

# INSIDE THE PRESIDENT'S INNER CIRCLE

There are old friends from Michigan, former colleagues from Capitol Hill, longtime aides and a sprinkling of carryovers from the last days of the Nixon Administration. But like any new team moving into power in Washington, the men around the new President tend to reflect his own personality and style: middle-aged, Midwestern, low-keyed, slightly ruffled and invariably decent whatever their political stripe. And as in past Presidential transitions, one of the biggest questions about the Ford Administration is whether they are up to the job.

Ford himself has clearly asked the same question. In the past, his staffers have mainly been men he was comfortable with—and they were probably adequate to the demands made on Ford as a congressman, House leader and even Vice President. But they were clearly not sufficient, either in numbers or abilities, to run a White House bureaucracy. Even before he took the oath of office last week, President Ford was expanding his circle of close aides and advisers to include some of the most sophisticated politicians in recent Washington history.

In addition to retaining the services of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and—for the time being, at least—White House chief of staff Alexander Haig, Ford was signing up men like former Defense Secretary Melvin Laird, ex-Sen. Charles Goodell and veteran lobbyist Bryce Harlow to play influential roles in his new Administration.

And in his most significant staff move thus far, he recruited four former congressmen as a transition team to “form a bridge” between his own staff and the sprawling executive branch: former Pennsylvania Gov. William W. Scranton, NATO Ambassador Donald M. Rumsfeld, Interior Secretary Rogers C. B. Morton and Ford’s own staffer John O. Marsh, once a Democratic congressman from Virginia.

## AT HOME ON THE HILL

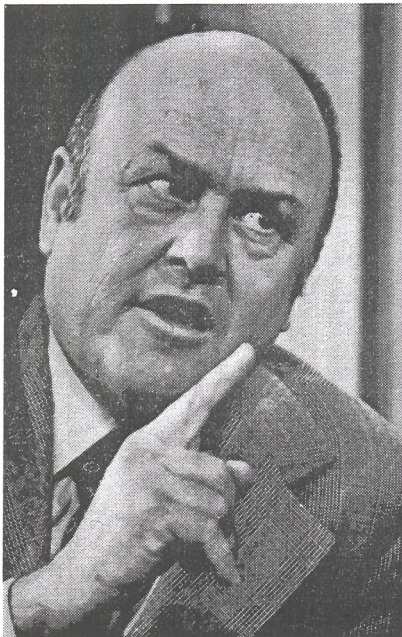
In one sense, the President’s early personnel problems may be something of a blessing. His predecessor had entered the White House with an inner circle tuned and tempered in a hard-fought national campaign and, as it turned out, they were often unable to shake the campaign mentality that places politics over policy and regards all critics as “enemies” to be undercut or overcome. Ford’s loose, low-key operation, on the other hand, has for years been geared to the compromises and concessions of Congressional politicking. The ability to understand and work effectively with the powers on the Hill may be the critical factor in the men

gathering around the new President.

The biggest jobs in the Ford Administration, either in a Kitchen Cabinet or official titles, seem likely to go to three of the President’s closest associates from congressional days—the three, in fact, who helped set him on the path of leadership that ultimately led to the Oval Office. They are Laird, Goodell and Senate Minority Whip Robert Griffin, the architects of a Republican revolution in the House eleven years ago that first made Ford chairman of the House Republican Conference Committee and then Minority Leader, replac-

east Asia, but in favor of continued military strength as a prerequisite to any real détente with the Soviet Union.

Goodell’s influence will probably be felt most in the tone and philosophic outlook of the new Administration—and perhaps in the areas of labor relations and judicial procedures. Also a conservative in the House, Goodell, 48, swung sharply left after New York Gov. Nelson Rockefeller named him to fill out the term of assassinated Sen. Robert F. Kennedy. As a result, he was denounced as a “radiclib” by Vice President Spiro Agnew and defeated in his

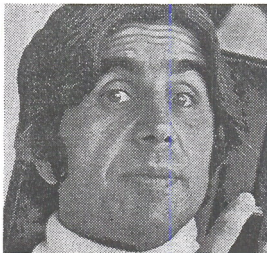


A new President’s men: Laird...



Wally McNamee—Newsweek

... Interior Secretary Morton ...



Bruce Buursma—Grand Rapids Press



AP

... Rev. Zeoli, law partner Buchen ...

ing mossback Charles Halleck of Indiana. All three moved on from the House to careers of their own, but all have stayed in touch with Ford as well and are thought to have the greatest influence on his thinking.

Mel Laird, 51, has already been pegged as Ford’s *eminence grise*, a baldish Wisconsin Machiavelli whose return to public service would nevertheless be applauded on both sides of the aisle. Despite his conservative record during nearly twenty years in the House, Laird is known as a moderate with a bright and open mind. And he assumed an almost dovish role as Secretary of Defense under President Nixon, urging a swifter reduction of U.S. troop commitments in South Vietnam and an earlier shifting of responsibility to the Vietnamese themselves. As a prime counselor to the President, he might be expected to argue against any further military involvement in South-

1970 race for re-election by then Conservative candidate James Buckley, who enjoyed unmistakable White House support. In the aftermath, Goodell returned to private law practice and for a time was even part of Dr. Daniel Ellsberg’s defense team. That he should now stand closer to the pinnacle of power than if he had remained in the Senate is only one of the minor ironies of the Watergate tragedy. Early this year, Goodell and Ford walked arm in arm through a party in honor of the former senator. “Although we’ve had our differences,” Goodell said later, “he’s very open to different viewpoints.”

Griffin, 50, whose grim letter to Nixon a week and a half ago signaled the final crumbling of his support in Congress, is an even closer associate of Ford. In fact, if he were not from the new President’s home state, Griffin would probably be among his first choices for Vice President. As it is, he

might be in line for a Cabinet post; but as a likable moderate whose relations with his Senate peers are excellent, Griffin can probably be far more helpful to the President where he is—working from the inside to get Ford's legislative program through Congress.

Yet another alumnus of the 1963 GOP revolt who might end up on the Ford team is Rep. Albert Quie, 49, of Minnesota, a deeply religious man who played a large part in the Christian conversion of former Nixon aide Charles Colson. And the President is also expected to have the advice and expertise of lobbyist Harlow, 58, who served as a Capitol Hill liaison man for Presidents Eisenhower and Nixon before taking on a policy role in the Nixon White House.



... ex-Senator Goodell ...

... chief of staff Hartmann

Harlow is not looking forward to leaving his high-paying job as legislative representative for Procter & Gamble. But like so many others who have come to know and respect Ford over the years, friends say, if Harlow is asked directly by the President he will be available.

**REVAMPING THE 'MICHIGAN MAFIA'**

Characteristically, Ford also turned to some former House colleagues to staff his transitional panel. But in each case they were men who had solid administrative experience as well. Rumsfeld, who headed up the Office of Economic Opportunity, was assigned as over-all coordinator of the transition. Morton, who previously headed up the Republican National Committee, was to focus on the Cabinet and the executive agencies. And Scranton, who served with Ford in the House before becoming governor, was asked to concentrate

on reorganizing the White House staff. President Ford himself moved to ease the shifting of gears by sending out letters to staffers in the Federal agencies, the White House and the Vice President's office. All were asked to keep on working.

Jerry Ford's "Michigan Mafia" will stay on the scene, but in lesser roles, with realistic limits on their authority and responsibility. For example, Robert Hartmann, 57, Ford's Vice Presidential chief of staff, is valued for his knowledge of politics and his knack for timing, both garnered during a long career as reporter and Washington bureau chief for The Los Angeles Times. But the ruddy-faced Hartmann, a man who enjoys his bourbon, lacks



... millionaire Seidman ...



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style and sensitivity in dealing with people. "The fact is he's just plain, damned offensive," said one Ford crony last week. And Hartmann is now expected to shift his focus from administrative duties to political advice and analysis as a counselor to the President.

Another former newsman in the Ford retinue, Paul Miltich, 54, Ford's press secretary, has also been replaced—by Detroit News Washington bureau chief Jerry terHorst (page 78). A low-key, likable man, Miltich frequently failed to brief himself on such basics as his boss's schedule or the kind of suit he was wearing ("The boss would kill me if I asked him something like that," he once explained). He will function henceforth as terHorst's deputy.

Two solid starters on the current Ford team are L. William Seidman and Philip W. Buchen, both old Grand Rapids friends. Seidman, 53, is the millionaire head of an international ac-

counting firm who was called in last February to sort out and shape up administration of the Vice President's office (to Hartmann's partially disguised dismay). Bald, dapper, "a kind of health nut" much like the President, according to one old acquaintance, Seidman has also worked closely with Michigan Governors George Romney and William Milliken and is credited with devising a milestone program for equitable tax reform in the state. His accounting firm also seems to have survived its association with Equity Funding Corp. of America, the financial empire that was the center of a major Wall Street scandal last year.

Buchen, 58, is the President's original law partner and probably his closest friend and confidant. Like Ford, he is a pipe puffer, but a boyhood bout with polio cut short his athletic career; he walks with a cane. Buchen was recruited earlier this year by Ford to run a White House committee on the right of privacy, but he will undoubtedly take on a more substantive role in the near future. "Phil," said one admirer, "is one of a very few people who can call Ford and say, 'Jerry, what in the hell are you doing?'" He has already made some canny suggestions. It was Buchen who advised Ford not to take an advance peek at the "edited" White House transcripts before mounting his zigzag defense of President Nixon at the height of the Watergate controversy.

**'GOD HAS A BETTER IDEA'**

Ford's own man on the new transitional panel, John Marsh, 47, has been a Pentagon lobbyist and is now the resident expert on military and foreign affairs. Marsh could well become a White House watchdog over President Ford's Secretary of Defense, whoever he may be. Another former congressman, 61-year-old John Byrnes of Wisconsin, once a ranking member of the House Ways and Means Committee and a longtime crony of the President, is expected to play a major role in the transition and later policy planning, with an emphasis on economics. Milton Friedman, 50, and no relation to the noted economist, may remain Ford's principal speechwriter. But Friedman, a 21-year veteran of the Jewish Telegraph Agency, will undoubtedly need a large stable of other writers to handle the expanded and specialized chores on a Presidential level.

The nation may also get to know the Rev. Billy Zeoli, a Grand Rapids evangelist who has for months catered to Ford's spiritual needs with a Monday-morning prayer memo ("To: Jerry/ From: Billy/ Subject: God has a better Idea"). "I've never been one to be ostentatious about my religious views," Ford has said. "But I don't hesitate to say that Billy has had an impact on my perspective."