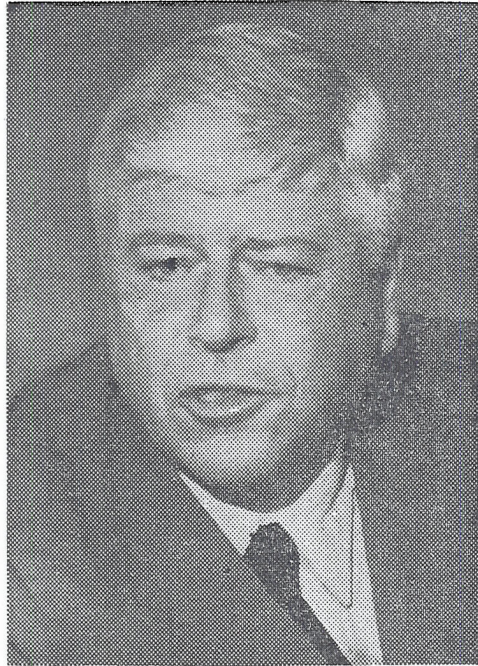


HICKEL DISMISSED BY NIXON FOR LACK OF 'CONFIDENCE'; REP. MORTON WILL GET JOB



Walter J. Hickel



Rogers C. B. Morton

Associated Press

OUSTER IS ABRUPT

White House Asserts Good Relationship Did Not Exist

By ROBERT B. SEMPLE Jr.
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Nov. 25 — President Nixon today dismissed Walter J. Hickel, his Secretary of the Interior.

Mr. Nixon intends to nominate Representative Rogers C. B. Morton, Republican of Maryland, who is now chairman of the Republican National Committee, to succeed Mr. Hickel. In the interim, Fred Russell, the present Under Secretary, will serve as Acting Secretary.

The President asked Mr. Hickel for his resignation at a private 25-minute meeting in the White House late this afternoon. Mr. Hickel agreed and left by a rear exit before newsmen could question him.

'Elements Did Not Exist'

Ronald L. Ziegler, the White House press secretary, told reporters:

"The President feels that the required elements for a good and continued relationship which must exist between the President and his Cabinet members simply did not exist in this case."

Mr. Hickel's dismissal was believed to be the first overt ouster of a Cabinet member since 1952, when President Truman discharged J. Howard McGrath, his Attorney General.

There were no overt dismissals in the Kennedy or Johnson Administrations, although several Cabinet members were nudged, promoted or shifted into different jobs and others left after having policy differences with the President.

Tonight's announcement was not a great surprise in the capital.

A colorful and combative figure, Mr. Hickel incurred the wrath of the President and his associates last May after the Cambodian invasion, when a letter in which he criticized Mr. Nixon as insensitive to the as-

pirations of the country's young people leaked to the press.

It has never been established who released the letter, but Mr. Hickel was never able to recover his standing at the White House thereafter.

Mr. Hickel played a major role during Mr. Nixon's successful campaign for the Presidency in 1968 and made several speaking engagements on behalf of Republican candidates in the recent midterm elections. But he continued to convey his doubts about the Administration's ap-

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proach toward youth, and on Sept. 25 he spoke out against the "rhetoric of polarization."

Apparently aware that his future with the Nixon Administration was at best uncertain, Mr. Hickel has spoken bitterly in private conversations in recent days of his relationship with the White House and some of Mr. Nixon's associates, including H. R. Haldeman, the chief of staff at the White House, and Henry A. Kissinger, the President's adviser on national security affairs.

'Sitting and Listening'

In a conversation with a New York Times reporter last Thursday, for example, Mr. Hickel said he still believed that the President was isolated from many issues and important currents of thought and that he was "just sitting around and listening" to his staff.

Mr. Hickel said he had high regard for John N. Mitchell, the Attorney General, and got along well with John D. Ehrlichman, the President's chief assistant for domestic affairs.

But he was less enthusiastic

about Mr. Haldeman, who oversees the flow of people and paper in and out of the oval office, implying strongly that Mr. Haldeman had restricted his access to the President.

He said that sometimes the White House would send letters to his office opposing proposals he had made and that the letters were signed "by people I never heard of and still don't know."

Kissinger Criticized

Turning to Mr. Kissinger, Mr. Hickel said the national security adviser vetoed his projected trip to the Soviet Union earlier this year to discuss problems of the Arctic. At the same time, Mr. Hickel said, Mr. Kissinger was encouraging Clifford M. Hardin, the Secretary of Agriculture, to go to Yugoslavia and Rumania.

Jokingly and with a huge laugh, he said the two names written in the White House war room were probably "Hanoi and Hickel."

Mr. Hickel disclosed that he first started hearing rumors of his impending departure a month or so ago and asked Mr. Ehrlichman about them shortly after the election Nov. 3. In effect, he said, Mr. Ehrlichman advised him that "everything's fine" and told him to "keep cool."

Mr. Hickel also said he had talked recently with Mr. Mitchell.

He said the Attorney General had suggested that it might be "mutually beneficial" if he stepped down as Interior Secretary but did not ask him to resign.

Last night, on "60 Minutes," a television program produced by the Columbia Broadcasting System, Mr. Hickel expanded on his conversation with the Attorney General, saying that Mr. Mitchell had told him to "sit tight until you hear from me again."

Nevertheless, speculation about Mr. Hickel's departure continued to grow. Late last week, at a breakfast meeting with newsmen, a high White House official said that Mr. Hickel and David M. Kennedy,

But Mr. Hickel refused to give up, saying at one point that since "the President hired me, he'll have to fire me," and thus forced this afternoon's final confrontation, according to this view.

Secretary of the Treasury, were the most vulnerable members of Mr. Nixon's Cabinet. Mr. Kennedy has since said that he energetically tried to persuade him to resign voluntarily and thereby spare the President the task of discharging him publicly.