



## PARADE'S SPECIAL

EDITED by LLOYD SHEARER

## INTELLIGENCE REPORT

BECAUSE OF VOLUME OF MAIL RECEIVED, PARADE REGRETS IT CANNOT ANSWER QUERIES.

**PARDONING PAINS**

Many veteran Washington observers, including some of his warmest admirers, are afraid that President Gerald Ford has come down with the same syndrome that afflicted Richard Nixon -- the bringing into the Federal Government of people on the basis of cronyism rather than competence.

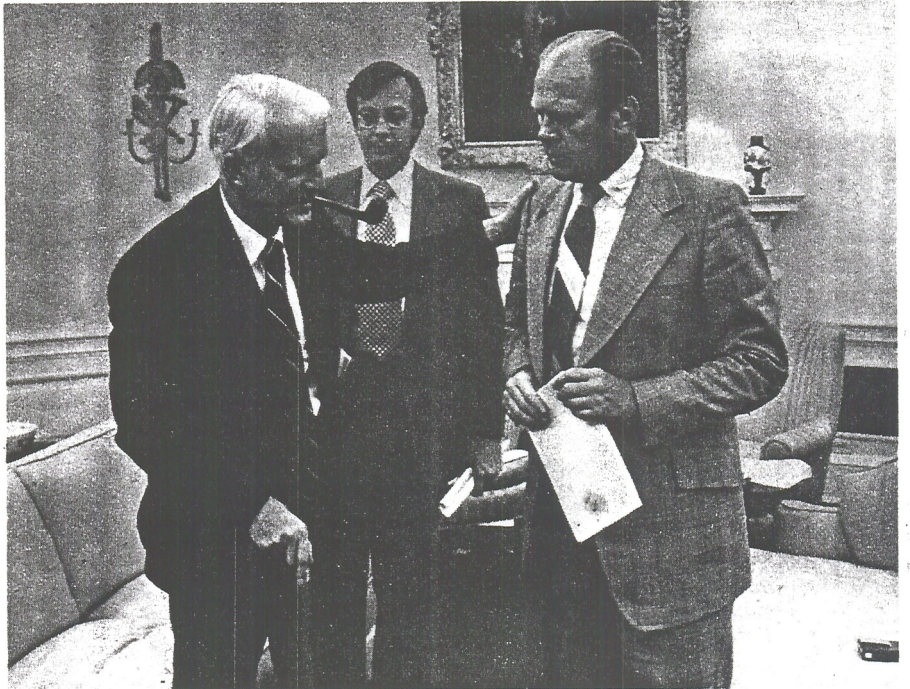
This problem faces many politicians when they reach high office and must make key personnel decisions. Do they then hire as their advisers men of expertise and tact or yes-men of proven loyalty? Do they choose men who are best for them or best for the country?

Former President Nixon chose as his chief of staff, Bob Haldeman, an angry, suspicious, driving, politically inexperienced loyalist, who at the end of the Nixon incumbency asked for and was refused a pardon by the chief he had served so long and fanatically.

**Starting a career**

President Ford has chosen as his trusted legal adviser and White House counsel Mr. Philip Buchen, with whom in 1941 Ford founded a law firm in Grand Rapids. It went nowhere, and four months after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, Ford joined the Navy and was sent to Chapel Hill, N.C., where he spent the next year giving physical training instructions to U.S. Navy aviation cadets. Buchen, a victim in his youth of infantile paralysis, remained in Grand Rapids, developing into a lawyer of unblemished reputation.

It was Buchen, however, Gerald Ford's former law partner and one of his



ATTORNEY PHILIP BUCHEN CONFERS WITH PRESIDENT FORD AS WHITE HOUSE AIDE CLAY WHITEHEAD LOOKS ON.

first appointees to the Presidential staff, who so disastrously handled for Ford the ill-timed pardoning of Richard Nixon last month.

It was also Buchen's lack of candor, trust, and openness in a so-called "Open Administration" which led in part to the resignation of Jerald F. terHorst as Ford's press secretary, a great loss indeed.

It was Buchen who chose as his secret emissary to

San Clemente to negotiate the Nixon pardon a young Washington lawyer of 36 named Benton Becker.

Several Sundays ago, on Sept. 8th, in a White House press conference, Buchen praised Becker in the following words: "I want to express for the record my heartfelt personal thanks and appreciation to a dear friend of the President's and of mine. He is Benton Becker, a Washington attorney, who has served voluntarily as



BECKER



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my special and trusted consultant and emissary in helping to bring about the events recorded today."

Buchen apparently did not know that Becker was under investigation by the U.S. Attorney's office in allegations of tax evasion. He did not know that Becker has represented two businessmen convicted of stock fraud who had accused him of advising them to perjure themselves, a charge Becker denies.

#### It needs explanation

Nor did Buchen explain Becker's background as "a dear friend of the President's and mine."

Becker's friendship with Ford reportedly began in 1970 when Becker provided some legal and investigational work for then Rep. Gerald Ford and two other Congressmen, Louis C. Wyman (R., N.H.) and Joe D. Waggoner (D., La.), who were spearheading the attempt to impeach U.S. Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas. It was back then that Gerald Ford suggested that "grounds for impeachment are anything the House wants them to be."

#### Raising questions

The House Judiciary Committee called Becker to testify during the hearings on Gerald Ford's nomination as Vice President last year. He was questioned at length, and his performance did not sit particularly well with several of the committee members. Congresswoman Barbara Jordan (D., Tex.) described Becker, following his testimony, as "a gentleman whose credibility was questioned by this committee on both sides ...and made representations that were construed in a fashion that serious ethical questions could be raised."

Ford, of course, staunchly defended Becker who helped him, along with Philip Buchen, prepare for the confirmation hearings. That, supposedly, is how Buchen and Becker met.

In any event, it was Buchen's judgment to send Benton Becker to San Clemente to negotiate one of the most important, delicate and controver-

sial pardons in the history of the United States.

According to many lawyers consulted by Intelligence Report, Benton Becker is simply not in the same legal league as Herbert Jack Miller, the lawyer who represented Nixon in the pardon negotiations. "Compared to Jack Miller," said one attorney, "Benton Becker is simply an ambitious babe-in-the-woods. To act as an emissary in a deal of such historic importance -- the first time in American history that a former U.S. President has been pardoned -- that requires the know-how of an equally important attorney, someone of top-notch achievement, character and reputation."

#### Major blunder

The decision to pardon former President Nixon on Sept. 8, 1974, has been widely regarded as a moral, legal and political mistake of the first water. Perhaps Mr. Nixon should have been pardoned, but the time, the manner, the method in which he was will surely rank as the first major blunder in the Ford Presidency. And it was brought about because the job was too big for the man assigned to handle it.

It is significant to note that following the "pardon snafu" President Ford named Phillip Areeda, 44, one of Harvard's most highly regarded law professors, to share the duties of Presidential Counsel Buchen, 58, effective Oct. 14th. Areeda is no stranger to Washington. In 1956, two years out of the Harvard Law School from which he was graduated summa cum laude, he was appointed assistant special counsel to the late President Dwight Eisenhower.

In the months to come, President Ford is going to look just about as good as the staff he surrounds himself with. If his hiring yardstick measures loyalty above all else, he is in for a bad, bad time indeed. If he places merit above political or personal loyalty, he will surely improve on the performance of his Presidential predecessor.