

# SCANDAL DELAYS WHITE HOUSE PLAN

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Shift in Public Information

Operation Now Uncertain

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By JOHN HERBERS

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Under the White House schedule that existed before the Watergate disclosures precipitated a staff shake-up, a new public information operation for the executive branch was to have been announced several days ago.

Now, the announcement has been postponed indefinitely, and the future of the operation is uncertain. This is an example of how the Watergate scandals are affecting the operations of the Federal Government.

Under the plan, Herbert G. Klein was to have resigned as director of communications, to be succeeded by his deputy, Ken W. Clawson, under a newly organized office that was part of the highly centralized White House staff operations put together by H. R. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman, the two top aides who resigned Monday.

But Mr. Klein was reported by White House sources to have delayed his departure because he did not want to imply that his resignation might be connected to the Watergate case. He has never been implicated in the affair and had planned for several months to leave and take a job in the communications industry.

Beyond Mr. Klein's delay and the vacuum left by the departure of Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Ehrlichman, some staff members say the future of the information operation carefully put together over the last few months is in doubt.

## New Approach Possible

"It is possible," said one member, "that an entire new approach to dissemination and information will emerge from this. We simply don't know what is going to happen."

Mr. Klein was named director of communications at the beginning of the Nixon Administration, as head of a new office in the Executive Office Building designed "to avoid a credibility gap between Government agencies and the American public" and to "provide for the free flow of information from the executive branch to the press and therefore to the American public."

Since then, Mr. Klein has spent much of his time taking the Administration's point of view directly to editors and news executives, bypassing the White House press. However, Charles W. Colson, a Presidential assistant who has since resigned, took control of the office and used it largely as a promotional device for Mr. Nixon's re-election.

After the election last year, a new plan for the office began to shape up. Mr. Klein, a soft-spoken, gentle man, was then out of the running as the hard-driving men of the Haldeman mold took over.

## Ziegler-Clawson Struggle

For a time, there was a power struggle between Ronald L. Ziegler, the White House press secretary, who operated a separate office out of the White House, and Mr. Clawson, a former Washington Post reporter who had been closely aligned with Mr. C. Olson. In the end, it was decided that all of the White House public relations functions would be under Mr. Ziegler, in keeping with the move toward centralization that Mr. Haldeman typified.

Mr. Clawson, nevertheless, was scheduled to succeed Mr. Klein, and he reorganized the office, bringing in four new assistants, whose appointments are still to be announced. The office assists reporters with information and access to officials, but it also carries on a large promotional operation.

Public Citizen, Inc., an organization run by Ralph Nader, the consumer advocate, filed suit recently in Federal District Court, charging that Mr. Clawson was running a "massive publicity and propaganda campaign designed to effect the defeat of 15 bills pending in Congress which the President opposes for budgetary reasons." The suit alleged that this kind of lobbying violates Federal laws.