

Enforcer of the Freeze

Arnold Robert Weber

By JOHN HERBERS

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 18—Arnold Robert Weber, the economics professor who has been named Executive Director of the newly established Cost of Living Council, was addressing an assembly of high Government officials one day this week on the difficulties in enforcing the wage and price freeze.

Man in the News "The textbooks all say how complicated the American economy is," Mr. Weber said.

"In the last 48 hours I have found out how true that is. The Government must now concern itself with everything from the pork-belly market to titanium."

A straight-talking, somewhat abrasive shaker and mover in the executive branch for the last year and a half, Mr. Weber has not been universally popular in the bureaucracy. But almost everyone agrees that he has a good choice to put together and direct the council that will make important decisions in the wage-price initiative and decide whether the controls should continue after 90 days.

Mr. Weber, his associates pointed out today, has the credentials and the brains, as well as an acerbic sense of humor that is rare in the high reaches of the Nixon Administration. Furthermore, he is entering the wage-price thicket after having survived quite well in two other governmental briar patches—the Office of Management and Budget and the Manpower Administration of the Labor Department.

The 42-year-old economist had resigned from the Government to return to the University of Chicago, where he was a professor, and had already sent his family ahead when President Nixon suddenly set his new economic policies last weekend and offered Mr. Weber the top post on the council.

'A 90-Day Wonder'

"I'm strictly a 90-day wonder," he said today in a telephone interview. "I signed on for that long and I am leaving at the end of that time," regardless of whether the freeze is continued, he added.

An indication of how Mr. Weber might operate in the meantime was given by some of his associates in the Government.

"He's brilliant and he doesn't suffer fools gladly," said one. "He grew up on the streets of New York and I guess he learned to survive by battering away with both fists. He still does."

But it is said that his sense of humor makes his aggressiveness more bearable. At the meeting of high-level officials the other day, attended by both President Nixon and Vice President Agnew, the officials considered giving the council a name that could be abbreviated COKE.

"If I am going to be in COKE," Mr. Weber said, "I suppose I a mjust to stand



A sharp sense of humor

here and fizzle for a couple of moments."

"The meeting," one of the participants said, "nearly broke up in laughter."

Mr. Weber was born in the Bronx on Sept. 20, 1929, his father Jack Weber, an electrical construction worker, now lives in Florida. In 1950 Mr. Weber entered the University of Illinois, where he earned his bachelor's and master's degrees. In 1958, he was awarded a Ph.D. degree in economics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Friend of Shultz

From 1958 until he entered Government service, Mr. Weber was associated with the Graduate School of Business of the University of Chicago, where he held several teaching and research positions and where he became a friend, associate and neighbor of George P. Shultz, President Nixon's first Secretary of Labor and the present director of the office of Management and Budget.

In 1966, Drs. Weber and Shultz were co-authors of a book on manpower entitled Strategies for the Displaced Worker. When Mr. Shultz came to Washington in the Nixon Administration, he brought Mr. Weber with him. He was Assistant Secretary of Labor for Manpower, a job that oversaw spending 80 per cent of the department's budget. A year ago, when Mr. Shultz moved to the White House, Mr. Weber joined him as Associate Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Mr. Weber is married to the former Edna M. Files of Denison, Ill. They have three sons, David, 14 years old; Paul, 12, and Robert, 7. In his new job, he expected to work "at the same leisurely pace" that he has for the last two and a half years—from 7:30 A.M. until 7:30 or 8 P.M., five or six days a week.

Asked what he does for relaxation, Mr. Weber said, "I will tell you what I used to do. I like to read and play basketball. I played basketball in high school and still like to, and in the winter I like to ski."

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