

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Boar's Head Inn, Charlottesville, Va.

Thursday eve., January 8, 1970

Subject: Workings of W.H. staff and
Comments on Executive-legislative
relationship.

Description of
President

First, how does the White House staff work? Republican Presidents are supposed, according to recent caustic theories, to be lethargic and laissez faire -- therefore, their White House activity should be small and inactive.

Not so in this Administration. The size and scope of this White House staff is evidence of it. Reason is simple: every White House staff is projection of President, a reflection of his personality and desires. President Nixon, driven by his intellect -- radiates and spews forth ideas and suggestions continuously. Creates burdens that force staff activity in a variety of areas.

So what staff does the President have, and how does it work:

I'll limit this to what's singular about it.

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| only Pres.
NSC]staff when he
BOB] takes office | 1. National security -- Kissinger /NSC
2. Domestic programs -- Ehrlichman (enlarge on novelty of this)
3. Urban problems -- Moynihan (Counsellor) “
Congress -- Harlow (Counsellor) “
Civil rights/goals -- Garment
Writing -- Keogh |
| 4. Cabinet subgroups
Domestic Aff. Council
Veteran Aff. “ | Communications -- Klein
Press -- Ziegler
Appointments -- Chapin
Administration -- Haldeman
Aides -- Hughes
Budget -- Mayo
Political -- Dent
Tours/ceremonial -- Davies
First Lady -- Stuart/Winchester
CEA -- McCracken
Science -- DuBridge
Cabinet & Agencies |

Of this aggregation, the most influential: Kissinger, Ehrlichman, Haldeman, Mayo; the others vary according to the ebb and flow of their problem areas.

Procedures: 8 a.m. staff meeting, Kissinger, Haldeman, Ehrlichman, Harlow, joined at 8:30 by Klein and Ziegler - to President (first 4) at 8:45 - 9:15. Rest of operation is mostly functional meetings within respective groups.

Our working hours run from about 7:30 to about 7:30, with all or part of Saturdays and Sundays. Probably not too far different from your own schedule.

Ehrlichman meetings with his people -- 7:30 every morning.

White House people with greatest contact with departments and agencies: Kissinger with State, Defense, CIA and other international or defense-related activities; Ehrlichman -- across the board domestically, with his subgroups handling departments functionally; Haldeman, direct to Cabinet folk with Presidential urgencies; Mayo, of course, with BOB all across the board; Harlow, on Congressional problems; Klein on communications; Ziegler on press conference; Dent on politics; Moynihan on Labor-HEW-OEO matters; Chapin on appointments.

Major characteristics of White House as contrasted with elsewhere: Scope -- amalgamation of national concerns; urgency-impact; intensity and endlessness of burdens; power & influence; visibility (with advantages and dangers). Only Speaker of House and Leaders of Congress, plus key Cabinet folk similarly situated.

A word about how we're doing so far.

President's popularity -- in Gallup, in first 11 months, Eisenhower dropped 8% and Johnson 10%, while Kennedy rose 6% and Nixon 9%. Nixon now well ahead of Eisenhower, equal to Johnson, behind Kennedy.

Good in first year --

Identity with Middle America (Nixon obviously President of most people)

Orderliness and calm restored

Ending the war honorably (Polls say people agree)

Restoration of dignity

Increased respect for U.S. abroad

Coming to grips with welfare failures

Gaining control of inflation

Firm attitude toward crime

Other approaches not coming through --

Dealing with problems of the poor

New federalism -- returning power to the people

Quality of life – Environmental Control Council not known; arts neither

First five years of life (education) – not known

Voluntarism – First Lady started; no follow-through

Streamlining of governmental decision-making

Reform

An action, not wordy, Administration

Initiatives toward world peace (SALT, Okinawa, NPT, germ warfare)

Political criticism of us --

Negative themes –

Doing right things for wrong reasons -- dragged into tax reform and hunger, OEO,

etc.

Southern strategy

Resent criticism (Agnew)

Inaccessibility of President

Can't handle Congress

Babel = contradictions by Administration leaders

Last item brings me to Congress, a negative theme for the President now.

Reasons for negatives:

Democratic control -- 1st time in 120 years, etc.

Seasonal -- patronage first 6 months; issues thereafter, with “getting to know you”
problem.

Press belief that President should dragoon Congress, even when in “enemy”
hands.

Republicans -- unused to their own President; factionally divided; new Senate
leadership (Dirksen death)

Communications/hold-overs

Consultation/patronage/projects

Lethargic session (slowness uptown and downtown; Democratic control) new

Administration always delayed

Contentious programs -- ABM; surtax; Haynsworth; budget cutting; HEW and
pollution add-ons by Democrats; postal reform

Caterwauling -- chronic, unavoidable, exploited by press attuned mostly to those
who complain (liberals).

Departmental shortfalls -- inexperience; consultation; communications; liaison;
relationship of Congressional group to Secretary; leaks; partisanship (both
ways). Best at it: Agriculture (weekly sessions with Committee).

Relations with junior members

Prospects -- better & worse

Bettors -- Republicans shaken down, used to working with President.

Departments shaken down, used to working with Congress. White

House cleaning up shortfalls with disgruntled. More teamwork.

Seasonal problems out of the way.

Worses -- More partisanship likely from Democrats

Budget cutting

“New Populism”

Elections nearing -- creates strains on both sides

Issues (ABM again; new taxes; HEW money; veterans benefits,

etc.)

Suggestions for departments --

Entire high command stay in close touch with Committee members

Advance consultation

Special handling of important Congressional correspondence

Direct access of Congressional man to Secretary

Quick remedial work on Congressional complaints before they fester

Careful preparation of testimony & advance correlation with Committee members

Playing straight with Administration in power

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