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President Nixon in the White House Rose Garden yesterday with Melvin R. Laird, left, new chief domestic adviser, and Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr., Presidential chief of staff.

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Haig to Quit Army to Hold Haldeman Post as Civilian

By JOHN HERBERS

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WASHINGTON, June 6—President Nixon named former Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird as his chief domestic adviser today in an effort to shore up the Administration during the Watergate crisis.

At a news conference following the announcement, Mr. Laird said that he had returned to the Administration reluctantly because Government "in some quarters is at a standstill." But he said that he had full confidence in President Nixon's "noninvolvement" in the Watergate scandals.

Mr. Nixon also said that Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr. would retire from active duty in the Army, effective Aug. 1, to con-

tinue on a regular basis as White House chief of staff.

Mr. Laird succeeds John D. Ehrlichman, while General Haig has been filling the post formerly held by H. R. Haldeman. Mr. Ehrlichman and Mr. Haldeman resigned April 30 because of the Watergate scandals.

The President thus continued a pattern of turning only to his circle of trusted advisers to rebuild the Government. Both moves, however, were victories for Congress, which only three months ago was the source of bitter complaints about an oppressive White House.

The Laird appointment met

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increasing Congressional demands for a high White House staff member with broad political experience. The Army retirement of General Haig met the objections of some Senators and Representatives who did not think the general should serve in a civilian post while continuing to hold his military rank.

In a third move announced by the White House, Ronald L. Ziegler was given a promotion and a broadened role in the Administration. The President's announcement said that Mr. Ziegler would be an assistant to the President, would continue as press secretary and as the President's spokesman and would assume the duties held by Herbert G. Klein, the Director of Communications whose resignation was announced yesterday.

The Ziegler promotion could mean that he will have less day to day contact with the news media. His credibility was widely considered to have been damaged by a series of misleading statements last year and early this year to the effect that no one in the White House had been involved in the Watergate burglary. However, Gerald L. Warren, deputy press secretary, said today that the President had "great confidence in Ron" and would seek his advice on a variety of subjects.

In yet another move, the President strengthened his defense in the Watergate case by adding as a legal counsel Charles Allen Wright, a constitutional authority who is professor of law at the University of Texas.

Mr. Wright, 45 years old, will assist Leonard Garment, the chief counsel, and J. Fred Buzhardt Jr., special counsel, as a \$150-a-day consultant on Watergate matters.

Nixon Answers Urged

Today's announcement came as the Administration appeared on the verge of taking steps to strengthen its anti-inflation efforts and as pressure mounted from political leaders, including ranking Republicans, for the President to submit to questioning on the Watergate case. All of this lent an air of tension and uncertainty to the troubled White House.

Among those demanding that Mr. Nixon submit to "tough questions" regarding his own role in the Watergate matter were Robert P. Griffin of Michigan, the assistant Senate Republican leader.

"At some point," said Senator Griffin, "the President will

have to go before a full-blown press conference and answer the tough questions or before the Ervin committee [the Senate select committee headed by Senator Sam J. Ervin Jr.] and answer questions.

The White House has been promising a Presidential news conference for several weeks—none has been held since mid-March—but there has been internal debate on whether that would be wise at this time.

The President has decided to make a rare public appearance on Friday. He will be commencement speaker on Friday at Florida Technological University in Orlando, before going to his Key Biscayne home for another long weekend.

As to the economy, it was disclosed that the President will meet tomorrow with Democratic and Republican members of Congress and then with his Cabinet. Secretary of the Treasury George P. Shultz and other economic advisers cut short a trip to Paris to return to Washington.

Laird Predicts Action

Mr. Laird, in his news conference today in the White House briefing room, said he would make recommendation to the President on wage and price controls. At one point he said, "Those people that are speculating against the dollar are making a grave error that I think they will live to regret."

Asked on what he based his statement, Mr. Laird said, "I think it will be based upon actions that the President will make."

The President made only a brief appearance for today's announcements. After the press office passed out a brief statement on the changes, Mr. Nixon, General Haig and Mr. Laird stepped out of the Oval Office and into the Rose Garden for pictures. Smiling and chatting, but without acknowledging the presence of some 100 reporters and photographers, they walked the full length of the garden, past beds of June flowers, turn around and walked back into the building.

A few minutes later, Mr. Laird appeared alone before the press and in his relaxed and easy manner submitted to questions for 30 minutes.

The 50-year-old former Republican Representative from Wisconsin said that in assuming the duties formerly held by John D. Ehrlichman, who resigned April 30 because of the Watergate scandals, he would seek to make Presidential Government more open, to Congress, to the departments and to the press.

"I think you will get tired of

hearing from me and talking to me," he said. "When I was Secretary of Defense, for four years, I held 195 press conferences."

As to Congress, which had chafed at the isolation that Mr. Ehrlichman and the former chief of staff H. R. Haldeman, allegedly brought to the White House, Mr. Laird said, "My best friends are Democratic and Republican members of the House and Senate."

A few weeks ago, shortly after he had left the Government, Mr. Laird told a group of reporters here that "if the President was involved in Watergate, I wouldn't want to know about it."

Asked today if he still felt that way, Mr. Laird said that he did not, that "as a government official I believe it is most important that our system work and the total, complete truth be known."

"The President has assured me of his noninvolvement, and I accept that," Mr. Laird said. "It is absolutely essential that we go on about the business of government. Government in some quarters is at a standstill. This cannot continue. That is one reason I have reluctantly decided to return to government."

He said he was eager to get the Government moving again in many domestic areas, including health, welfare and other matters that he had known well as a member of Congress. In addition he will serve as an ex-officio member of the National Security Council.

"I will have 24-hour-a-day access to the President," he said. But he warned that that should not be taken too literally because "I am not that much of a night person."

General Haig's planned retirement from active military service was announced as a group called Public Citizens, Inc., headed by Ralph Nader, the consumer advocate, filed suit charging that it was illegal for him to serve in the White House while holding a military rank. Lawyers for the group said they would continue to push the suit in the belief that even inactive status in the military violates a Federal law against a military officer holding a civilian post.

Poll, made public today, shows that Mr. Nixon's popularity has dropped 24 percentage points, from a high in late January after the Vietnam peace settlement, to the lowest it has been. The rate of decline, the survey indicated, has leveled off, however. The latest figure—44 percent—is virtually unchanged from last week's 45 percent.