

White House

New Talk of Finch Shift

By Robert B. Semple Jr.

Washington

When a report was printed not long ago suggesting that Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Robert H. Finch might join the White House staff, the presidential press office issued a prompt denial.

But there is indeed talk about such a move for Finch, and it is coming from a most influential quarter: H. R. Haldeman, the president's

chief of staff.

A fellow Californian and one of Finch's closest friends (their families

vacationed together last year in the Caribbean), Haldeman senses that Finch is not at all happy at HEW and would like to keep him on the Nixon team.

Haldeman has no intention of relinquishing his own administrative post to his old friend; rather, his thought — and at the moment it is only a thought — is to bring Finch into the White House in a high-level advisory capacity, comparable to posts occupied by the presidential counselors, Bryce N. Harlow and Daniel Patrick Moynihan.

"Finch is trapped in a bureaucratic nightmare down there," says one White House staff member. "But he really has no place to go, except here. It might be good for all of us."

Should Finch leave, his successor could well be Franklin D. Murphy, former chancellor of the University of California at Los Angeles and now president of the Times-Mirror of Los Angeles. Murphy's contacts in the administration are extensive (he knows the president and Haldeman, a graduate of UCLA, very well). Beyond that, he is highly admired by John W. Gardner, the former HEW chief and now head of the Urban coalition.

NOBODY

Ronald L. Ziegler, the White House press secretary, has insisted that nobody had asked for the resignation of Finch's commissioner of education, Dr. James E. Allen. But it can be said on authority that Allen has no real

friends left in the White House. Even Leonard Garment, the president's civil rights adviser, who shares many of Allen's views of education, was visibly angry when he read of the outspoken educator's criticism of the Cambodian troop move.

White House aides do not think they can dismiss Allen without repudiating the president's assertion that he welcomes criticism and intends to conduct an "open" administration. But President Nixon is privately furious, and Ziegler, an accurate barometer of presidential moods, replied with thinly veiled sarcasm when asked to judge Allen's statement.

He noted that he would no more comment on Allen's view on foreign policy than he would on a state department official's views on "elementary and secondary education."

WHO

Who directs public relations at the White House? not one man, but many — a dozen or so staff members who meet secretly Sunday afternoons at the White House. The group includes Ziegler; Herbert G. Klein, director of communications; Murray M. Chotiner and Harry Dent, political advisers; Lyn Nofziger, former press secretary to Governor Ronald Reagan of California; Dwight Chapin, the president's youthful aide de camp; Patrick J. Buchanan, a speech writer; Haldeman or one of his subordinates, and several others.

Their main concern in recent weeks, one member says privately, has been to "sell" the president's Cambodian decision. Mr. Nixon popped in not long ago and gave the group a pep talk, the essence of which was that the operation was designed in large part to put pressure on Hanoi to undertake serious peace talks.

One tactic devised by the group was to inundate the press with statistics designed to demonstrate the success of the operation. A second stratagem: give increasing recognition to what one member of the group calls "the hard hats" — construction workers and others who have demonstrated openly for the Cambodian operation.