

# Advance Support for Nixon

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A recently reported instance of White House aides soliciting support in advance for a speech by President Nixon is apparently a continuation of a practice begun early in Mr. Nixon's first term.

The practice appears to go considerably beyond what was done in earlier administrations, according to former aides for President John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson.

Persons familiar with the procedures used by the Nixon administration told The Washington Post that Cabinet officers, business and labor officials and other prominent individuals were regularly called by the White House aides on the days of major presidential speeches and were asked to call in their comments, sometimes directly to Mr. Nixon, after the speech.

In addition, an AFL-CIO spokesman said, in several instances during Mr. Nixon's first term labor union leaders were called before a presidential speech and were asked to make public statements or to issue press releases supporting the President after the speech.

Former Cabinet members told The Post they were called by Alexander P. Butterfield, a former White House aide and secretary for the cabinet. Personal friends of Mr. Nixon were called by Rose Mary Woods, the President's longtime secretary, while special interest groups were called by the office of former White House aide, Charles W. Colson, sources said.

In all, 17 to 20 such calls were placed before a major speech, one source said.

The net effect of all the calling, one source said, was to generate a chorus of praise for Mr. Nixon—both directly from his personal callers, and indirectly through the comments to the news media—and very

little criticism of what he had to say.

The practice is apparently part of what memos released during the Senate Watergate hearings called the "follow-up" for Mr. Nixon's speeches and press conferences.

Two Cabinet officers in Mr. Nixon's first term—Robert H. Finch, former Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, and George Romney, former secretary of Housing and Urban Development—told The Post in answer to questions, that they received White House phone calls on the days of major presidential speeches when they were Cabinet members.

Romney said he was "quite frequently called by the White House and was told to call after the speech with my comments, and I was told I would be put straight through to the President."

The White House calls "came before every major speech, and I would be told that the President would be happy to hear from me after the speech," Romney said.

In no instance was he told what to say, Romney said.

"I told him what I felt quite honestly and candidly," Romney said.

Finch said he was occasionally called before a major Nixon speech, usually by Butterfield, and was asked to call the White House after the speech. Sometimes, he said, he called and passed on his opinion to Butterfield, while on other occasions he talked directly to the President.

The prespeech calls from the White House "were not a regular occurrence," Finch said. Many times, Finch said, Mr. Nixon himself called Finch after a speech to ask what he thought of it.

Finch said he felt the President wanted "my political judgment about the speech—whether it was a plus or minus, or up or down."

Al Zack, public relations director for the AFL-CIO,

said that various union leaders in the AFL-CIO had reported to national headquarters during Mr. Nixon's first term that they had received calls in advance of Mr. Nixon's speeches from White House aides saying, "the President is going to say something important tonight."

In many cases, Zack said, the union officials receiving the calls "were asked to make statements, issue press releases in support of the President after the speech, if they could." Zack said he believed the practice of the White House contacting AFL-CIO leaders before a speech has died out, because no union officials have reported receiving such calls in the last year.

Zack said that previous administrations, both Republican and Democratic, often contacted AFL-CIO President George Meany in advance of major economic speeches or messages to outline what the announcement meant for labor. The Nixon administration also has continued this practice, he said.

What was different about the Nixon administration's approach, Zack said, was the solicitation of statements of support for the President from labor union officials.

Kenneth W. Clawson, White House deputy director of communications, said he was unaware that cabinet officers and others had been called in advance of presidential speeches during Mr. Nixon's first term. He said

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the White House only follow-up to Presidential speeches that he is aware of currently is the practice of calling editors, publishers and broadcasters after some speeches and asking them what they thought of the speech.

The practice of lining up support in advance of presidential speeches in the Nixon administration appears to go beyond what occurred in previous administrations, according to Pierre Salinger, former press secretary to President Kennedy, and Joseph A. Califano Jr., former special assistant to President Johnson.

Salinger and Califano said that the White House, during their years of service, encouraged outside interest

groups to voice support for administration programs on Capitol Hill, but they could not recall the White House asking these same groups to issue public statements supporting a presidential speech. Neither could recall White House aides ever asking Cabinet officers to call in after a speech.

"I can't see the point of doing that," said Califano. "We were interested in support on the Hill. . . ."

Salinger said that the Kennedy administration also lined up support from private groups for administration programs sent to Congress, but that it did not to his knowledge attempt to seek public statements of support for the President on the night of presidential speeches.