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THE PRESIDENCY/HUGH SIDNEY

Rockefeller in the Boiler Room

At 67, Nelson Rockefeller must make some concessions to the flesh. He downs a bowl of Wheatena instead of eggs when he breakfasts in bed at 8 each morning. A creeping cholesterol count has forced the indignity.

At night he sips at a glass of Mateus rosé, a Portuguese substitute for red Dubonnet, which is suspected of a higher calorie count. But beyond that, he looks and in some ways acts as well as ever, maybe a little better. His hair is bleached, his skin tanned from weekend sun on his Pocantico Hills golf course with his two sons and Club Pro Chi Chi Rodriguez. A medical lab, after studying his charts and X rays, reported: "This man is 40 years old."

He still carries an element of naiveté around with him. He does not always understand the folkways of people with less than a hundred million in the bank. In his first months in Washington, he offended the delicate sense of parliamentary justice of Alabama's Senator James B. Allen by failing to recognize him on the Senate floor. He piled up more painful clichés about Jerry Ford than even Ford's speechwriters could have coined, and he continued to talk about American purpose when the hot subject was the contents of Henry Kissinger's garbage cans.

But there is the aura of power about Rockefeller. His footprints, like the impressive state-capitol complex he built in Albany, show that somebody significant has been there. He is beginning to be felt in Washington.

He has kept his head low and found his way to the boiler room. He is a man concerned with the substance of America,

not only the CIA but also water quality, productivity and energy. The Rockefeller tentacles are reaching out for men and ideas. His staff includes a former Governor and two ex-Under Secretaries; last week he added the voluntary services of Heath Larry, a former vice president of U.S. Steel and next year's probable N.A.M. president.

Rockefeller is unlike any other Vice President we have had. He does not really live in Washington. His base is New York, and he commutes in an Air Force jet. He not only travels in political society but inhabits the corridors of finance, industry and academe.

Not even the flap over whether Rocky would be a political drag for Ford next year upset the Vice President very



KIGHTLINGER—THE WHITE HOUSE

HOWARD CALLAWAY & NELSON ROCKEFELLER

long. As a result and after a cozy helicopter flight with the President, Rockefeller and Ford may be closer than ever. Ford and his new campaign manager, Howard ("Bo") Callaway, the former Secretary of the Army and conservative Georgia Congressman, had wanted to try to disarm the militant right-wingers of the G.O.P., who still dislike Rocky. But Callaway's quite correct assessments that the Vice President's "liberalism" and age would be political problems in 1976 caused many people in the nervous Washington atmosphere to believe that another conspiracy was under way and that Ford was nudging Rocky toward the exit.

Ford wants to go to the convention next year uncommitted to anybody but himself. If it goes well, he most likely will again tap Rockefeller, who would be a help in the election. If trouble develops and Ford feels that he must accept someone else, Rocky will probably become Secretary of State—and with delight.

"I've got a strong heart and I'm totally relaxed," he said last week. "I'm lucky to be here now where the action is." Wearing the inevitable blue striped shirt, the white handkerchief tucked in his suit pocket, he continued to move around the back lots of power. He helped get yet another try for Turkish military aid back on the tracks in the Senate. He was the one who alerted the White House on the troubles over extending the Voting Rights Act. He helped along Ford's policy interests on energy and taxes while the President was off in Helsinki. Rocky could claim an expanding group of friends on the Hill. There were even cordial relations, if not agreement, between himself and conservatives like Barry Goldwater and John Tower.

Rockefeller's optimism about the future of America seems undimmed. From the back seat of his limousine last week he admired anew the classic lines of the Supreme Court building, he pondered the herd of joggers around the Tidal Basin ("Must do this on their lunch hour . . . Must be good for you"). Being rushed to an appointment for which he was already late, he spotted a street vendor below the Capitol. "Gee," said the Vice President, "I wish I could stop for a hot dog."