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Capital Views Big San Clemente Exodus as a Signal

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WASHINGTON, July 23—President Nixon is heading west again tomorrow, with much of the United States Government in tow. This is news, quite apart from the serious economic and political business to be considered in California. For in the sign language of the capital and of his own official family, Mr. Nixon is saying that he does not want to pass another summer in isolation. He does not wish again to leave the impression that only a few White House nobles have access to the remote throne room in the castle at San Clemente or that a whole year's worth of policy is being ratified on the links with only Attorney General John N. Mitchell in attendance.

News Analysis

That is what happened last summer when Mr. Nixon anointed Mr. Mitchell and aides H. R. Haldeman, John D. Ehrlichman and Henry A. Kissinger as the California elite and emerged from their lonely consultations with a series of fateful decisions: to delay the Vietnam troop withdrawals for a month; to nominate Clement F. Haynsworth Jr. for the Supreme Court; to rewrite the disputed "guidelines" for school desegregation and to launch Vice President Agnew on the middle-America circuit.

The Outer Circle

Though other officials positioned themselves near the Presidential seaside compound for a time last August, they felt left out of the inner circle. Even some of the most loyal Nixon aides who had been left to swelter in Washington felt themselves forever branded as

second-class citizens at court. And the vast Federal machine, sensing itself headless, struggled with a torrent of terse and remote orders and requests that arrived, annoyingly, on California daylight time, three hours out of phase.

By design or by accident, Mr. Nixon's summer out west established not only new work habits for the White House, but also a new pecking order and what came to be called a conservative or Southern tilt in policy and political strategy. The opinion polls in the winter that followed seemed to indicate public approval, and the character of the first Nixon term, at least, appeared fixed.

Reedy's Analysis

George E. Reedy, the thoughtful former press secretary to president Johnson, was writing at very moment of dangerous, monarchic tendencies in the American Presidency. He demonstrated how a few White House aides come to appear to a President as the voice of the people and how the more important a pending decision the fewer the number of advisers likely to be consulted.

Mr. Nixon seemed to be turning this analysis of the Johnson years into a prophecy of his own until the loss of the Haynsworth nomination led to an even worse defeat with Judge G. Harrold Carswell, followed swiftly by the national trauma over Cambodia and Kent.

Suddenly Mr. Nixon found his popularity in decline, his celebrated Vice President under assault, his nemesis, George C. Wallace, re-elected anyway and his liberal or moderate crew of advisers crying a loud alarm at the gates. To some extent, the President responded. To what extent remains to be seen.

Having contained the venture

into Cambodia, Mr. Nixon tried, almost begged, to have more people brought to him with reports on the mood of the country. Though no one will admit that it happened on White House orders, Mr. Agnew's most accusing rhetoric was redirected, if not really cooled. Mr. Mitchell, too, worked to change his demeanor and allowed that he had been widely misunderstood.

Mr. Nixon confessed to himself and finally aloud that "those at the highest level are like in an isolation booth in the old quiz shows, where the man inside cannot hear what's going on outside." Even his wife was quoted the other day as saying she felt cooped up.

And instead of a private month by the sea, Mr. Nixon set out a summer schedule of three shorter trips west, with plenty of exposure on the way and plenty of business on the agenda to give a large group of aides and Cabinet members a chance to deal with him in shirtsleeves.

Members of Caravan

Flying out with Mr. Nixon tomorrow will be Secretaries Clifford M. Hardin, Maurice H. Stans, George Romney and the sinning Walter J. Hickel; the liberal domestic lobby of counselors Robert H. Finch and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, and Donald Rumsfeld of the poverty agency, as well as Messrs. Ehrlichman and Haldeman and the more conservative counselor Bryce N. Harlow.

Also California bound is George P. Shultz, who will try to drive the Federal Government in new directions as head of the Office of Management and Budget. Other meetings will bring out the top officials of the Pentagon and some from the State Department. In a

dozen days, they are all to gain a place in the sun.

Left behind and sounding the alarm this time is Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina, one of Mr. Nixon's patrons in the segregationist South. Observers here suspect that his wing of the party is aroused not so much by anything yet done as by the fear of what might be done under the influence of so many "liberals" far off in California.

The most recent desegregation policies of the Administration do not yet betray any significant change of direction. Nor has the President visibly veered from the tendency to seek his political constituency in the urban South and suburban North. And no one has yet claimed that a different pattern of travel and western rest will compensate for the President's isolation from the people.

But a few important officials in Washington are being made to feel less isolated from their President and for that reason alone the court of King Richard is abuzz.