

Nixon Aide Resigns to Return to Journalism

Washington

Clark Mollenhoff, the controversial "presidential ombudsman," quit his \$33,500-a-year job to become the Washington bureau chief of the Des Moines (Iowa) Register and Tribune, A. E. Heins, managing editor, said yesterday.

Heins said in a telephone interview that when Mollenhoff left the paper to take the post with the Nixon Administration Aug. 18, 1969, there was no agreement for him to return.

Mollenhoff last winter changed his mind and wanted to come back to the paper, Heins said.

Mollenhoff quit Saturday as special counsel to the President. Heins would not disclose his new salary.

CHANCE

Mollenhoff told the President, in a letter dated May 28, that "this last chance" to return to his old paper "is too good an opportunity to let slip by despite the great experience it has been to work as 'presidential ombudsman' in your administration."

Heins said there was considerable soul-searching within the newspaper on whether to permit Mollenhoff to return.

"The basic problem is this," said Heins, "Can he function as an investigative reporter without being suspect as far as his political leanings are concerned?"

FLAW

"Partisanship," he added, "has been the fatal flaw in a hell of a lot of star reporters."

But finally, the Register and Tribune opted for Mol-



AP Wirephoto

CLARK MOLLENHOFF
He took notes

lenhoff because "Where else can you find a guy that good, with that much ability to move in Washington and get the news."

Heins had no qualms about whether Mollenhoff should use information he has gathered in his special White House role that permits him, with the highest secrecy clearance, to inspect income tax returns, to view confidential reports from all Federal agencies, and to reach into the innermost parts of Government.

"There are no guarantees, but I would be very disappointed if he didn't have some ideas in the works already," Heins said.

He added that Mollenhoff probably has kept notes during his tenure in the White House. "It's his way," Heins said. "Someone once reported that he built an addition

on his house to store his files."

IDEAS

Mollenhoff—reached at his summer home in Clarion, Iowa—was less direct, but he admitted that story ideas are prone to buzz through his head even while gardening in Iowa.

Mollenhoff was becoming a frequent target of criticism himself. He denied yesterday that he slipped an alleged memo accusing CBS-TV of falsifying Vietnam battle scenes to a pair of newspaper columnists.

Nevertheless, CBS evening news accused the White House of conducting an "undercover campaign to discredit" a television story showing a North Vietnamese prisoner being stabbed.

Last year, his defense of Supreme Court nominee Clement F. Haynsworth Jr. brought charges that he pressured Senators on behalf of Haynsworth. His tactics, which included angry shouting on television, were labeled a "Mollenhoff cocktail." Haynsworth, was not confirmed by the Senate.

GESTAPO

More recently, it was disclosed that Mollenhoff had examined nine confidential income tax returns. This caused Senator Albert Gore (Dem-Tenn.) to remark, "This sounds like a Gestapo loosed on the American people."

Some of those who came to Mollenhoff's attention during his reporting days are in jail, others out on parole. The quest of his hulking, ex-football player for the scalp of teamster president James R. Hoffa was long and ar-

PRESS

See also this file, 19 Apr 72, "Capital Newsmen Say Secrecy Rises."

See this file 16 Apr 70

"Reporter Disputes Ziegler," SF Examiner 18 Oct 72 et seq., filed Demo bugging.

duous. It netted Mollenhoff a Pulitzer Prize in 1958; Hoffa is in the federal prison at Lewisburg, Pa.

Bobbie Baker and Billie Sol Estes were other Mollenhoff targets. He developed a strong relationship with the Kennedy brothers when they were investigating labor racketeering and broke with them when they couldn't see what Mollenhoff saw wrong with the TFX airplane.

His colleagues admired him for his doggedness, fearlessness and resourcefulness but not as a lovable man.

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