

White House Plans for Offen

By Paul W. Valentine

Washington Post Staff Writer

A series of White House memorandums made public yesterday discloses administration proposals in 1969 and 1970 to counter what it considered unfair news coverage with a broad array of suggested tactics ranging from "planting" favorable stories to pressuring news media with the threat of federal investigation.

The memos, several marked "secret" or "confi-

dential," resulted at least in part from President Nixon's annoyance with media coverage and his request that "specific action" be taken, according to one of the memos.

It could not be determined immediately if any of the proposals were implemented.

The documents were made public by Sen. Lowell P. Weicker (R-Conn.), a member of the Senate Watergate committee. He said he made the disclosures

because of recent stepped-up criticism of the news media by President Nixon and other administration spokesmen.

The memos chronicle exchanges of ideas and suggestions on how to cope with the press among high administration figures including former White House chief of staff H. R. (Bob) Haldean and former White House special counsel Charles W. Colson.

In the earliest memo, dated Oct. 17, 1969, former White House aide Jeb Stuart Magruder told Haldean that scattered "shotgun" complaints to individual newspapers and broadcasters about unfair coverage were ineffectual and should be replaced with a broader effort including:

- Using the antitrust division of the Justice Department to "investigate various media relating to antitrust violations."

- Having the Internal Revenue Service "look into the various organizations that we are most concerned about."

- Monitoring radio and television news broadcast through the Federal Communications Commission to help form the basis for "official complaints" against selected stations.

- Showing "favorites within the media." Magruder added, "Since they (news media) are basically not on our side, let us pick the favorable ones as Kennedy did."

- Mounting a "major letter writing" campaign through the Republican National Committee in protest against unfair news coverage.

Magruder stressed the use

of government regulatory agencies in bringing pressure on selected news media.

The FCC monitoring action, for example, he said, "will have much more effect than a phone call from (former White House communications director) Herb Klein or (presidential speech writer) Pat Buchanan."

Also, he said, "just a threat of an IRS investigation will probably turn their approach."

Magruder's memo, entitled "the Shotgun Versus the Rifle," came after he said he received 21 requests in the previous month from President Nixon asking for "specific action relating to what could be considered unfair news coverage."

The 21 requests, according to the six-page memo, ranged from such broad steps as taking "appropriate action to counter biased TV coverage of the Adm. over the summer" to the more specific move of countering CBS correspondent Dan Rather's allegation that former Selective Service director Lewis B. Hershey was dismissed because of anti-war protests.

Another request, submitted by Klein, urged that "we have the Chicago Tribune hit Sen. (Charles H.) Percy (R-Ill.) hard on his ties with the peace group."

Language in the memorandums released by Sen. Weicker was usually cast in terms of attaining "press objectivity."

One confidential memo from Magruder to Haldean and Klein entitled "Tentative Plan on Press Objectivity" spells out tactical details for countering

sive Against Press Revealed

“extremely disparaging remarks” about President Nixon attributed to former NBC TV news caster Chet Huntley in the July 17, 1970, issue of Life magazine.

To bring national focus to the issue of journalistic “objectivity and ethics” raised in the Huntley case, the memo outlined a set of “follow-up” tactics by which administrative operatives could among other things:

- Generate a “massive outpouring of letters-to-the-editor.”

- Arrange to have a congressman publicly urge “licensing” of individual TV newsmen.

- Arrange for an “expose”

to be “written by an author such as Earl Mazo or Victor Lasky.”

- “Plant a column with a syndicated columnist which raises the question of objectivity and ethics in the news media. Kevin Phillips could be a good choice.”

- Encourage the dean of a leading graduate school of journalism to “publicly acknowledge that press objectivity is a serious problem.”

In a related memo dated July 16, 1970, Lawrence Higby, then chief assistant to Haldeman and now an official in the Office of Management and Budget, summed up the tactical situation this way:

“The point behind this whole thing is that we don’t care about Huntley—he is going to leave anyway. What we are trying to do here is to tear down the institution. Huntley will go out in a blaze of glory, and we should attempt to pop his bubble.”

Haldeman, in a Feb. 4, 1970 memo, instructed Magruder to devise ways of mobilizing the nation’s “Silent Majority . . . to pound the magazines and the networks in counteraction” against negative administration coverage.

“Concentrate this on the few places that count,” he

said, “which would be NBC, Time, Newsweek and Life, the New York Times and The Washington Post. Don’t waste your fire on other things.”

Weicker first revealed the Oct. 17, 1969, Magruder memo Wednesday on Martin Agronsky’s “Evening Edition” program on WETA-TV Wednesday. The other memos were made available yesterday.

Weicker said Wednesday there is “no way to know” if White House officials implemented any of the proposed tactics, but “it shows the type of thinking that was going on at the White House.”