

Ex-Employee Says ACTION Rated Politics of Applicants

By Joanne Omang

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ACTION, the parent agency of the Peace Corps and Vista, "fully put into effect" a plan "for using government machinery to win votes" for President Nixon, according to the sworn affidavit of a former ACTION staff recruiter submitted to the Senate Water-gate committee staff.

The testimony of Stephen C. Royer, 29, directly contradicts a sworn statement to the committee by former White House aide Frederick V. Malek that an alleged plan to politicize federal agencies was only "puffing" on his part and was never implemented.

Malek, now deputy director of the Office of Management and Budget, was not available for comment. His office said he was out of town and could not be reached.

Royer, who is now unemployed and living in Helena, Mont. provided the Washington Post with a copy of his June 25 affidavit to the committee at The Post's request.

He also supplied the committee with documents he said showed that ACTION "was flagrantly violating the Civil Service laws" by placing only known supporters of President Nixon in top ACTION posts while Royer worked there between July, 1971, and February, 1972.

Several present and former ACTION employees, most of whom declined to be identified, supported the substance of Royer's testimony.

All of them also agreed with Royer's assertion that the alleged policy was instigated by Alan M. May, Royer's former college roommate, who was appointed director of staff placement for ACTION in

July, 1971, and resigned in May 1972.

"May systematically got people in here who were Republicans, got them promoted, subverted the (agency's) promotion plan, and it's still happening, to some extent," said Charles Howell, a Vista volunteer placement officer in Washington who is president of the ACTION employees' union.

"We have documentation of it, personnel papers and memos from people who said they were doing it for political purposes," Howell said.

Edgar M. Teeter, a personnel management specialist who headed the Civil Service Commission team investigating Howell's charges, said the team's report is now being written. "We didn't find any evidence of political influence in the classified service," he said.

The term "classified service" refers to career jobs regulated by the Civil Service Commission.

May denied that the system had been used to circumvent Civil Service laws and called Royer "a very confused guy."

Royer's 36-page affidavit detailed the use of a coded personnel form he said was "an indispensable tool to place Nixon loyalists, and Nixon loyalists only, within ACTION." Checkoff boxes on the form enabled every job applicant to be rated from a high of one to a low of five in three categories labeled Q, M and P.

"For public consumption," the affidavit said, "Q was to stand for qualifications, P was to stand for personality and M was to stand for maturity . . . (but) as Mr. May explained it in a meeting in August of 1971, Q stood for qualifica-

tions but P stood for political and M stood for minority."

Every job applicant was rated on qualifications by the five staff recruitment officers including Royer, on minority qualifications by Joseph Simon, special projects officer for minority affairs at ACTION, and politically by Peter Monk and Richard Lewis in the special projects unit on political qualifications, according to Royer's affidavit.

Royer's affidavit said the political rating was "based upon White House support," service to the GOP or endorsements from key Republicans in Congress or elsewhere in the administration.

A P-1 rating meant the individual must be hired, Royer stated, while a P-4 or P-5 meant that the person was politically unreliable or that he was recommended by an individual who was a political opponent of the President and therefore should not be hired.

He said the effect was that many highly qualified persons were given "very curt" interviews because of their low political ratings, while "must-rated" persons were often hired in preference to more highly qualified applicants.

The procedure applied both to jobs that Civil Service law requires be awarded competitively and to "excepted" jobs that are not covered by Civil Service rules, Royer's affidavit said.

Contacted in Hollywood, Calif., where he is practicing



United Press International

Stephen C. Royer, in glasses, at the 1968 Republican National convention.

law, May said Royer "basically didn't understand why for a position in the government a person's political abilities or his compatibility with the administration ought to have anything to do with his application for a job."

He said ACTION, then in its organizational stage, was filling more than 1,800 staff jobs. Two-thirds of those were "excepted" positions and he focused mainly on those May said.

"There was a concern that the agency (staff) was predominantly hostile to the President and his program," May said. "In essence, if I was instructed to do anything, it was to depoliticize it."

He confirmed the use of P and M designations on the coding sheets for political and minority notations but said they were not used for career Civil Service posts.

May also denied Royer's allegation that Malek was receiving regular reports from May on preferred White House candidates.

Michael P. Balzano Jr., ACTION director, said through a

spokesman that the agency would have no formal comment on Royer's allegations until it reviews them.

In a 150-page draft report on an alleged White House-organized program to politicize the bureaucracy, the Watergate committee staff said Malek confirmed in his testimony before them that the term "must place" was occasionally used to secure special treatment for applicants for career Civil Service positions.

However, according to the committee report, Malek said "the special consideration was not in competition for a specific job, but to ensure that the person was exposed to a range of jobs for which he or she was qualified."

The questioning concerned a March, 1972, memo from Malek to former presidential aide H. R. Haldeman outlining a "responsiveness" plan geared to maximizing the bureaucracy's political usefulness in President Nixon's re-election effort.

Malek told the committee the memo represented "puffing" on his part and was

never implemented. He was quoted to that effect in a Jack Anderson column May 9, 1974, which Royer said Moved him to volunteer to testify himself.

"I submit that what happened at ACTION as herein described was unquestionably a part of Mr. Malek's plan for using the government machinery to win votes for President Nixon in 1972 and that that plan was fully put into effect at least at ACTION," Royer's affidavit stated.

Senate Watergate committee sources said no decision had been made on what to do with the affidavit and its apparent conflicts with other testimony.

Royner's tenure at ACTION predated the Malek-Haldeman memo that the Watergate committee staff charges set up the "responsiveness" program. However, the committee report cites several documents dated in late 1971 that it said indicate "that political considerations were taken into account in government staffing long before the 1972 election campaign began."