

Somebody Else Decided To Televis Nixon Talk

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 7 — President Nixon told the nation, in his "Conversation" with four television newsmen Monday night, that he had not been in charge of the campaign to elect Republicans to Congress last November. Neither, it would seem, was anyone else. The President told the newsmen that the

Washington tactical error of rebroadcasting, on election eve, his denunciation of the demonstrators who stoned his limousine a few days earlier in San Jose, Calif., would not have occurred "had I been, shall we say, running the campaign."

Who was in charge of the decision to rebroadcast the speech? "I'm frank to tell you I don't know," said Harry S. Dent, the chief White House political operative.

"I know I didn't do it," said Murray M. Chotiner, another White House political aide.

Mr. Dent said he did not believe Charles W. Colson, their associate, had been responsible, either.

Attorney General John N. Mitchell, who was the manager of Mr. Nixon's 1968 campaign, was not responsible because "he didn't play a significant role" in the 1970 effort, Mr. Dent said.

A spokesman for the Republican National Committee said that the party chairman did not even see the film before it was telecast nationally.

"You could say it was a decision by a committee," another White House aide said. He would not indicate, however, who had been on such a committee.

Still another Administration official who was involved in the campaign said that he wondered about Mr. Nixon's remark, adding, "I suppose he was engaging in legalistic evasion."

In the television interview, Mr. Nixon, referring to an opinion poll commissioned by Life magazine, commented that he did not quote polls "if I've taken them." Four days earlier, over New Year's Eve cocktails in his office, he told a small group of correspondents that the White House did not conduct such polls.

Mr. Nixon does, however, have access to opinion samples of the Republican National Committee.

The opinion sampling on

the President's latest television performance was mixed within the White House. The morning after the telecast, Mr. Nixon received high praise and a standing ovation from his Cabinet.

He told the Cabinet members, though, that his daughters, Tricia and Julie Nixon Eisenhower, had informed him his comments on the economy had been the "dullest" part of the program.

But Mr. Nixon said he had received a telephone call from "a friend of Tricia's at Harvard"—Edward Finch Cox, a law student who is rumored to be seeking Miss Nixon's hand in marriage—who reported that the economic discussion had been "the most interesting."

The telecast caused some consternation among public affairs officers in various Federal agencies. They are required to submit, in advance of each Presidential press interview, likely questions (and answers) within their fields of expertise.

Mr. Nixon's second conversation with newsmen was announced only two working days before it occurred, putting the public affairs representatives under an unusual deadline.

"I'm not coming up with any new questions," said one of them. "This time I'm just rewriting the questions and answers I sent in before."

One of the first questions to be decided by Senator Edmund S. Muskie, when he returns from his current tour of the Middle East and the Soviet Union and completes the hiring of a staff to help him seek the Democratic Presidential nomination, will be whether to undertake a national voter registration drive on college campuses.

Most experts believe that the Supreme Court decision approving the 18-year-old vote in Federal elections is unlikely to favor one political party over another.

But the Maine Senator's aides recognize that one young segment of the electorate that might tend to vote as a liberal bloc is college students. Since many of them attend school out of their home states, though, it could take a concerted effort to get them registered to vote in large numbers.

Such an effort, funded by supporters of Mr. Muskie, could serve a dual purpose of identifying the Senator with the new voters, it is thought.