

Quick Followup To Hickel Firing

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The White House began yesterday to reverse some of the policy decisions made by former Secretary of the Interior Walter J. Hickel and to dismiss some of the officials in the Interior Department who were closest to him.

One policy decision that was reversed by the office of Undersecretary of the Interior, Fred J. Russell, according to informed sources, was Hickel's order of a few months ago banning all commercial billboards on Federal public lands.

Another was an order on Tuesday, November 24, the day before President Nixon dismissed Mr. Hickel, banning all imports of products from eight species of whales that the Secretary had declared endangered.

Russell is now serving as acting-Secretary of Interior until Hickel's successor, Representative Rogers Morton (Rep-Md.), is formally nominated and confirmed by the Senate.

The following six officials in the Interior Department were dismissed yesterday by White House aide Frederick V. Malek:

Patrick P. Ryan, Hickel's executive assistant; Dr. Leslie L. Glasgow, assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife (a former Louisiana State University professor and Louisiana Wildlife Commissioner and the only one of the six not appointed personally by Hickel); Josef Holbert, Hickel's press secretary; Charles H. Meacham, Commissioner of Fish and Wildlife; Donald D. Dunlop, Science Adviser and Thomas Holley, Congressional Liaison.

Hickel had brought Ryan, Meacham and Holbert with him when he came to Washington from Alaska where he was governor.

According to several of the dismissed officials, Malek came over to the Interior Department early yesterday afternoon and set himself up in the office of Deputy Un-

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cent of the products from whales caught in the world's oceans.

Hickel said that three of the species — the fin, the sperm and the sei — were critically endangered. "It is the clear intent of the act," he said, "to prevent conditions that lead to extinction. It is also clear that if the present rate of commercial exploitation continues unchecked, these three species will become as rare as the other five (the blue, the bowhead, the humpback, the right and the gray)."

The same day he issued his order Hickel sent it to the Government Printing Office to be published in the Federal Register. Executive orders do not take effect until so

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dersecretary William Rogers. Rogers, acting under Malek's orders, then summoned the officials who were to be dismissed one by one.

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Malek, as several dismissed officials reported in almost identical words, said to each one in turn: "We want your resignation, and we want you out of the building by five o'clock."

One of the dismissed officials said that he had asked Malek if he might ask a question. When Malek said that he might, the official asked: "Why this dismissal with such suddenness?" Malek was quoted as replying: "The President feels we need a change in the staff as long

as we have got rid of Hickel."

The official then asked whether Morton knew anything about the dismissals. Malek was quoted as saying: "No."

WHALES

Informed sources also gave this account of the reversal of Hickel's order on the whales:

On Tuesday, Hickel, acting under the authority of the "Endangered Species Conservation Act," which Congress passed last June, declared eight species of whale to be endangered and ordered that no oil, meat or other products from these species could be imported into the United States. This country imports about 30 per

printed.

Yesterday, according to informed sources, the State Department called Russell's office and asked that it call the Government Printing Office and order the printing stopped.

Hickel had ordered the end of all commercial advertising on Federal public lands as part of his program to enhance the environment. When he issued the order there were reports that he had acted without clearing the order with the White House.

Hickel, has cancelled a scheduled Wednesday appearance at the National Press Club. Aides said he was out of town resting.

The Interior firings, it is

believed, may herald personnel changes in other departments as the Nixon Administration gears up for the second half of Mr. Nixon's first term in office.

The man who personally gave the dismissal orders, Frederick V. Malek, is a 33-year-old graduate of West Point and the Harvard Business School who made his first million in business in South Carolina before joining the Nixon Administration as deputy undersecretary of Health, Education and Welfare.

In the administrative jungle of that department, he earned a reputation as an executive who did not spare personal feelings in the quest for efficiency.