FROM: Phyllis Schlafly

68 FAIRMOUNT, ALTON, ILLINOIS 62002 (618)462-5415

RELEASE: MARCH 16, 1984

EXECUTIVES WHO BECOME PRISONERS OF THEIR STAFFS

One of the work-related risks of getting to be a Very Important Executive, whether in big business or in big politics, is that you have so many decisions to make and problems to solve that you have less and less time to evaluate decisions and problems, to reach out for other alternatives, and to receive input from a variety of advisers.

The Very Important Executive must depend on his key aides to filter out the less important persons, to schedule his time efficiently, and to reduce the amount of information coming into his office to manageable proportions by "briefing" problems and issues, preferably on one sheet of paper each.

This is how it happens that a Very Important Executive may become a prisoner of his staff. Any executive's decisions can be only as good as the information on which they are based. Even a good staff which shares the executive's values, priorities, and goals can be overly protective and isolate the Very Important Executive from the real world.

Once upon a time there was a very rich man whose consuming lifetime ambition was to be President of the United States. After he was elected Governor of our then-largest state, his goal was within his grasp. He called together his able and well-paid staff and asked them this question: If I divorce my wife of 22 years and marry the woman I love, will that hurt my Presidential campaign?

Instead of telling him the political facts of life in the 1960s, his staff told him what he wanted to hear. So, Nelson Rockefeller divorced his wife and married Happy, and thereby forfeited his very real chance to become President.

Those who had known Richard Nixon before he became President, and understood how politically-motivated he was, found it hard to understand why he made so many political mistakes about Watergate. Amazingly, he did not seem to recognize the fatal tide rolling over him and his political ambitions.

Richard Nixon had become a prisoner of his key aides. Nobody and no piece of information could reach President Nixon except through H. R. Haldeman or John D.

Ehrlichman (on domestic issues) or through Henry Kissinger (on defense and foreign policy issues). Unfortunately, these three men, who so enjoyed the exercise of power, had one important trait in common: none had any sweaty, practical political experience.

Through their monopoly of access to Richard Nixon, these three men created a sort of "isolation ward" for the President, shielding him even from old friends and Republican Senate leaders. As astutely pointed out contemporaneously by Garnett D. Horner, columnist for the Washington Star-News, Haldeman served as "guardian of any access to the President, either in person or by telephone"; Haldeman and Ehrlichman had the "authority, not only to shape policy, but even to control what the President read or what he did with his time."

Ronald Reagan's immense task as President requires not only crucial decision-making on matters of national security and domestic policy, but also vital 1984 political decision-making. Reagan's reelection depends on a re-mobilization of the significant groups which formed his 1980 victory coalition. If they feel unwanted and unneeded, or if they are denied access to Ronald Reagan, they are unlikely to put forth the kind of effort that the Reagan campaign needs in order to checkmate his principal opposition, namely, the liberal media and Jesse Jackson's registration drive.

There is a prevailing myth that the so-called conservatives are locked into support of Reagan-Bush because they "have nowhere else to go." Anybody who believes this simply lacks "sweaty, practical political experience." Millions of those who voted for Reagan in 1980 do indeed have somewhere else to go -- back to the ranks of the nonvoters where they were before Reagan came along.

Ronald Reagan urgently needs to have in the White House a replacement for Edwin Meese who is trusted both by the President and by the conservative groups whose enthusiasm is essential to a 1984 victory. A good choice would be his old friend, Joseph Coors, because, since he would not be jockeying for power or perks, he could be depended on to tell the President what he needs to know rather than what he wants to hear.

The other advantage of such an appointment would be to give authentic "pre-1980" Reaganauts the assurance that the President would have access to their point of view, on a daily basis, before he makes his national and political decisions. The President cannot afford to allow his most loyal friends to believe that they are denied his ear or are unwelcome at the White House.