

# Watergate Has Clogged the Machinery

While the problems of state pile up on his desk, President Nixon is now putting his Watergate troubles ahead of the nation's affairs.

He takes out time to visit with world figures and to pose for pictures, seeking to give the impression that he is attending to his duties. But concerned aides tell us he is engaged almost totally in heading off impeachment, to the neglect of both domestic and foreign problems.

The problems are forwarded to the White House for decisions, generating the usual paperwork. Aides confer; secretaries bustle; typewriters clatter. The routine, however, has more form than substance, for a malaise hangs over the White House.

The problems that languish on the President's desk today, meanwhile, may become crises for the nation tomorrow. Here are some of the most urgent:

• The economy is out of whack. Prices are soaring; unemployment is rising; the stock market is in the doldrums. Workers, caught in the price squeeze, are demanding higher pay. The President has been alerted to brace for a wave of strikes this year. Food exports have been increased in a desperate but lagging effort to keep up with the trade deficit. This will cause food prices to climb in the supermarket. Yet these problems have received little attention in the White House.

• Skyrocketing inflation has stripped the poor of money to buy necessities. Many will be forced to resort to crime in order to survive. Hundreds of thousands of teenagers, unable to find jobs, will be turned into the streets this summer. Already, outbreaks of violence and vandalism have been reported in the big cities. The White House has been warned to prepare for trouble, but nothing has been done to head it off.

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• Americans suddenly are confronted with troubling commodity shortages. This is “causing serious economic, social and political problems for the United States,” warns the General Accounting Office. Americans are consuming oil, for example, faster than they can produce it. Tight fuel supplies could cause electric brown-outs this summer, and long gas lines may start forming again, energy experts fear. The President has called for expanding energy supplies, but he hasn't followed up with a coherent program.

• Watergate has clogged the legislative machinery, tying up Congress and preoccupied its members. Urgent issues have been ignored. In the backrooms, Republicans are in a panic. Since President Nixon's name won't appear on the ballots in November, angry voters can protest against Watergate only by voting against the party. This could badly damage the two-party system. The President's tactics, meanwhile, are aggravating the problem.

• On the foreign front, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger has achieved some spectacular successes. But he is becoming a one-man State Department, who can handle only one problem at a time. While he was keeping peace in the Mideast last week, a long line of foreign dignitaries cooled their heels in Washington waiting to see him. In private, they didn't conceal their disappointment over missing

him. Those who got into see President Nixon instead were scarcely consoled. They had come to see Kissinger.

• The President is counting heavily on the Moscow summit meeting next month to bolster his standing with the American people. But the Soviets are disappointed over his inability to gain them promised trade concessions from Congress. The strategic arms limitation talks have also bogged down. Our sources doubt that the Soviets will sign any meaningful agreement until Nixon either has regained his political strength or has been replaced.

• China is going through another purge, with Premier Chou En-lai's neck apparently on the chopping block. This could jeopardize Chinese-American relations, which the wily old premier championed. It looks as if the rival factions are maneuvering for power, as the venerable Mao Tse-tung slowly fades. The future of the world could depend on who wins the power struggle. If China restores its ties with Russia, the Communist alliance could dominate the world. If China turns to the United States, a hostile Russia may decide upon a preemptive attack. Both men and missiles are ready along the 5,000-mile Sino-Soviet border. Yet both Nixon and Kissinger are so preoccupied that they have little time to follow these crucial developments.

• A black-vs-white war may be developing in Africa. Portugal's new mil-

itary leaders favor “self determination” for their African colonies. This almost certainly will lead to the independence of Angola and Mozambique, which serves as “buffer states” separating South Africa from the black nations. South Africa has already started to arm its farmers on the northern borders. If Mozambique becomes independent, a State Department source told us flatly, “Rhodesia is a dead duck.” These white supremacist nations are quietly lobbying in Washington to end the U.S. arms embargo, while the President worries about Watergate.

• Many other foreign problems have been neglected by Nixon and Kissinger. Latin America is in ferment, but Washington is paying scant attention. Kissinger wants to restore relations with Cuba, but the President won't listen. Our sources say he has a personal dislike for the bearded Fidel Castro. Nor has the President taken time to keep up with the leadership changes in the western world. He is scarcely acquainted with the new leaders of France, Germany and Portugal. The President has been too busy to deal with Turkey's decision to resume poppy growing, despite the multi-million-dollar American program to subsidize Turkish farmers and, thereby, hold down heroin smuggling into the U.S. Kissinger is also eager to normalize relations with India, but he can't seem to find time for a planned trip to New Delhi.

The key question was put to the President the other day by columnist James J. Kilpatrick. In case of an impeachment trial, asked the columnist, would the President be able to defend himself and still manage the nation's affairs. Nixon replied with grim determination: “Yes, and I intend to.”

Some other people in the White House aren't so sure.