

Staff With a Sense of Mission

The Men Around

By Robert Shogan
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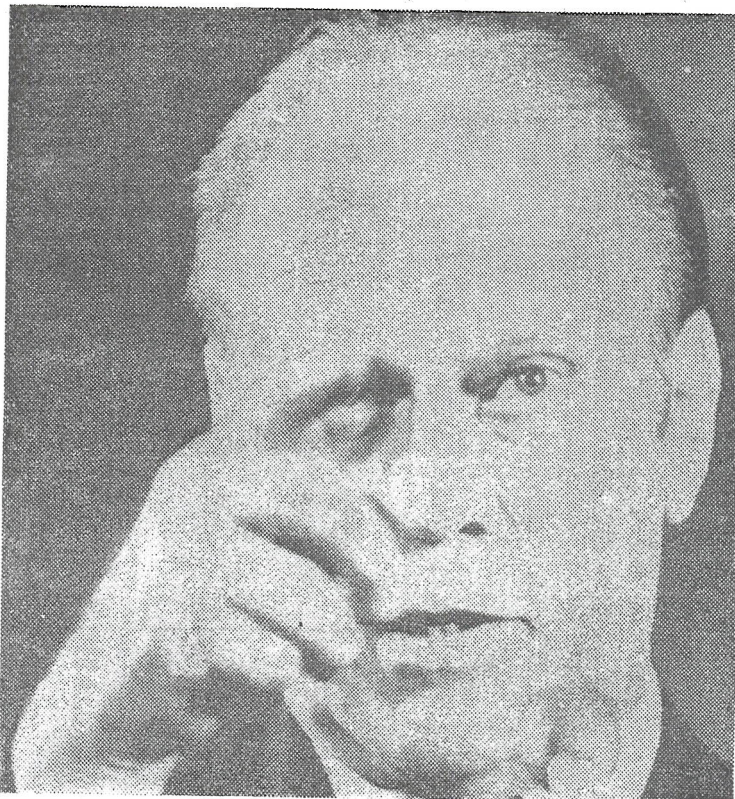
Soon after Spiro Agnew's resignation, a senior member of his outgoing vice-presidential staff was asked about Gerald Ford's incoming staff. "If you didn't think we were so hot," the Agnew aide said, "wait till you see those guys."

That double-edged put-down reflects the lackluster reputation from which vice-presidential staffs have traditionally suffered.

But Gerald Ford is assembling a group of aides who are hopeful that the special circumstances of his vice presidency will help them make a brighter record than their predecessors did.

The skeleton crew Ford brought over from the House of Representatives has grown to nearly 60 persons. To help them get organized Ford has brought in a management and budget consultant, L. William Seidman, from his hometown of Grand Rapids, Mich.

The apparent enhancement of the vice presidency, because of the crisis facing



The vice president is gathering an enthusiastic staff

the presidency, has given Ford's staff a sense of mission.

The ruler of the vice presidential roost, on the second floor of the old Executive Office Building across the street from the White House,

is Robert T. Hartmann.

A former Washington bureau chief and foreign correspondent for the Los Angeles Times, Hartmann, 56, was Ford's right hand man when Ford was house minority

Gerald Ford

leader.

Some people outside Ford's official family complain that Hartmann takes himself too seriously in his new job as vice presidential chief of staff."

But few question Hartmann's grasp of the Washington scene, particularly his grasp of the inner workings of Capitol Hill, or his understanding of Ford.

Though too practical to be an ideologue, Hartmann is judged by former colleagues in the house as a firm conservative. Most of Ford's other senior staff members are also considered to have views falling somewhere to the right of center.

The staff does have a bipartisan tinge, provided by John O. Marsh Jr., 47, a former Democratic congressman from Virginia. But Marsh, too, is regarded as conservative.

Marsh, who was an assistant secretary of defense in the Nixon Administration, is expected to do double duty for Ford. He will be the Vice President's chief adviser on national defense matters and he will take over some of the legislative liaison duties of Kenneth E. Belieu,

who left last week to take a post with the natural gas industry.

Most of Ford's energies probably will be focused on helping the administration on Capitol Hill. Ford's man on the scene there is Walter L. Mote, 49, who was Senate liaison man for Agnew.

Mote described himself as Ford's "contact man, his buffer, his timesaver."

Though other vice presidents have not been particularly influential on the Hill, Mote predicted that Ford will be more successful, particularly on his old home grounds in the House.

Mote noted that Ford is on the Hill almost daily, while Agnew appeared there infrequently during the last three years of his vice presidency.

Relations with the White House have been a problem for almost every vice president. "The White House," George Reedy said, "assumes it owns the Vice President."

As a step toward asserting a measure of independence, Ford decided to hire two speechwriters of his own, instead of relying on the President's ghost writers.
