

Nixon's Plans

PRESIDENT NIXON has disclosed that in his second term he will lean down the federal government, throw out some costly Great Society programs of the Johnson era and cut executive staffs across the board including his own.

Philosophically, he said, his goal is to rekindle the old American spirit of self reliance by taking the federal government out of the role of the benevolent uncle doing for citizens what they should do for themselves.

We read that to mean that Mr. Nixon will not propose any new spending programs in those social areas where the government grew so rapidly in the 1960s — specifically welfare, medical care, education and housing. On the contrary he will dump a few that are failures, propose leaner substitutes for others and tighten ship generally.

This doesn't mean that he will try to jettison the major social advances made in the 60s. These are permanent parts of the governmental structure. It does mean, we hope, that he will make them more workable and less costly. He can make some relatively minor improvements immediately. In the long run his degree of success will depend upon the cooperation of the Democratic Congress.

The President will have public support in his search for leanness and efficiency. Anger in the hard-working middle class over Washington's paternalism and indulgence of the nonproductive part of the population helped build the Nixon landslide.

Mr. Nixon's overhaul will not be complete unless he also cleans house of all individuals involved in the Watergate episode. The public showed on Election Day that it did not regard Watergate as a major issue.

Nevertheless Watergate was a deplorable affair. It remains a stain that must be removed.