

THE PERISCOPE

A NEW HITCH FOR CLEAN CARS?

The top men in the Environmental Protection Agency face one of their roughest decisions: whether to ask for further delay in the timetable for emission-free automobiles. The first cars fitted with catalytic converters are due in California on 1975 models, but EPA scientists have told their chiefs that they cannot assure the public that emissions from the devices will not pose worse health hazards than the pollutants they are designed to control. (While the converters cut down on carbon monoxide and hydrocarbons, they produce potentially dangerous amounts of suspended sulfates and acid aerosols.) The irony is that the No. 1 automaker, General Motors, dropped its opposition to EPA's timetable and is ready to meet it with a converter that it claims can increase gas mileage by 18% over present models, which have no converters.

DALLAS REVISITED?

The assassination of John F. Kennedy is back on the agenda of Jim Garrison, the controversial New Orleans district attorney who recently won acquittal in a Federal bribery trial. In 1969, Garrison tried and failed to convict a New Orleans businessman on charges of conspiring with JFK's assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald. Now he is looking into the idea that the "Cubans" arrested in the Watergate break-in might have been involved in the assassination.

NADER'S NEW FRIENDS

Consumer crusader Ralph Nader's stock with the Establishment continues to soar. Last month, the head of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce heaped praise on his old foe. This month, a Federal Reserve Board member, no less, appealed privately to Nader for help in killing a bill that was rushed through Congress restoring a ceiling on interest rates for small savers. The measure, currently awaiting President Nixon's signature, cancels an earlier decision by the Fed to permit rates of 7% to 8% on long-term deposits; the Fed thinks it discriminates unjustly against small savers. The savings and loan industry lobbied for the bill; the Fed official wanted Nader to raise a public outcry against it.

THE EMPTY EMBASSIES

Secretary of State Henry Kissinger didn't mean exactly what he said when he promised to fill the score of presently vacant U.S. ambassadorial posts "within two months." Three countries will

remain without U.S. ambassadors for the immediate future. The three are Sweden, because of the running diplomatic feud started when Prime Minister Olof Palme sharply criticized President Nixon's actions in Indochina; Uganda, whose President Idi Amin has been even more critical of Mr. Nixon, and Libya, because of President Muammar Kaddafi's hostility. The Uganda embassy has been vacant since April, Sweden's since last Christmas and Libya's since last November.

FORD'S SUCCESSOR

Who will succeed Gerald Ford, Mr. Nixon's nominee for Vice President, as GOP leader in the House? The favorite is Arizona's Rep. John Rhodes, head of the GOP Policy Committee. Out of sentiment, Minority Whip Leslie Arends might be named. (He is 78 and would like to cap his career with the post.) The odds are against John Anderson of Illinois, choice of liberal Republicans.

THE CHANCES FOR CAMPAIGN REFORM

Despite the Watergate and Agnew scandals, final passage of the tough campaign-reform bill already approved by the Senate looks more and more remote. The reasons: House leaders are leery of the powers granted to the special Federal election commission created by the Senate bill; they also fear that, given the angry "clean politics" mood of the country, House members would add stricter—and more undesirable—provisions. Tipoff on the bill's fate came when Ohio Democrat Wayne Hays, who as head of the House Administration Committee controls the fate of any such measure, publicly blasted Common Cause, the No. 1 lobbying force for campaign reform.

STRIP OR STRIKE

South Africa has witnessed a brand-new twist in labor bargaining—a striptease to avert a strike. Sixty Dutch workers imported to operate a 14,000-ton dredge in a huge harbor project at Saldanha Bay, near Cape Town, threatened a walkout to protest a lack of recreational facilities. A local stripteaser (who features a live python in her act) volunteered to perform on the dredge. Her offer was approved and the strike was called off. The strict and staid South African authorities acquiesced for a very practical reason: the harbor project will enable export of 15 million tons of iron ore for earnings of \$100 million a year.