after the 1972 victory, it stunned loyalists who had helped—on and off the job—assure the landslide. Some of the appointees were kept dangling for months, until they learned they had been given, again, the White House seal of approval. Their feelings of relief sustained many through the dark days this spring and summer when there was a new Watergate bombshell a day.

"Even when Agnew left," a White House aide said, "I thought things would eventually

right themselves. The day after the press conference," he recalled, "I called several friends in the press to tell them I thought that was the most insulting, boorish display on the part of the press I had ever witnessed. But that was two weeks ago. Now with the (missing) tapes and the editorial pressure, and the telegrams, I'm beginning to wonder where I'll be a few months from now." He isn't alone, as any executive job placement agency in town will tell you.

Insurance Premiums: Rep. Jerome R. Waldie (D-Calif.) says the Cost of Living Council has turned down his request to review and roll back proposed 1974 rate raises for federal health insurance premiums.

Waldie, chairman of the House Health Benefits Subcommittee, asked the COLC to bar a rate increase next year of 19 per cent for Blue Cross-Blue Shield and 14 per cent for Aetna, two largest carriers in the government program. The raise will mean a 27 per cent premium increase for individual Blue Cross-Blue Shield subscribers, and 16 to 18 per cent more per person for Aetna coverage.

The Californian, a Blue Cross-Blue Shield premium-payer himself, says the COLC sent him

a form letter of rejection that contained a premium increase justification from the Civil Service Commission. CSC negotiates rates and benefits with the 40 carriers in the government health program.

Waldie, obviously, was hoping for a repeat of last year when he helped badger the COLC into reducing federal premium increases by about 12 per cent. Federal officials say that is the reason the jump is so big this time. So, pending new developments, get set for a bigger insurance premium deduction in January unless you are enrolled in one of the few plans that don't plan a rate hike.

Women in the Public Service: That's the theme of a Nov. 15-16 conference at the Mayflower sponsored by the National Civil Service League. The sessions will feature seminars on equal pay and employment, training programs for women and discrimination against women resulting from pregnancy and old age.

Bill Spates, manager of Social Security's Silver Spring district office, will retire next month. Spates has more than 40 years of federal service, 37 with SSA, which included top posts in Philadelphia, Chicago and San Francisco.