

A GOP Revolt on 'Distant' Nixon

By Saul Kohler

Newhouse News Service

WASHINGTON — A revolt by Senate Republican liberals against the inaccessibility of President Nixon has spread to conservatives, and the White House has moved rapidly — but without much success — to quell the uprising.

Three top-ranking presidential aides went to the Capitol this week, ostensibly in an effort to discourage a press conference and statement decrying Nixon's economic policies by the liberal "Wednesday Club" of the Senate.

Got An Earful

But a second meeting, in the office of Republican Leader Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania, showed the problem is far deeper than liberal discontent with conservative fiscal policies of the Administration.

Sen. Lowell Weicher of Connecticut, where the percentage of unemployed is second largest in the nation (Alaska is first), had attacked Nixon's economic policy as

"disastrous" several days earlier.

"They didn't want any Republican — liberal or otherwise — using a word like 'disastrous' in connection with the Administration," a participant in the session said. "They came down hard, but they got an earful in return."

Representing the White House were George P. Shultz, director of the Office of Management and Budget, Clark MacGregor, counsel to the President for Congressional relations and a former member of the House, and William E. Timmons, assistant to the President who heads Senate liaison.

'Sort of Sticky'

For the Senate GOP leadership Scott was joined by Minority whip Robert P. Griffin of Michigan and by Republican Policy Committee Chairman Gordon L. Allott of Colorado.

Thirteen "Wednesday clubbers," including seven who must stand for election next year — on the same ticket with the President — also

were present at the meeting.

"It started out quietly enough, but got sort of sticky later," another observer said. "The fact that it happened wasn't even supposed to get out.

"There is no doubt about it, the President has isolated himself and we all yell about it privately. Until now, we have blamed it on the people around Nixon, but were beginning to wonder if that isn't the way he wants it after all."

A total of 19 Republicans must submit themselves to the voters next year. Many of them have complained privately that they cannot arrange a meeting with the President to begin work on their campaigns, as well as his possible effort in their states.

Economic Issues

"If the major issue is going to be the economy, many of these people feel they ought to be able to lay their particular problems in front of the President and work together with him," an observer said.

"He must know there is disenchantment, and they feel he ought to be doing

something about it. After all, their political futures are tied in with his," he added.

Another participant took a different view. "If all 45 Republican senators were to change their (political party) registrations and the White House staff didn't want Nixon to know about it, he wouldn't know about it," he said.

The "Wednesday Club" — a group of liberals who lunch together on Wednesdays and discuss the GOP Policy Committee luncheon of the preceding day — was led in the Capitol meeting by Sen. Jacob K. Javits of New York.

Isolation Problem

Others joined in the criticism of the "isolation" of the President — whether it is self-imposed or engineered by Nixon's staff — and defended Weicker, who heretofore had toed the Administration mark.

But non-members, such as Scott, likewise blasted the White House representatives, and Allott, a conservative, joined in the strong criticism, it was reported. Griffin was said to have remained silent.

"The White House boys made their positions clear — they don't want outcries against the Administration from Republican senators — and the senators made their position clear as well," another participant said. "Did either side get anywhere? We don't know, and we won't know until we see any sign of reaction from downtown.

"Every time this has happened before, there has been a temporary improvement. Let's see what happens now."

Rightists Gripe

Scott generally meets with the President on Tuesdays at the White House GOP leadership breakfast, then discusses the session at the policy luncheon Tuesday afternoons.

"But when Hugh goes to the White House with Gerry Ford (House GOP leader), they don't get to say much other than 'Yes, Sir, Mr. President,'" a senator said.

"And when true-blue conservatives like Gordon Scott and John Tower (R-Tex.) gripe, man, they've got problems."