

James Reston

# It Will Take More Than a Change of Style

Washington

**T**HE LATEST word from the White House is that President Nixon is not only changing his staff but his "style" in hope of repairing the Watergate damage and blocking any move toward his impeachment.

According to this thesis, Mr. Nixon will reduce the authority of the White House staff, increase the influence of the Cabinet and make himself more available to the Congress and the press. In short, the pugnacious spirit of defiance, which has marked his Administration from the beginning, is now to be replaced, or so we are told, by a different spirit of cooperation.

The first hard test of this is upon us in the clash between the President and the Congress over the bombing of Cambodia.



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**T**HREE IS A fundamental conflict here. The Congress is insisting that the President has no clear constitutional authority for intervening in Cambodia merely to save the Lon Nol government from possible defeat by the Communists. The Administration is insisting that it has an obligation to do so until North Vietnam abides by the Vietnamese cease-fire agreement, and public opinion seems to be supporting the Congress.

The Gallup Poll indicates that Americans are opposed to the bombing by a margin of 2 to 1. Also, for the first time in years, less than a majority of those polled say that they are satisfied with the President's conduct of his office.

Mr. Nixon can avoid the crisis for a little while. He doesn't need "new" funds to continue the bombing, and he can still carry on as before, but as Senator Mike Mansfield says, not without defying "the will and intent of the Congress."

In other words, the controversy over the bombing is the same, but the Watergate scandals have hurt the President badly, and emboldened the Congress not only to challenge him but to revive old grievances, and even to mutter about impeaching him.

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**T**HE IMPEACHMENT talk is not serious now. In fact, each day's newspaper and network TV news show amount to a kind of bill of impeachment against the President, but any formal attempt to get a majority of the House to impeach or two-thirds of the Senate to convict would certainly fail even in the present mood of anger and despair.

Unless — and this is the main point — the President defies both the House and Senate after they express the will of the Congress against carrying on the bombing of Cambodia. The Congress is terrified even of using the word "impeachment," but if, after the Watergate disaster, the President insists on doing as he pleases in Cambodia, the "constitutional crisis" we've been hearing about will finally be a reality, and even impeachment a possibility.

Even in the middle of the Watergate scandals, the Administration, despite all its talk of new staffs and styles, has not only differed with the Congress on the Cambodian question, but has provoked and even challenged it.

But the Cambodian question, after the Watergate mess, is not likely to be finessed by new styles and better manners, and a more cooperative approach. The constitutional issue of the President's power to wage war in Cambodia, without the consent of the Congress, even in defiance of the Congress vote to take away funds for the operation, is now coming to the fore precisely when the Congress finally feels confident enough to confront the President.

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**T**HEN THE PRESIDENT will have to face the Case-Church amendment which states that "no funds heretofore or hereafter appropriated may be obligated or expended to finance the involvement of U.S. military forces in hostilities in or over, or from the shores of, North Vietnam, South Vietnam, Laos, or Cambodia, unless specifically authorized by the Congress."

This is where the test of Mr. Nixon's new "style" is going to come, and changes in men and attitude will not deal with it. For this is a fundamental question of policy and authority between the Executive and the Legislature, and the Congress, disgusted by the Watergate revelations of presidential judgment and misuse of authority in the Watergate case, is now finally ready for the confrontation.

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