

I. T. T. and Milk - Price Statements: No Gain

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 9 — If President Nixon was not thrown for a loss, he certainly did not gain any ground with his statements yesterday on the I.T.T. and milk price controversies.

News
Analysis

Nobody around Washington was saying today, "He certainly ran over the opposition this time." Even at the Western White House at San Clemente no hats were thrown into the air. What they were hearing out there, one senior official said, was that people were glad the President had addressed himself to the other charges against him, but after 10 months they are getting weary of denials from the White House.

"The sense we get," the official said, "is let's get on to other things, and that's what the President is going to be doing. We are not going to spend 1974 constantly trying to prove the negative."

In any case, as Bryce N. Harlow, counselor to the President, observed in Washington today, Operation Candor, as it is called, has "just about run its course."

"The President can't indefinitely keep this kind of thing up," Mr. Harlow said, "and he shouldn't."

Major Issues Covered

Unless there are new accusations against Mr. Nixon, he has already — beginning on March 22 of last year — addressed himself to all the major issues raised by Watergate and related scandals.

While President Nixon may still be obliged to reply to questions about the scandals from time to time, it seems that he and his staff will be turning to other tactics.

Aside from trying to eliminate the negative and accentuate the positive, the White House will be shifting from a public relations to a legal defense.

Last Friday, the Watergate legal defense team was reorganized. James D. St. Clair, a Boston lawyer whose experience in Washington goes back 20 years, was appointed to lead it. Yesterday, Charles Alan Wright, the constitutional expert from Texas who left the White House in a state of disillusionment last year, returned as a part-time consultant.

These lawyers and others will defend the President against any charges that may arise from the investigations of the Watergate special prosecutor.

against efforts to obtain documents and tape recordings that President has refused to surrender, and against impeachment proceedings—if Congress decides to undertake them.

Meanwhile, what is the President's political situation? Has Operation Candor been a success? Has it halted the erosion of the President's authority and restored his credibility with politicians and voters.

Bryce Harlow, who is reputed to have been a chief advocate of Operation Candor, holds that it has been a success.

Every time the President has made a disclosure, Mr. Harlow said today, he has come out ahead.

The President's critics—and they are very thick on the ground in this town — do not agree. One of them, who asked to remain anonymous because he is a lawyer in a Watergate-related case, said today that President Nixon reminded him of a character in "The Arabian Nights."

That character, who was accused of a crime, asked to be pardoned if he could prove to

be the caliph, Haroun Al-Rashid, that the excuse could sometimes be worse than the offense.

Point Illustrated

To prove his point, the man surreptitiously pinched the caliph's consort. When she complained to the caliph, the offender said, "Excuse me, sire, I meant to pinch you."

President Nixon's explanations have tended from the beginning to confirm the allegations made against him. For example, his income tax returns showed that he had paid

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Seen for the President

very little tax on a very large income, had taken questionable deductions, and had given very little to charity.

Somewhat the same thing was being said today by the President's opponents about the I.T.T. and milk price "white papers" issued yesterday. They confirm that the President had, in fact, intervened to halt an antitrust prosecution of the International Telephone and Telegraph Corporation and to raise milk price supports.

All that was denied, in essence, was that these ac-

tions were taken in return for political contributions. But the evidence to support the denial — documents and tape recordings — was withheld. However, some of this evidence has been given to the courts.

The white papers, of course, were not the voice of Richard Nixon. They were the obvious product of staff work. This kind of staff work has not yet convinced the public: According to a Roper poll, 79 per cent of those interviewed have not been convinced by Operation Candor.