

Nixon Is Seeking to Placate Black Aides Ready to Quit

By PAUL DELANEY JAN 4 1971
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Jan. 3—The Nixon Administration plans a series of moves to placate several top Negro officials who are distressed over the Administration's civil rights policies

and are threatening to resign. At least two black officials have indicated that they plan to quit their posts shortly, while several others have set an informal deadline of June for the Administration to make some positive changes.

The White House is distressed that such an effort might snowball and result in the loss of all senior Negro officials, according to a high Administration official. To counter this threat, he said, the Administration will take action to hold Negro officials already in the Administration, to attract more to high positions and to appeal to black voters in 1972.

Problem of Prevention

Steps under consideration include a major policy statement, possibly in the State of the Union message later this month, the naming of blacks to key White House positions and improvement and stronger enforcement of programs aimed at blacks and other minorities, such as the Philadelphia Plan and minority capitalism.

"But the immediate problem is to prevent any of the blacks already here from leaving, or we won't be able to attract anybody," the official commented.

The black officials who said

Continued on Page 22, Column 4

Continued From Page 1, Col. 3

they planned to leave insisted on anonymity at this time. They said they were "looking for some kind of moral leadership, a positive statement, a good, strong speech from the White House to take some of the heat off us in the black community."

Blacks appointed by Mr. Nixon met with him last March and implored him to take stronger action in civil rights matters. They have been disappointed in the action he has taken since then, several said.

"If the Administration does not move by the beginning of summer to improve its image, I don't see how I can remain on board," one black official remarked.

"If nothing is done by then, it definitely will be too late for us to try and be effective in the coming election-year campaign. If things don't improve, we won't have anything at all to sell to the black community," he said.

'Too Little, Too Late'

One of the Negroes who said he would definitely leave felt that it was too late for the Administration to attempt a major change to attract blacks, that any more would be "too little, too late." He said, "many of the people around Mr. Nixon just have no understanding of or sensitivity to the problems of blacks."

Another official cited an example. He said a Negro official and his white superior were speaking before separate black audiences at a black meeting. Afterwards, the black official went to the hotel room of his superior, who immediately chastised the black for not being at the same session to take some of the heat.

"But I was catching hell at the other meeting," the black official explained.

"Yes, but that's what we pay you to do," his boss shot back.

The Administration official said he was concerned about a snowball effect in case one or two blacks resigned.

One black official acknowledged that the resignation last month of James Farmer as Assistant Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare had an effect on him, adding, "If other guys go, I certainly am not going to sit around and be the last one to leave."

Mr. Nixon has appointed blacks to Assistant and Deputy Assistant Secretary posts in several departments, as well as to head several smaller units. Posts occupied by Negroes include those of Assistant Secretary of Labor and two Assistant Secretaries of the Department of Housing and Urban Development and two Deputy Assistant Secretaries of Defense.

Fletcher Expects Change

Arthur Fletcher, Assistant Secretary of Labor, was the only Negro official willing to be quoted by name. He confirmed that many Negro officials were uneasy over Administration policy. He said he was optimistic there will be substantial and substantive change over the next few months, but he said the situation right now was critical because the black leaders and the community expected change.

"And black officials look for immediate accelerated movement by the Administration," he added. "This has got to be part of the President's game plan. Blacks would like for the President to be on the offensive early in the third quarter in order to have a good fourth quarter. We are entering the third quarter."

Mr. Fletcher said the black officials would remain as long as they had the feeling they were accomplishing something providing them with the manpower, money and machinery to do an effective job.

"The bulk of black officials feel that, in spite of the less than admirable public image of the Administration in the black community, they are getting things done by being inside," the Assistant Secretary continued.

"They have said to me privately that if it appears they were not getting anywhere they would quit. They have no hesitation about seeking opportunities outside Government. Some already have offers that are good," Mr. Fletcher said.

Explaining the administration's image problems in the black community, one official said:

"We had the problem of try-

ing to get through to a community that passionately distrusted us in the first place, and this was compounded by a so-called southern strategy. Blacks felt that if we gave them something good with the right hand, we took it away with the left hand.

"For example, a good program such as the Philadelphia Plan was negated by the nomination of a Harrold Carswell to the Supreme Court."

Another criticism of the Administration by blacks was that there was no exposure to the black community. For example, the professional staffs of Communications Director Herbert G. Klein and Press Secretary Ronald L. Ziegler are all white.

Also, President Nixon has never appeared before a black audience, although he has received the leaders of several Negro organizations at the White House. One White House staff member reported last August that Mr. Nixon would visit black college campuses, but that trip never materialized.