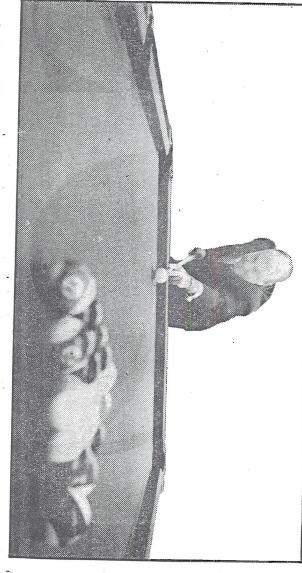
Rowland Evans and Robert Novak

Decentralize The Power?



czar Melvin R. Laird about some of his and take complete charge. House consultant John B. Connally frustrations, then warned: move in fast told incoming White House domestic Tuesday evening, outgoing White Paul Young's restaurant here last At a long and very private dinner in

created by the forced departure of must be to end the internal power are far from filled. H. R. Haldeman and John Ehrlichman Watergate White House. The vacuums struggles which still threaten the post-But an even more challenging prob-Laird agreed that his first target

self. But even if Mr. Nixon resists power, difficult enough anyway, may be made more so by the President himsent of President Nixon. Thus Laird's over four years with the obvious conneered by Haldeman and Ehrlichman determination to reverse the flow of That power flow was engi-The result: a dangerously weak energy wanted him to run the whole show." show, and the President apparently oil-and-gas shortage. "Ehrlichman wanted to run the whole "Ehrlichman saw Akins as a threat," Connally insider told

a maximum of 30 aides is one side of Trimming that swollen staff back to

to returning power to the departments

Laird's intimates say he is committed

cumulation of raw and unsupervised power within the White House ever in cians consider the most dangerous acpeacetime. and ending what he and other politi-

an iron hand. Connally and Laird discovered, with over the entire domestic side of the which gave Ehrlichman sole control ble only to him. It was that huge staff federal government. He ruled it, both Nixon's second term, were working di-House aides who, at the start of Mr. rectly under Ehrlichman and responsi-Laird has now counted 68 White

staffer on the energy crisis was dicthan Ehrlichman — about the coming knew too much - that is, far more tated by Ehrlichman's fear that Akins James E. Akins as top White House Laird that Ehrlichman's ouster of Thus, Connally intimates have told

power from the departments and agenreverse what they both regard as the lem, Laird and Connally agreed, is to

dangerous flow of

incredible and

cies and its concentration in the White

House.

will gain influence over such matters as presidential vetoes of departmental If Laird's scheme to reverse the

ministration — is going to be harder. fairs for the first time in the Nixon admust now start running their own af convincing cabinet members that they House. The other side of the cointhe coin of Laird's problem in reversing the flow of power into the White

some of the passive, obsequious yesorder means trouble. anymore; handle them yourselves. For cabinet department, spreading this into limousine puppets by the Ehrlich-man-Haldeman White House, the Laird alien doctrine to cabinet members and men of the cabinet who were turned lems over to the White their top staffs: Don't send your prob-Laird is now quietly visiting each

decision for months," one Laird lieutenant told us. "They've almost forgot ten how." "Some of these guys haven't made a

House last Monday, Laird has been pounding hard on this theme: Stop shunting hard decisions off to the White House. Since he moved into the White

bills, appointments to high office in power flow works, each department

> each department and development of administration policy.

another. curs when one administration replaces requiring almost as much change and perhaps as much time as normally oction within the Nixon administration, It means, in short, a power revolu-

sonnel policy. low in charge of post-Watergate per personnel policy he has in mind, say Laird intimates, Laird will put newly more loosely structured, decentralized changes which could transform the White House from a dictatorial palace returned presidential aide Bryce Harthe White House. To supervise the level personnel by a single office in ing near total authority over middlemake decisions. One such change: endand the cabinet meets to help him to a place where the President lives In addition, Laird plans other

domestic White House chief may distressingly short. throughout the second Nixon adminis-tration. If he cannot, Laird's tenure as changes, the result will be a profoundly new and If Laird is able to make these improved tone

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