

NIXON'S STRATEGY FOR REACHING THE PUBLIC LARGELY BYPASSES WASHINGTON PRESS CORPS

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 23—The Nixon administration has come up with a new strategy for getting its policies across to the American public: reaching out to metropolitan newspaper editors and regional television executives throughout the land.

In football parlance, the Nixon Administration has made an end run around the Washington press corps and the "Eastern Establishment" press that Vice President Agnew has acidly criticized.

The strategy, devised by Herbert G. Klein, the President's Director of Communications, includes the following:

• Top-level briefings for news executives. The briefings are led by the President himself, and the participants include senior members of the Administration such as Henry A. Kissinger, the President's assistant for national security affairs.

• Briefings on legislative proposals for reporters around the country by Administration teams.

• Special mailings to editorial writers, radio and television station news managers, and news managers, and writers who focus on particular fields such as pollution.

Direct appeals to the public through Presidential television addresses or televised news conferences that the President can control.

A minimum of Presidential contacts with the White House press corps, with those contacts almost always in formal meetings.

Mr. Klein said that his plan intended "no reflection on the Washington press corps, which has to follow things minute by minute."

"We're looking at the long range and trying to provide a full range of facts to those who are editing or writing editorials," he added.

"The more resources they have to decide on an issue, the better," Mr. Klein said. "It's difficult for people out there to get all of the background on all of the issues. We've made a major effort to give them a factual presentation."

A former aide to the President said Mr. Nixon believed he had a better chance of getting through by direct means than by having his views filtered by Washington reporters. "The President feels that the White House press corps has not been giving a faithful representation of his Administration," he said.

George Christian, one of

President Johnson's press secretaries, admires the "finesse" of Mr. Klein's tactics. Having had his own battles with the Washington press corps, Mr. Christian said, "I can understand why they would want to go directly to opinion makers."

"I sit back in some admiration for having some sort of plan to get the word out," Mr. Christian said. "It is a lot more of a concerted effort than anything we tried to do. They work overtime to get their ideas across."

The Administration evolved the plan over the two years since the 1968 election campaign. The latest moves have been private briefings at the summer White House in San Clemente, Calif., and in New Orleans for regional news executives.

About 40 news executives from all over the country were invited to the San Clemente briefing last June. The President spoke briefly, then Mr. Kissinger delivered a long exposition of the Administration's foreign policy.

Lieut. Gen. John W. Vogt Jr., director of operations for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and William H. Sullivan, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, also spoke, to defend the Ad-

ministration's policy on Cambodia.

In New Orleans last week Mr. Kissinger again spoke on foreign policy, to Southern editors. Assistant Secretary of State Joseph Sisco, who is the key American negotiator on the Middle East question, outlined the Administration's efforts to stimulate Arab-Israeli peace talks.

Similar briefings are being planned in San Clemente this month for Western editors and in Chicago next month for Midwestern editors. A third may be held later in the East.

Robert Healy, executive editor of The Boston Globe, said he found Mr. Kissinger "very effective" in San Clemente. "He has a faculty for taking you inside," Mr. Healy said. "That was particularly useful for The Globe, which has been critical of the Administration and the war in Vietnam."

The briefing resulted in several columns in The Globe setting out the Administration's position in general, and on Indochina and the Middle East in particular. Mr. Healy said that the briefing had not changed his paper's opinion on Indochina "but the Administration came out well in editorials on the Middle East question."

Emmett Dedmon, editorial di-

<p>rector of The Chicago Sun-Times, also praised Mr. Kissinger's explanation of the Administration's basic philosophy on foreign policy, but Mr. Dedmon said his paper still believed that "the push into Cambodia was not worth the price the Administration paid domestically."</p> <p>"The briefing didn't change our position," he said, "but better-informed editorials were written."</p> <p>A Southern editor, who asked not to be named, said the briefing in New Orleans was "useful to people out here in the boondocks." He said, "It was good to hear the Administration's view first hand and not have to rely on the wire services, or a correspondent, or television."</p> <p>An Eastern editor, who also asked not to be named, took the opposite view. He said, "It wasn't worth the money to go out there just to hear the Administration say the same old thing." He also said, "We're trying to make evident to Mr. Klein that we're not in his pocket."</p> <p>Besides the briefings, Mr. Nixon has made personal visits to two newspapers recently. He had lunch with editors of The Washington Star last</p>	<p>month and of The New York Daily News last week. Both have generally supported the Administration.</p> <p>A year ago last spring, the Administration began sending teams out to brief editors and reporters of influential regional papers on legislative proposals. Three representatives, one an Assistant Secretary, explained postal reform. Another team—from the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare; the Department of Labor, and the White House discussed welfare reforms. A third took up draft reform.</p> <p>White House sources said the briefing teams also took soundings on the mood of the country. "We can tell quite a bit from the lines of questioning," said one official. "We had a resident hippie in one city give us some insights into the youth movement."</p> <p>Even before such briefings were started, Mr. Klein's office started sending transcripts of Presidential speeches and remarks to about 1,200 editorial writers and radio and television news directors.</p> <p>"Editorial writers don't ordinarily see the source material," said an official, "because the reporter in Washington may</p>	<p>be sending out only a 700 to 1,000-word story." Seeing the original gives the writer the context in which the President intended his statement to be taken.</p> <p>In addition, the White House sends printed copies of major Presidential messages to publishers and editors. Messages on specific subjects go to writers who specialize in that field. The environmental message, for instance, went to outdoor writers.</p> <p>Today, the Nixon Administration's approach to the Washington press corps is in marked contrast to the Johnson Administration's.</p> <p>Mr. Nixon has held only two informal meetings with the White House press this year. Mr. Johnson averaged about 18 meetings a week with reporters, either alone or in small and large groups. Cabinet officers hold backgrounders rarely. Secretary of State William P. Rogers has discontinued the practice of his predecessor, Dean Rusk, who met with State Department correspondents almost every Friday evening.</p> <p>Although Administration officials contend that Vice President Agnew's criticism of the press is not part of the over-all strategy, his attacks have di-</p>	<p>verted the attention of many Washington correspondents while other spokesmen are spreading the word.</p> <p>Mr. Nixon will continue to use television as a major means of reaching the public, White House sources said. Perhaps the best measure of his effectiveness has been the outcry from Democrats in Congress for equal time.</p> <p>White House sources said the President would stick with televised news conferences rather than alternate them with those for the pad-and-pencil press. The President is much more the master on television.</p> <p>He selects the reporters who will ask the questions. As every President has, Mr. Nixon has questions he wants to answer planted in the press. Moreover, few reporters, knowing the camera is on them, have shown themselves adept at asking sharp questions.</p> <p>But the biggest thing going for the President is the clock. The usual 30-minute time limit imposed by television precludes follow-up questions from a reporter who does not want to look as if he is hogging the show. And the President can filibuster a bit to run out the clock if he thinks he is in trouble.</p>
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