

Clayton Fritchey

Changing White House Personnel

On Dec. 11, 1968, Richard Nixon, then the President-elect, staged the first of his many "firsts." In an elaborate television ceremony on prime time, he presented his new Cabinet to the public in living color. As master of ceremonies, he introduced the appointees individually, noting that each possessed an "extra dimension of leadership."

Times change. These supposedly indispensable men—all 12 of them—have now been eased, greased or forced out of office. William P. Rogers, who retired as secretary of state Monday, is the last for whom the bell has tolled. He outstayed the others, chiefly because he never confused himself with the real secretary of state, Henry Kissinger.

Not in the history of the United States has there been such a sweeping shake-up of top officials. The cabinet is only the tip of the turnover. Since the beginning of Mr. Nixon's second term, for instance, there have been 65 assistant secretaries and bureau chiefs. Of 125 White House staff members appointed by the President, 72 have left since January. Also, of 94 posts as heads of agencies or members of the cabinet, 27 are held by newcomers and four are still vacant.

U.S. News and World report reckons that "of the nearly 400 top-level jobs in the Nixon administration—the positions used by the President to put his own stamp on government—more than half are either vacant or held by people on the job less than four months."

So far, Mr. Nixon has made 29 cabinet appointments, easily breaking the previous record of 26 set by President Ulysses S. Grant in eight years. Even in four terms, Franklin Roosevelt named only 25 to the cabinet. Dwight Eisenhower named 20 in two full terms.

"I have picked big men," said Mr. Nixon as he introduced his first cabinet. "We are not going to have a cabinet that will be basically made up of yes men." And he added, "Everyone is an independent figure."

Some of the new appointees foolishly took Mr. Nixon at his word, including Robert Finch, the administration's first secretary of health, education and welfare. Having been praised by the President for his "compassion," Mr. Finch set out to run HEW compas-

sionately, to the consternation and embarrassment of the White House. He finally had to be removed.

Despite this warning, there were still some who persisted in speaking up, notably Walter Hickel, secretary of interior, and George Romney, secretary of housing and urban development. Hickel got the ax when he urged the President to stop isolating himself. Romney, a friend of civil rights, also complained he could never see the President. It was a mistake. When he was allowed in, the President accepted his resignation.

The purge reached its climax shortly after Mr. Nixon's landslide re-election, when he asked for and accepted resignations across the board. The changes

were rather impersonal, mostly incidental to the objective of reducing the power of the major departments, while centralizing that power in the White House on a scale never before known. In the process, however, Mr. Nixon ended up with having named three different men to head up each of these departments: Defense, Treasury, Commerce, Labor, Justice, HEW. Also, State, Interior, Agriculture and Transportation, each have had two secretaries.

There have been three Nixon ambas-

sadors at the United Nations, while the directorships of the FBI, CIA, the Internal Revenue Service and the Bureau of the Budget have also changed three times. Others missing in action include the head of the Civil Rights Commission, the director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Commission, the chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, the commissioner of education, the head of the U.S. Information Service, the White House communications director, two presidential science advisers and three

chairmen of the Republican National Committee.

If there is a silver lining, it is that Mr. Nixon, in an effort to restore confidence in his administration, has recently been filling the most important posts in the government with men of some standing who, hopefully, may be more independent than their predecessors, especially now that the White House "politburo" is in disarray. The new heads of State, Defense, Justice and the FBI all have an opportunity to make distinguished personal records.

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