

By Russell Baker

WASHINGTON, Jan. 28—If Secretary of the Treasury Shultz quits, and he is said to be ready to go, President Nixon may have to resign after all, not because of Watergate but because he is running out of people to run the Government.

At present, with Secretary Shultz still working, the Nixon Administration is made up of ten persons. On June 16, 1972, the eve of the Watergate burglary, the Administration by contrast had a payroll of 7,362 persons in the White House alone, and this did not include 2,722 White House people who had been temporarily assigned to the Committee for the Re-election of the President.

The ten who are left are President Nixon, General Haig, Ronald Ziegler, Rose Mary Woods, Gerald Warren, Henry Kissinger, Secretary of Defense Schlesinger, Roy Ash, William Simon and Mr. Shultz. It is hard to see how the Government can go on if even one quits. Consider their present division of responsibilities.

Mr. Shultz handles the economy, Mr. Kissinger deals with foreigners, Mr. Simon manages the oil shortage, Mr. Schlesinger operates the military and

Mr. Ash keeps them on their toes by trying to get ahead of them all in the struggle for power.

A struggle for power has to go on in every administration, or it would not be an administration. No exception can be allowed for the present Administration, though sensible persons may observe that it has practically no power left to be struggled for. As long as the struggle—even for powerlessness—can be continued, the illusion of power can be maintained. It is Mr. Ash's thankless job to do so.

President Nixon, General Haig, Miss Woods and Messrs. Ziegler and Warren make up what is called "the White House." The President launches and cancels operations, such as "Operation Candor," "Operation Cut the Candor," "Operation Hang Tough," "Operation Fight Like Hell," and so forth.

General Haig hires and fires lawyers, Miss Woods works in tape, and Messrs. Ziegler and Warren deal with the press, polish the brass, do the cooking and shopping, keep the windows washed and tell the President he is looking great.

Obviously, we have here a very delicate division of tasks. If Mr. Shultz

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pulls out, it might seem easy to move Mr. Ash into his job. Not so. For one thing, Mr. Shultz's job may be the most powerful of the ten. If Mr. Ash, whose job is struggling for power, were to get such a vital position, everyone would say that he had won the Washington power struggle.

This would probably result in resignations by General Haig, Mr. Simon and Miss Woods, all of whom would feel that their powers had been reduced. Then, besides having to find somebody to handle the economy, the Administration would have to come up with a new oil-crisis manager, somebody who can hire and fire lawyers, and a new tape handler.

Unfortunately, Mr. Ash must stay where he is. Nor can Secretary Schlesinger be moved from the Pentagon to the economy, since the only man who could possibly succeed him, Secretary Kissinger, would then be in the position of having to spy on himself in order to keep the Joint Chiefs of Staff abreast of his thinking. Mr. Kissinger is known to believe that spying on himself is dishonorable.

The ideal solution would be to find

a new person willing to come to the Administration. Feelers that have been put to a number of distinguished persons have not produced results. David Rockefeller, for example, is reliably said to have replied that while he would be honored to serve in the Administration he, unfortunately, has a prior engagement to attend the opera in Milan. Count Dracula has replied that, being a Democrat, he cannot possibly take the position.

Great pressure is being put on Julie Nixon Eisenhower to fill Mr. Shultz's shoes, and she may accept if she can learn to grasp the relationship between gold and money, an unlikely possibility for anyone with a rational turn of mind, like Mrs. Eisenhower.

Messrs. Warren and Ziegler might conceivably be persuaded to add Mr. Shultz's job to their many other duties, although this is doubtful. Both of them did a lot of ugly muttering about resignation a few weeks ago when they were told they would have to start doing the White House plumbing repairs and flying the helicopters to Camp David.

Another solution, of course, would be to drop the economy altogether. Considering the shape it's in, this may be the sensible way out.