

# Watergate Seen as Boon to Urban Aid and Civil Rights

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, May 27—The shakedown of the White House staff has left opponents of President Nixon's social and civil rights policies encouraged that there might be some changes for the better for them.

Civil rights leaders, urban and Government officials say they expect, at the least, a softening of the Administration's positions on racial and social matters, if not a complete reversal.

"Watergate seems to have been God-sent," commented an aide to a big city mayor.

On social matters, some Administration opponents feel the President might back off on such issues as the stringent new regulations on welfare and social services. Civil rights officials and leaders believe the White House might now seek to improve relations with them.

Although they are optimistic over the long-range impact of the White House shakeup, these officials say that serious problems exist today.

## Hard to Get Answers

For example, they complain that it is almost impossible to get answers on important questions from the White House. Further, they note that as many as 25 major jobs remain unfilled in domestic agencies.

At least one civil rights leader, Bayard Rustin, thinks blacks and liberals should try to exploit the President's position. Mr. Rustin, director of the A. Phillip Randolph Institute, said Watergate had provided an opportunity for breakthroughs and "our job is to take advantage of Nixon's extraordinary weakness."

But most of those interviewed tried not to convey the impression that they were attacking the President while he was down. And they were unanimous in their dislike for, and pleasure over the departure of, Mr. Nixon's two closest aides, John D. Ehrlichman, domestic affairs adviser, and H. R. Haldeman, chief of staff.

The two aides were held responsible for everything the leaders disliked, from screening the President from opposing viewpoints to influencing the cutbacks in such programs as day care, health and manpower training.

## Pleased With Garment

Further, civil rights leaders were particularly perturbed about the Administration's opposition to busing and low-income housing in the suburbs and about its plans to shift social programs to the states.

Civil rights and urban leaders were especially pleased with the elevation of Leonard Garment from special consultant for minority affairs to counsel to the President.

While they do not consider Mr. Garment especially effective, they see him as a likeable friend of civil rights, the only

Presidential adviser who advocated the civil rights cause.

"We've always considered Leonard Garment as more friendly and receptive than the rest of the White House staff," said Roy Wilkins, executive director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

"We found Mr. Garment to be a person with whom we could communicate despite the Administration's hard line on racial issues. We could always talk to him, even though he was not always able to do what we suggested."

The attitude at the United States Civil Rights Commission is optimistic. The independent commission has been the only executive agency to be highly critical of the Nixon Administration, accusing the President repeatedly of failing to adequately enforce the Federal civil rights laws.

Because of that criticism, the Rev. Theodore Hesburgh, the commission's chairman and a long-time friend of the President, was forced to resign last November and has not been replaced. Father Hesburgh blames Mr. Ehrlichman and Mr. Haldeman.

## Sees Bright Future

One official of the commission, who asked to remain anonymous, said the future appeared bright following Watergate. "President Nixon is a very practical politician, and I would not be surprised at anything he did," the official said.

"He is a man who changes his mind. And certainly if he changed from being strongly anti-Communist to improving relations with Russia and recognizing China, he can change his mind about race and social programs.

"And if he surrounds himself by men like Len Garment, he can't help but change. The Ehrlichman-Haldeman team was the cause of many if not most of our and his problems in civil rights and social areas."

The commission official also had high regard for the appointment of Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr., who succeeded Mr. Haldeman as White House chief of staff.

"Despite the stars [military], General Haig is a good man," the official said.

Black Republicans feel they have a special problem and many hope it will be addressed as a result of Watergate.

They say they have been frustrated for some time over the slow pace at which blacks have been appointed to positions in President Nixon's second team.

## 'Net Loss of Top Jobs'

"Numerically, we have a net loss of top jobs, compared to the first term," one Republican leader commented. "And as many blacks seem to be getting out as coming in."

One of the top-ranking blacks in the re-election effort was John Wilks, former director of the Office of Federal Contract

Compliance, which policed compliance with equal employment laws by holders of Federal contracts.

A picture of Mr. Wilks clearing the way for Mrs. Patricia Nixon at one of the inaugural balls was given wide publicity in black communities. Mr. Wilks is still waiting for a long-promised appointment.

"People who fought with us in the campaign have been calling and wondering about jobs," Mr. Wilks said. "A lot of them were given the impression they would be coming aboard almost immediately, so they packed their bags or put their business dealings aside in preparation for coming to Washington. Now they are embarrassed."

The complaint that no one can get answers from the White House came from those inside

as well as outside the Federal Government.

"It's madness over there," one Federal department head said. "I've been trying to get some simple personnel matters solved, but I can't get any answer. It's unbelievable."

John J. Gunther, executive director of the United States Conference of Mayors, said that policy decisions on urban programs "are virtually at a standstill."

He said the conference used to hold weekly meetings with the White House Domestic Council to talk over ideas. The last meeting was April 19.

"We just haven't been able to find out who to talk to," Mr. Gunther said. "It is still not clear what channels and apparatus for continuous discussions have been set up."