



White House Photograph

END OF A LONG DAY: President Nixon at his desk in White House after visitors left

The President's Revolutionary Plans

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Jan. 22—President Nixon had every right tonight to call his new domestic program a revolution. Except that old New Dealers might call it a counterrevolution. Although many of his proposals are not new, though many will be disfigured or delayed by Congress and while

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hardly any will satisfy the many claimants on Federal money and power, taken together, they represent a radical effort to reverse the 40-year flow of bureaucratic power toward Washington. Their purpose is to improve the delivery of governmental services, to revitalize state and local government and the authority of Governors and Mayors and to relieve the White House and Congress of much of their costly and dispiriting administrative burdens.

Mr. Nixon would not only begin to return sizable amounts of tax revenue to the hard-pressed states and cities, he would also try to liberate their managers from the great tangle of Federal regulation that comes with most existing grants and aid programs. Simultaneously, he would radically overhaul the Federal Government, to strike at the bureaucratic confusion and negotiation in Washington that so greatly impedes the delivery of services.

It is less clear, from what is now known about the Nixon proposals, that the President also has the right therewith to pre-empt the revolutionary slogans of "power to the people." To toss out great sums of money to the localities with

hardly any strings attached does not automatically guarantee control by the people. More specifically it begs the question of which people.

The Guiding Concept

For the essence of Mr. Nixon's proposals is an effort to begin to dismantle the procedures by which the Federal Government has been earmarking tax monies for the people and sectors of society deemed to be the most needy. It would abandon the guiding concept of the Democratic party in this century that Federal aid should be aimed not only at education or health in general but also to selected groups of poor children, or slum dwellers, or the elderly.

The President intends to preserve a set of minimum standards for support of the poor and the sick, and he would retain control over programs that must be national in scope to achieve their ends.

But beyond that, he would move powerfully in the opposite direction. He would abolish the requirements for local "matching" efforts by aid applicants. He would shift the battle for priorities to the local and state governments. And he would explicitly reject the doubts about their honesty and competence that produced such a massive concentration in Washington in the first place.

Win or lose, Mr. Nixon has fashioned a potent political argument to sustain his bid for re-election next year.

If the Democratic Congress meets him at least halfway, he will lay claim to the gratitude of many hard-pressed communities and taxpayers. He will claim to have met the demands of both the new left and old right for a more accessible and less tutorial political system. He

would have produced some alternatives to the despised increases in property taxes and held out at least the promise of fast delivery of government service—from more policemen to better parks.

Sharing the Glory

The President offered to share the glory of peaceful revolution with Congress. But he was, in fact, speaking over its head, to the people.

For if Congress denies him, the President would have his target for 1972 and he has already served notice that he would endorse what he senses to be the people's disgust with the performance of all levels of government.

Many legislators question both the social and political wisdom of surrendering significant control over the way Federal funds are to be spent. Many will argue that the more energetic, able and sacrificing states deserve a much larger return. Others will argue for the neediest communities. Some will argue that there simply is not enough revenue to share with anyone. And some will argue for their own prerogatives and powers.

These will not be easy arguments to sustain against an aggressive President.

Moreover, Mr. Nixon has now pre-empted the favorite ground of one of his leading challengers. Senator Edmund S. Muskie of Maine has long stood out as his party's foremost expert on Federal-state-city relations and he has been planning his own well-advertised program of reform.

The ultimate political irony is that Democratic economists first advanced the concept of revenue sharing with the states and stirred up considerable interest in it even while President Johnson amassed the Great Society programs that

would now be eliminated. Other Democrats brought Mr. Johnson to the conviction that aid programs had to be radically simplified. Still others had pre-prepared reorganization plans very similar to those now championed by Mr. Nixon.

Motive and Moment

It was left to a Republican President, however, to find the motive and the moment to promote such a far-reaching venture, with at least a fighting chance to enlist support around the country. Unless Presidential politics immediately intrude, the reaction is not likely to be along partisan lines.

Mr. Nixon's proposal to start sending \$5-billion a year as a kind of tax rebate to states and cities, without any strings, is the mature version of an experiment in revenue sharing he suggested a year ago. This time, he has lobbied for the backing of Governors and Mayors and influential voices in both parties and faces his most formidable obstacle in Representative Wilbur D. Mills, the influential Democratic chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee.

The further proposal to take about \$10.5-billion out of existing aid programs and to let states and cities spend the money as they choose, within only the broadest categories such as education or law enforcement, is the more radical element. For it would alter the ways of government and erode the controls of Congress. It should stimulate a lively controversy between the harassed leaders of local government and the jealous baronies on Capitol Hill.

Who gets how much will be in dispute among all factions. And the ability of local governments to improve on the bureaucratic performance of the Federal Establishment will be contested in many places. But precisely because Mr. Nixon is reaching for a radical solution to some radical problems, the ultimate significance and consequence of his proposal will not be evident for some time.

Crash on Bridge Kills 3

Three Jersey City residents were killed yesterday morning when their car went out of control on the Queensboro Bridge, crashed into a rail and burned. The police identified them as Chris Kalcanids and Chris Aidacis, both of 60 Wayne Street, and Aristotlis Elipoulous of 112 Wayne Street. The accident occurred on a Manhattan-bound lane of the upper level of the bridge.