**Here Today and Gone Tomorrow**

By Martin Hittelman

December 16, 2018

The story of President Trump’s presidential history of hires, fires, and leavings continued this week. **Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke** submitted his resignation and **White House chief of staff John F. Kelly** was fired. So two more rats have left the sinking ship.

Zinke’s resignation and Kelly’s departure follow the firing of Trump’s attorney general. It is widely expected that Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen and Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross are soon to follow.

**Ryan Zinke**

Zinke was the fourth Trump appointee to **resign after a number of ethics charges**. The other three were Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price, Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt. Zinke had come under multiple investigations regarding his involvement with a real estate deal by a company that the Department of the Interior regulates, allowing his wife to ride in governmental vehicles, and allowing a security detail to travel with him on a vacation to Turkey at government expense.

Zinke sought to eliminate Obama-era environmental rules. He also attempted to open up large areas of federal land and water for oil and gas exploitation. In the words of Jennifer Rokala of the Center for Western Priorities: “*Ryan Zinke will go down as the most anti-conservation Interior secretary in our nation’s history.” “Surrounding himself with former lobbyists, it quickly became clear that Ryan Zinke was a pawn for the oil and gas industry.”*

“*Ryan Zinke was one of the most toxic members of the cabinet in the way he treated our environment, our precious public lands, and the way he treated the government like it was his personal honey pot*,” Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer said in a tweet, “***The swamp cabinet will be a little less foul without him***.”

**Acting Secretary David Bernhardt**, who is likely to succeed Zinke, is also likely to be an opponent of carrying out the responsibilities to protect the environment. He is a **former lobbyist for the oil, gas and water industries** that rely on the Department of the Interior's decisions.

According to Stephen Brown, a corporate lobbyist at RBJ strategies: “Bernhardt, who joined the Trump administration last year, has taken the lead in softening the department's protections for endangered species, a move that will make it easier for oil and gas companies to drill on ecologically sensitive lands. 'He knows how to make that agency work and he is why Interior is now considered 'best in class' in terms of agency performance.” Or as ecologist would describe it – “How to make it so that the agency doesn’t achieve its priorities.”

**Mick Mulvaney**

Trump has announced that **John F. Kelly will be replaced by Mick Mulvaney.** Trump has been unhappy with former four-star Marine Corps general Kelly for months.

Mulvaney is currently the director of the Office of Management and Budget. He also had held the title of acting director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. His successor at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau is Kathleen Kraninger.

Mulvaney served in House of Representatives from South Carolina and was an early supporter of the tea party movement as well as a co-founder of the House Freedom Caucus. He helped lead to the government shutdown of 2013.

A White House briefing stated that Mulvaney “**got picked because the president liked him—they get along,**” As to Mulvaney’s other roles, Sarah Huckabee Sanders, the White House press secretary said in a statement, “Mick Mulvaney will not resign from the Office of Management and Budget, but will spend all of his time devoted to his role as the acting Chief of Staff for the President. **Russell Vought** will handle day to day operations and run OMB.” Of course whatever Huckabee Sanders says at some point may be reversed in a subsequent statement.

And so it goes