

The big parade

Black cabinet nominees for Mr. Nixon

There are no signs that President Nixon is considering the appointment of any blacks to his cabinet or any other top administration posts.

Nevertheless, those smoke signals or trial balloons coming out of the White House these days clearly indicate that some important changes are about to take place in the President's official family.



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Apparently Mr. Nixon is too smart to believe in his own White House press releases which have been proclaiming that the 1970 elections were a great Republican victory.

Should by some miracle the President decide to consider the appointment of a black American to his cabinet, I know how his top advisors would respond to the suggestion.

Right off the bat they would, of course, try to dissuade him from such a radical act. Such a move, they would point out, might be considered almost unAmerican, especially in the South.

The Southern Strategy was badly injured in the elections and now to add a black face to the official family portrait would kill it utterly.

If the President persisted in this radical course, then the advisors would ask the \$64 question. Who?

Then there would begin that painful, agonizing experience that most ruling class whites endure when they try to think of a black man who might be as smart as they are. Their nature instinctively rebels at the very thought.

Besides Ralph Bunche, Whitney Young, Roy Wilkins and a few black stars of stage and screen, most of these advisors do not know anything about the background and qualifications of any blacks. They never seem to remember the names of those outstanding blacks they occasionally read or hear about.

This fact, of course, is easy to explain. No blacks, however sophisticated, belong to the country clubs and the social circles that provide the white elite with the kind of gossip and information that lead to so many personnel decisions.

Incidentally, both President Kennedy and his brother, Bobby, shook official Washington when they admit Carl Rowan and voted to stick to its policy of barring blacks.

Today when young blacks are organizing their own "exclusive" bags, white leaders are deploring this dangerous growth of "black separatism." They wonder why the responsible black leadership does not put a stop to this unAmerican black racism.

Anyway, it is self-evident that scouting for black brains must present a great challenge to the President's advisors.

It is not as simple a task as it was when they sought to implement the Southern Strategy by appointing a Dixie lawyer to the Supreme Court. They found, through their own peer group connections, those legal luminaries, Judges Haynsworth and Carswell. It was probably done over mint juleps.

Since I have had a little experience in recommending blacks to Presidents, I am presumptuous enough to offer Mr. Nixon a few suggestions. This is done in full recognition of the fact that only a miracle would lead the President to consider a black for a major appointment in the first place.

I read recently that Attorney General John Mitchell had a little private chat with Secretary George Romney of HUD. The implication of the leak was that poor George has had it.

This view was strengthened in my mind when President Nixon said that Senator Ed Muskie, the Democratic front-runner for 1972, was the "George Romney of the Democratic Party." I have a feeling that George didn't appreciate that.

If Romney is on the skids, the President has an opportunity to make a black cabinet appointment that might not start a revolution. This HUD spot was once occupied by a black man, Dr. Robert C. Weaver.

When President Lyndon Johnson pulled this one off, the sky did not fall and the stars over Alabama continued to shine.

Now Mr. Nixon has a couple of blacks already in HUD whom he might consider. They are called the two Sams, Sam Jackson and Sam Simmons. Then too there is Walter Washington, the Mayor of Washington, who has a housing background. Since these gentlemen are already in his family, step children at least, Mr. Nixon and his advisors could move without difficulty. How about that, Mr. President?