



Haig and Laird In the White House

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BOTH HUMANLY and politically, General Alexander Haig's new appointment is a remarkable development.

Last Saturday, Haig had to report to President Nixon that he had failed to find anyone capable of carrying the enormous burden of responsibility that he has been carrying himself since the departure of H. R. Haldeman. The President then asked Haig to stay on.

Quite properly, Haig replied that he did not believe he could remain in his White House command post, without resigning from the U.S. Army. The President did not beg Haig to resign, or order him to resign, or offer him inducements to resign. And he did not withdraw his original request.

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WHEREUPON Haig agreed to stay on as a civilian. It is a very, very long time since any American has made a comparable personal sacrifice for a public purpose. The U.S. Army had been Haig's chosen, genuinely loved career since he was a boy in his teens. He gave up what he loved when his highest ambition was literally within his grasp, to serve in what is now a post of danger.

It was also a post for which he had no wish whatever; but it was a post where he was badly needed. In sum, the highest traditions of the service that Haig was formed in, are now exemplified by his abandonment of that service.

Meanwhile, all with much political sense will again agree that the new ar-

rangements at the White House give a badly needed new look to the total situation. No one is better qualified than Haig to serve as the President's chief of staff and general manager. His appointment means the end of the period of drift in the White House.

But on the political side, equal importance must certainly be given to the appointment of former Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird as the President's domestic counselor. Despite his weakness for circuitous approaches, Laird has always been a man of extreme ability. Even more significantly, he is also a man who knows the Congress and all other aspects of our politics from long, hard, practical, highly successful experience.

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ARROGANT blindness to political realities was one of the prime peculiarities of the former regime at the White House. That sticks out a mile from the Watergate horror. No politician in his senses would have run the smallest risk, for example, to bug Lawrence O'Brien's telephone. Crimes in politics are always possible, of course. But sane, experienced politicians do not commit absolutely purposeless and useless crimes.

Thus political idiocy has now been replaced by extreme political craftiness and shrewdness in the person of Laird. As Haig's appointment means an end to drift, Laird's appointment further means a beginning of more sane relations between the White House and Congress.