

## Mr. Nixon's Game Plan

Now that President Nixon II has swept out and largely replaced the Administration of President Nixon I, there remains little mystery about his new game plan. The indicators point clearly to White House retreat from progressive social action.

Not surprisingly, key Cabinet posts have been handed over to men sympathetic with Mr. Nixon's pledge to "shuck off" the domestic reform programs of the past decade he dismisses as "massive failures." The businessmen who dominate the Cabinet line-up are likely to need little persuading that those Federal agencies which deal particularly with health, welfare, education and similar domestic concerns are, in the President's words, "all too fat, too bloated."

The new Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, Caspar W. Weinberger, is an expert in demonstrating how to wield the ax. Secretary of Commerce Peterson, an enlightened internationalist, has been replaced by Frederick B. Dent, a textile manufacturer who has actively supported protectionism. Oilman Claude Brinegar's appointment as Transportation Secretary can hardly displease the highway lobby.

Retrogression in socioeconomic matters is matched in the even more crucial area of justice and individual liberties. The meaning of Mr. Nixon's new crusade against "permissiveness" is rendered clearer by his retention of Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst and the nomination of Solicitor General Robert H. Bork, a conservative law professor whose views are said to have helped formulate Mr. Nixon's antibusing strategies.

The portrait of the "new" Administration's image thus shows the prominence of the legal hard-liners alongside the ideological hardhats, personified by Labor Secretary Peter Brennan. In 1968, campaigner Nixon spoke of bringing the nation together; in 1972, any second-term togetherness is clearly to be achieved on the President's terms alone.

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The strategies toward that goal appear unmistakable. Henry Kissinger continues to supersede Secretary of State Rogers. Treasury Secretary George Shultz doubles as a special Presidential assistant. Elliot Richardson is moved to the Pentagon after he proved the extent of his unswerving loyalty by swallowing the President's anti-busing orders with hardly a hint of distaste. The Messrs. Erlichman and Haldeman remain. Former White House aides are positioned in key sub-Cabinet posts throughout the administrative structure, even in some heretofore free of party politics.

In many of the specialized agencies, from the National Institutes of Health to the National Park Service, the policy-making echelons have been swept out as if by victors claiming the spoils from a defeated opposition party. Such disruption is sure to have a devastating effect on efficiency and morale throughout these services, whose professional staffs are now aghast as they see experts being replaced for political or other reasons.

But more is at stake than efficiency. Patronizingly describing "the average American" as a child, Mr. Nixon said the other day: "If . . . you make him completely dependent and pamper him and cater to him too much, you are going to make him soft, spoiled and eventually a very weak individual."

Such a nostalgic throwback to rugged individualism camouflages a new form of *laissez faire* that is manipulated by the rich and the powerful—a hidden protectorate of corporations, special-interest labor unions and the "law and order" advocates of increased governmental power. It is a coalition of wealth and power that justifies its prerogatives by joining the President's crusade against "permissiveness"—presumably to help keep the "average American" from going soft.

Such a policy of being tough on the cost of health, education, welfare and other social services—but not on the cost over-runs of the military-industrial complex—seems clearly to be the path now set out. It can therefore be pursued only by means of expanded White House power. This dangerous tide will not be blocked unless Congress rouses itself out of its present lethargy and makes it evident that the rights, aspirations and the social goals of the mass of the American people are not lightly to be dismissed by an Administration that looks on them as little better than spoiled children.