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# White House Opens Up A Little

By James Reston  
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## Washington

With the appointment of Henry Kissinger as secretary of state, there is now virtually a whole new cabinet and top White House staff moving into place here, and what is probably more important, they are bringing new attitudes to their work.

The transition from the old to the new is far from complete. It takes time to master the complexities of the great departments

### Analysis and Opinion

of government and sort out new personalities and routines in the White House, but something interesting, and maybe even important, is happening here in the aftermath of Watergate.

It is all on the surface so far. The essential policies of the administration are the same. The defensive and even deceptive arguments are the same. In short, the administration is backing into the future, and clouding its movements as it goes, but it is moving.

The tight and secretive little power center in the White House is gradually dispersing into the departments and agencies. General Alexander Haig, H. R. Haldeman's replacement,

Mel Laird, John Ehrlichman's successor as the President's assistant for domestic affairs, and Kissinger, the President's principal adviser on security affairs, are now coming out from behind the White House screen.

## PRESS

After the President's first televised news conference in more than a year, Haig was available to talk to the press about the background of the President's problems. Kissinger followed with a news conference promising to open things up and be available to questioning by the Congress, the press, and the critical ideas and suggestions of the public.

In these melancholy days of contention and confrontation, even if the fundamental questions of the past have not been resolved, these tentative symbols of change, and maybe even of reconciliation, may be even more important than the President's arguments that he was right all along, and if he wasn't, it was somebody else's fault, and anyway, was no worse than what other Presidents did in the past.

Everybody in Washington now, including the President, says we must "learn the lessons of Watergate," and some people have. Most of the new key cabinet members are showing a new independence, and this is an important lesson.

Vice President Spiro Agnew is in deep trouble. He is fighting for his political life, and he is fighting on his own. He is not asking the President whether he can have a news conference to argue his case. He is "in-

Fuller column,  
NYT 24 Aug 73,  
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forming" the White House what he intends to do, and doing it in his own way.

## PROBE

Similarly, the new attorney general, Elliot Richardson, is not asking the President or the Vice President whether it's all right to inform Mr. Agnew that the Vice President is under investigation for criminal activity, but telling them this is a fact and putting Mr. Agnew on notice.

This causes trouble between the attorney general and the Vice President, who goes on public television to denounce the leaks out of the Justice Department, but at least the struggles are not being concealed or directed by a White House staff out of the President's control.

These emerging changes of attitudes, assumptions and power centers in Washington may be more important than anything else. After all, it was probably the administration's mistrust of fear or dissent that led to the centralization of power, the secrecy, the conspiracies, and the Watergate tragedies, but at least there is now a change of tactics, if not a change of heart.