

A Program of Broad Change at Home

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Aug. 8—

President Nixon set out to reverse the tide of domestic programs, to divert the flow of power away from Washington and back to the states and localities.

He was only partly successful.

Mr. Nixon's avowed aim was to create what he referred to frequently as a "New Federalism." But with his overriding interest in foreign affairs and with the Democrats solidly in control of a sometimes balky Congress, only a few of his domestic reforms were enacted into law.

The theme of less Government interference and more self-reliance was in both of his Inaugural addresses.

"In this past third of a century, Government has passed more laws, spent more money, initiated more programs than in all our previous history," he said in his 1969 Inaugural. But he warned that "we are approaching the limits of what Government alone can do."

And again in his Inaugural speech Jan. 30, 1973, after his landslide re-election, Mr. Nixon declared in an appropriation of President John F. Kennedy's words of 1961: "In our own lives, let each of us ask not just what will Government do for me, but what I can do for myself?"

'Time for New Federalism'

Mr. Nixon spelled out his first domestic program in a nationally televised speech Aug. 3, 1969. "After a third of a century of power flowing from the people and the states to Washington it is time for a New Federalism in which power, funds and responsibility will flow from Washington to the states and to the people," he said.

In that speech, Mr. Nixon proposed four major programs for Congressional action — a reform of the welfare system under which a minimum Federal assistance of \$1,600 a year for a family of four would be paid; creation of a manpower training program to pull together various job training operations but with a decentralized administration; a reorganization of the Office of Economic Opportunity, and a new program to share Federal tax revenues with the states and localities.

The welfare reform proposal

was passed by the House, but it died in late 1972 when the Senate and the Administration failed to reach agreement on a compromise.

When reorganization of the manpower programs and the Office of Economic Opportunity also encountered Congressional opposition, Mr. Nixon proposed phasing out O.E.O. programs, but a Federal District Court judge ruled that the agency could not be shut down without Congressional approval.

Revenue sharing fared slightly better. With the support of many of the nation's Governors and Mayors, Congress approved a five-year, \$30-billion commitment of Federal funds that will be passed on to the states and localities with few strings on how the money is to be spent.

Second Part Languishes

However, the second part of the revenue-sharing package—the gathering of existing Federal grants that go to a variety of education, housing and job training programs into so-called "special" revenue-sharing programs—was much slower in coming.

Congress was generally reluctant to yield control over the spending of the funds, although special revenue-sharing programs for job training, for example, were adopted.

Even though Mr. Nixon served as a Representative and a Senator himself and once presided over the Senate as Vice President, his relations as President with Congress were curiously distant. Until the drastic shake-up of the White House staff in the aftermath of the Watergate scandal, even some of Mr. Nixon's strongest Republican supporters in Congress complained about not being consulted by the White House on developing Administration programs and legislation.

After taking office for a second term in January, 1973, for example, Mr. Nixon sent a series of written messages to Congress but did not go to the Capitol to deliver the traditional State of the Union message.

And in some cases when Mr. Nixon failed to secure Congressional action on some of his proposals he sought to do the same thing by executive action, such as his attempt to phase out the antipoverty program.

After Congress had failed to enact his reorganization plan to consolidate seven Cabinet departments into four, for example, Mr. Nixon announced a reshuffling of Cabinet and

White House staff duties to accomplish the same result.

Also, Mr. Nixon began vetoing bills and impounding—or declining to spend—funds for various existing programs appropriated by Congress, such as for a variety of health, highway and housing programs.

The impoundments triggered a number of lawsuits challenging the President's power to withhold funds appropriated by Congress and resulted in Congressional approval earlier this year of a bill reorganizing the way Congress deals with the Federal budget and restricting the President's power to impound funds. Mr. Nixon signed the bill.

And the Watergate scandal forced additional changes. The so-called "super Cabinet" was abolished with the dismissal of H. R. Haldeman, the President's chief of staff, and John D. Ehrlichman, his domestic affairs adviser. Alexander M. Haig Jr. moved in as chief of staff.

The Domestic Council, which was created under Mr. Ehrlichman by Mr. Nixon at the outset of his first term, declined in influence and many of its powers over domestic matters went to the Office of Management and Budget, headed by Roy L. Ash and his deputy, Frederic V. Malek.

Despite Mr. Nixon's announced efforts to decentralize the Federal bureaucracy, many of his critics in Congress contended that he had centralized power even more than before over Government spending within the Office of Management and Budget.

Congress sought to gain a voice in the operation of the office with enactment of a bill requiring Senate confirmation of future top officials of the budget agency after Mr. Nixon vetoed a bill that would have required confirmation of Mr. Ash and Mr. Malek.

In sum, the years of the Nixon Presidency were marked by some successes as well as failures.

Enacted were such things as major air and water pollution control laws, plus the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency. The Post Office Department was converted into a Government corporation. The long-standing program of price supports for agricultural products was overhauled, and a \$20-billion highway bill that will eventually open up the Highway Trust Fund to urban mass transit needs was approved.