

Nixon Social and Economic Policies Still Pressed

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SAN CLEMENTE, Calif., July 26 — President Nixon, despite the deepening shadow of impeachment, continues to press ahead with legislative and administrative programs designed to produce fundamental social and economic change in this country. Mr. Nixon brought up several of these proposals in his economic speech in Los Angeles last night.

News

Analysis

One was a change in what the President described as the current "trade-off" between the need for increased supplies and production on one hand and the desire for a cleaner environment.

The President made it clear that he believed that the environment was absorbing too much of the nation's investment capital and productive capacity and said that environmental programs had to be "re-evaluated and adjusted." Presumably this "adjustment" means that the environmental protection laws would have to be eased so that business would have to invest less capital in obeying them.

Easing of Safety Laws

Mr. Nixon made the same argument for easing occupational health and safety laws—they are deflecting capital and productive capacity from increasing supplies. The President indicated he would like to see an adjustment in the Occupational Health and Safety Act as well.

In his speech Mr. Nixon also complained of "the burdensome overregulation" of business and industry by the Federal Government, which, he said, was

"based on policies designed for an earlier era."

The President made it plain that he favored de-regulation or eased regulation as a remedy for economic ills.

These proposals were no mere idle rhetoric intended to please the President's audience of business leaders last night. Members of his economic staff, who have accompanied the President to his Pacific shore retreat here, have been telling interviewers about specific plans to introduce legislation or take administrative action that would implement the President's proposals.

Roy L. Ash, the director of the President's Office of Management and Budget, told a group of reporters today that "undue regulation impedes productivity and fuels inflation." This problem, he said, "must be tackled and will be tackled."

Regulatory Agencies

What the Administration plans to do, he added, is to see if the "processes" of the regulatory agencies, such as the Interstate Commerce Commission and the Federal Power Commission, could be changed—rather than changing the structure of regulation itself.

Mr. Ash and other economic officials made it clear that the President was considering still more programs to change the nation's economic and social fabric. "The field of antitrust laws must be looked at." He suggested that the nation's antitrust laws, which include the Sherman and Clayton antitrust acts dating back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries, have become outdated.

What the nation now needs, Mr. Ash asserted, is a "new framework of pro-competition

rather than antitrust law." He argued that in many cases there might be better competition between 10 big companies than 100 small companies.

What is needed, Mr. Ash said, are laws that "don't brick up bigness because it is big and don't brick up interlocking directorates of business activities."

Another of the President's economic officers, Kenneth R. Cole, the director of the Domestic Council, told a reporter that the Administration was looking into the possibility of changing the base of the entire Social Security system, which he described as "bankrupt."

What the Administration hopes to do, Mr. Cole indicated, is to rid Government of the Social Security system by turning it over to a private corporation.

And these are not all the changes the Nixon Administration has in mind. The President has indicated, for example, that he will seek to repeal many of the social programs that absorb a lion's share of the Federal budget. He has already begun to phase out some of these programs, such as the Office of Economic Opportunity, although shifting some of its functions to other agencies.

If all of the changes envisioned by President Nixon were put into effect, the result could be tantamount to a reversal of the social and economic tide running through this country for most of the century. They would alter the fabric of the nation woven by Theodore Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal and the Great Society of Lyndon B. Johnson.

But is there any reasonable possibility that the President will be able to affect these

changes, most of which would require Congressional action—not to mention broad popular support?

President Nixon has demonstrated his ability to make fundamental changes in the nation's political and economic structure. His "New Federalism" at least began to reverse the long flow of power from the states to the Federal Government by giving tax revenues back to local authorities.

But Mr. Nixon implanted his New Federalism when he was a first-term President with broad popular support, and no taint of scandal surrounded his Administration.

Even under ordinary circumstances, Mr. Nixon—as a lame-duck President and with a Congress controlled by the opposing party—would probably have found it enormously difficult to push through such a sweeping program of change.

But, of course, he is not working under ordinary circumstances. The latest Gallup Poll indicates that less than a quarter of the nation approves of his Presidency. And Congress is preoccupied with his impeachment, not with his social and economic goals.

Given these facts, it would appear that the fundamental changes he proposes are not realistically obtainable. Why then is the President making these proposals?

There have been some suggestions that he has put forward these programs as impeachment politics and that they are designed to cater to the conservatives in Congress whose votes might save him from being removed from office.

But the President's aides insist that these proposed changes reflect his own deeply felt convictions about the di-

Despite Woes

rection this country ought to be moving.

Some critics have contended that the President is persisting on this course because the White House has lost touch with reality.

But the probable answer is less dramatic. It is, simply, that the President and his Administration have no real choice but to press forward with their plans. There is no pattern or blueprint that tells a President how to act when he is facing impeachment and possible removal from office.