

Washington: A 'Small' Staff in an 'Open' Administration?

By JAMES RESTON

WASHINGTON, June 16—When Richard Nixon ran for the Presidency, he promised that he would have a "small" White House staff, and after he won, he said he would run an "open" Administration with a strong Cabinet of "independent thinkers."

It is interesting to look back on this in the light of the President's recent reorganization of both his staff and his Cabinet. The official White House staff is now considerably larger than it was when President Johnson left office, and after the new reorganization is completed, will probably be larger than ever in the history of the Presidency.

For example, the new Domestic Council in the White House, with John D. Ehrlichman as its director, is expected to have a team of over fifty officials, and if this follows the experience of the White House security staff of over seventy under Dr. Henry Kissinger, it is not likely to add much to the authority of the Cabinet or the "openness" of the Administration.

For Mr. Ehrlichman, like Dr. Kissinger, is a confidential aide to the President, and both they and their assistants are protected by "executive privilege" from being questioned by the Congress.

These bald facts, however, can easily be misinterpreted. Every President is entitled to organize the executive office as he pleases, and most of them end up with larger staffs than they planned before taking on the murderous job of controlling a vast bureaucracy. Also, the creation of new machinery for this purpose, even though it appears to centralize policy-making and control in the White House, does not by itself prove that this is what the President intends or what he will do. It all depends on how he uses the new machinery, and how the new men fit into it.

Could Be Better

For example, with the addition of Secretary of Labor George P. Shultz and Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Robert Finch to the President's White House organization, the Cabinet heads of the executive departments may find that they can get their ideas to the President quicker than under the old system.

Also, with Mr. Shultz established as director of the new Office of Management and Budget, and especially with his understanding of departmental problems, he may be able to provide more balance on policy questions in the White House.

Nevertheless, the question

remains whether the intention now is to use the new and larger staff to open up the White House to the Cabinet members more than in the past or to shut it up and provide greater control over policy to staff members who cannot be summoned to Congress to explain what they are doing.

This is one of the complaints on Capitol Hill about Dr. Kissinger's security affairs operation. The impression prevails that he has more power than Secretary of State Rogers but is not available for questioning.

What, however, if this same privilege is to be extended to another large Domestic Council staff planning the internal policy of the country under Mr. Ehrlichman? It is not the size of the staff that concerns the Congress so much as the fear that it may, like Dr. Kissinger's, diminish the Cabinet and reduce the "openness" President Nixon promised.

Actually, the White House staff now seems much larger than it was under President Johnson because President Nixon has been more candid about it. On July 1, the staff will jump from 208 to 548 and the budget from \$3,940,000 to \$8,550,000 largely because a great many members of President Johnson's staff were "loaned" to the White House by other depart-

ments and hidden in the budgets of other departments.

Even so, the Nixon staff will actually be larger than the Johnson staff, and it will go up much more after Mr. Nixon's organization is fully manned.

Every President since the last war has faced the dilemma of protecting the proper secrecy and efficiency of his office without turning the White House into a fortress. President Kennedy had a way of jumping lines of authority and encouraging the flow of ideas to and from the White House under a "system" that was sometimes described as a "creative mess." President Johnson was suspicious of the departments and ran what often seemed to be an Administration of fear.

Presidential Styles

President Nixon has veered between these extremes, now being open and candid, and then, as in the Cambodian invasion, or in the Hickel affair, fearing and resenting openness. So the new reorganization will have to be judged on the way he uses it. He has talked a lot about "small" and decentralized government, but he has now established a big machine that can run both ways and not even the Congress will know its direction until much later in the year, if then.