

Lil marked a couple of passages she thought might be of special interest to me. I suggest it also addresses our recent exchange on ego, paranoia, etc. The Post carried Pett's interview, about a page, if I didn't tell you. I have it. There is much more of the slippery ego he can't always keep in his pocket. If you want this, keep it. If not, please return. HW 1/19/73

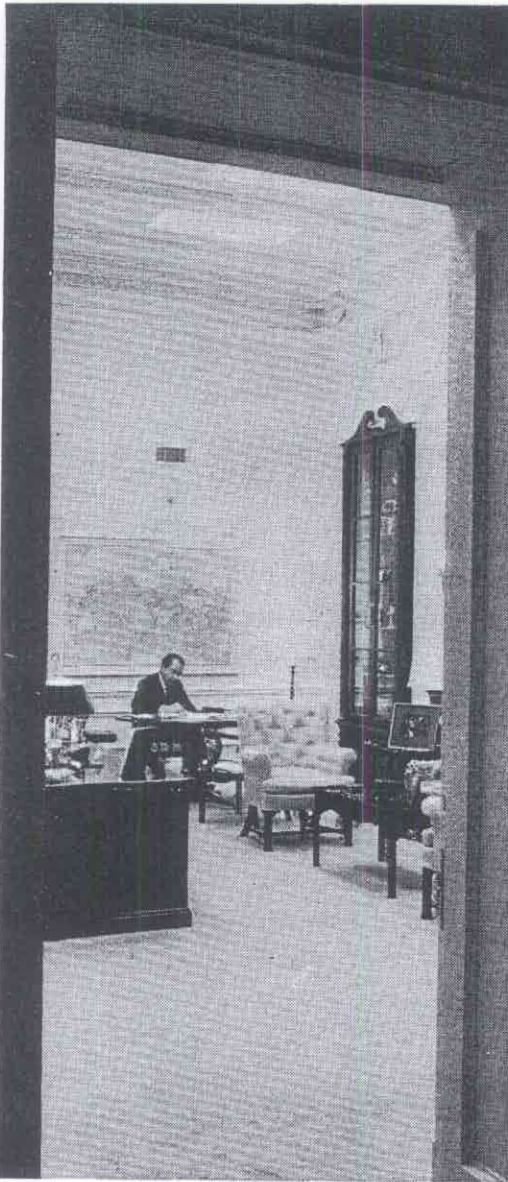
# Nixon's Continual Quest for Challenge

**T**HE ultimate political triumph—overwhelming re-election to the nation's highest office—was behind him. He had turned a mature 60 and his Inauguration this week for his new and final term was only days away. Yet the question lingered: What was success doing to Richard Nixon? The early evidence was disturbing. Silent, secretive and still suspicious, he seemed to be reaching, in a mood strangely compounded of euphoria and truculence, for greater power.

If that is indeed his intended course, a rare opportunity for more constructive leadership will have been ignored. The President who wins by a landslide and need never run again is in a unique position to use his general popularity to forge a new unity. Confident of his majority support, he can afford to become expansive and even treat his critics generously, appealing to higher motives. Yet all of Nixon's post-election actions suggest that he is determined to subdue his opponents, defy rather than reason with the Democratic Congress and run the Executive Branch by decree, brooking no contrary advice by strong-willed Cabinet subordinates. Although he has every reason to appreciate the vast public support at the polls, he acknowledges no obligation to explain his decisions to his constituents.

Much in the imperial Gaullist manner, Nixon granted a rare pre-Inauguration interview to the Associated Press's Saul Pett. The interview, which Nixon insisted be confined to questions about his mood and personality, proved to be revealing, especially about the President's post-election feelings. Said Nixon: "After four years of the most devastating attacks on TV, in much of the media, in editorials and columns, and then all that talk in the last two or three weeks of the campaign of the gap narrowing...and then whap! A landslide, 49 states, 61% of the vote!" He paused, then continued: "You'd think I'd be elated...Well, you're so drained emotionally at the end, you can't feel much. You'd think that just when the time comes you'd have your greatest day. But there is this letdown."

As Nixon perceives the presidency, as well as his whole career, that letdown must never be allowed to prevail. There must always be a new challenge; it is all a constant battle. "I believe in the battle," he said in the interview, "whether it's the battle of a campaign or the battle of this office, which is a continuing battle. It's always there wherever



**NIXON IN EXECUTIVE OFFICE BUILDING**  
*Fighting from the dressing rooms.*

you go. I, perhaps, carry it more than others because that's my way."

The interview may reinforce the analysis of Political Scientist James Barber, who has tagged Nixon an "active-negative" President, one who gains little satisfaction from his accomplishments, has "a persistent problem in managing his aggressive feelings" and is engaged in "a hard struggle to achieve and hold power." Others see Nixon as relishing the lonely role of a martyr who suffers constant criticism for doing what he believes to be best for society.

Nixon is so absorbed by this combative mood, and feels so proudly at home in it, that he carried the athletic metaphor to excess. "You can't be relaxed," he said. "The Redskins were relaxed in their last game of the regular

season, and they were flat, and they got clobbered. You must be up for the great events. Up but not uptight. Having done it so often, I perhaps have a finer-honed sense of this. But you can overdo it, overtrain and leave your fight in the dressing room."

If that reveals some of the Nixonian psychology as his second term begins, it does not reveal why he has been waging his battle from the secluded "dressing rooms" of Camp David, San Clemente, Key Biscayne and his Executive Office hideaway rather than in the public arena, where he would have to defend his policies. Reporters learned last week, for example, that Nixon ordered the massive B-52 bombing of urban targets in North Viet Nam without even consulting his Secretary of Defense or the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He apparently discussed it only with National Security Affairs Adviser Henry Kissinger—and many insiders are not at all sure that Kissinger liked the idea. There has not yet been any public explanation of that decision.

Much of Nixon's re-election campaign was a similar kind of shadowboxing. He kept his public appearances to a minimum—and, of course, avoided any personal confrontation with George McGovern. He has not held a full press conference since Oct. 5, a National Security Council meeting since last May, or even a Cabinet meeting in more than two months. Last week he revealed that he will not present his annual State of the Union message personally to the Congress, with which he is feuding—the first such omission by a President since 1956, when Dwight Eisenhower was recovering from a heart attack. Nixon's wholesale dismissal of various Administration officials similarly was accomplished through the indirect device of demanding the resignations of all appointees, then selecting whom to retain, rather than personally calling in the condemned to be fired.

Nixon's battle with the press is also a devious, and sometimes petty one. He retaliated against the long-critical *Washington Post* by granting an exclusive interview to its rival, the *Star-News*, and the *Post's* society reporter has been banned from covering White House social functions. Nixon's telecommunications director, Clay Whitehead, has attacked the "elitist gossip" in network news and proposed that local stations be held accountable at license-renewal time for any unbalanced news programming. Suddenly, three groups of Re-



publican businessmen, some with close ties to the Administration, have challenged the licenses of two Washington Post-owned TV stations in Florida.

The standard White House defense of all of the presidential actions in massively bombing North Viet Nam, seizing powers from Congress, shielding policymakers from public questioning, and trying to discourage press criticism is a simple one: Nixon was given a mandate in the election to conduct his office as he sees fit. Any critic who questions that tends to get a stock question in reply: "Who elected you?"

**Insecurity.** It could well be, of course, that a majority of Americans do support all of the recent Nixon actions, even if they have been given little explanation that would help them understand the rationale. Yet the non-committal Nixon campaign discussed none of those issues in the kind of detail that would make them part of a mandate. There especially was no mention of re-escalating the air war, an action that cost half a billion dollars, increased rather than reduced the number of U.S. prisoners of war and seriously depleted the B-52 deterrent force. On the contrary, millions of voters must have been swayed by the celebrated Kissinger claim that "peace is at hand." Nor, in returning a Democratic Congress, did the voters give Nixon any mandate to ignore that body. Cried a frustrated Republican Senator, Ohio's William Saxbe, last week: "Is there anything other than his own conscience that limits a President from any overt act? There's nobody that can touch him. No Security Council, no Joint Chiefs of Staff, no veto power—nothing."

However laudable some of Nixon's aims, his almost furtive maneuvering from behind the protective screen of aides and private redoubts violates the spirit, if not the letter, of constitutional checks and balances—and through his appointive power Nixon may soon have a compliant Supreme Court that could render the Judicial Branch ineffective too. His actions also suggest a personal insecurity, a potentially divisive need to create or magnify enemies so as to avoid his feared letdown.

Perhaps this is only a short-run effort to shake those post-election blues, a mood that will dissolve when a Viet Nam settlement is reached or a practical need to seek cooperation in resolving national problems becomes more urgent. This unpredictable President has shown an admirable facility for shifting ground rapidly once the need is clear, as he demonstrated again last week by announcing a surprising Phase III for the economy (see page 22). Indeed, there often seem to be two Nixons, the gut fighter whose basic passions emerge when his personal position appears secure, and the cerebral Nixon, who responds calmly to a public crisis. Yet this current isolation and belligerence are indulgences that neither he nor the nation can readily afford.

## THE PRESIDENCY/HUGH SIDNEY

## Leadership as an Art Form

ON the surface, Richard Nixon's White House is a visual and mechanical marvel. Inside, where the President reigns in solitary splendor, the marvel is the man himself. The President's post-election campaign of self-assertion rolls on unchecked. Last week there still was no explanation of just why he had unleashed the massive B-52 bombing attack on North Viet Nam. His fiat to reorganize the Government caught the men elevated to super positions unawares and stunned the strata of bureaucracy below. Congress looked on in ignorance like the rest of the country. All through the nation Nixon was gaining the reputation of some kind of grim fiscal reaper as the depth and extent of his budget slashes filtered out. The actions were often not as unsettling as the calculated silence and distance of the President, an unprecedented attitude in an office that, as Nixon himself has explained, depends on keeping the people informed.

There was drama of sorts, of course. Colonel Ralph Albertazzie soared over the Rockies on a test flight of the President's gleaming new Air Force One (Boeing 707-VC-137, over \$10 million). The plane soon will stand ready with its 16 private phone lines to sweep Nixon off on new adventures, while maintaining a flawless electronic umbilical cord to the Oval Office.

On the ground, Ron Ziegler, the youthful Press Secretary with the Hollywood profile and sideburns as hardy as Zoysia, was about to be made czar of the whole presidential image, a reward for his four flawless years of stewardship over the White House policy of non-information. He appeared in the press room in a suit of daring plaid and good-humoredly avoided answering questions on peace and bombing. He also showed up on a Virginia indoor tennis court in an "Izod outfit," the supreme quality in tennis attire. Coordinated Izods can cost \$50. His play was just as good.

Back at the White House, Nixon turned 60, and the wizards in the White House theater, without even straining, came up with *The Maltese Falcon*, a 1941 thriller just made for the President. It stars Humphrey Bogart, Peter Lorre and Sydney Greenstreet, and the good guys win. There was a new film too, this one put together by Paul Keyes, producer and writer for *Laugh-In*, and it showed ten minutes of football fumbles and flubs while Rowan and Martin played straight, as if they were the President phoning in strategy to the quarterback. They say Nixon broke up.

But behind the crisp smiles and beneath the beautiful precision there are moments, some say, when Nixon is troubled. A lot of people, including Congress, are angry. Something has gone awfully wrong in those parts of the presidency that can't be flown or worn or priced or charted. They are the invisible dimensions of the job: civility and consideration, understanding and willingness to listen, candor and the patience to explain.

There is a curious turn in Nixon's character that has baffled the experts before. In private the President is courteous and kindly. But often his tactics in the governmental game beyond the Oval Office are insensitive and brutal. It is a two-way street, to be sure, and the Congress and other folks have committed their sins. But the power is in the White House. It is the instrument of initiative. What Nixon wants for the nation is not all that much different from what most others would like. But the manner in which he has gone at it has them muttering about King Richard even in Washington's exclusive Metropolitan Club.

There is no doubt that Nixon believes we are in a sort of national crisis where he must end the war, by whatever means, and arrest the growth of monstrous Government, fed by the ineptitude and the casual spending of Congress. But putting the presidency all together, from Izod outfits to the Paris peace talks, is an art form, as Thomas Jefferson explained. Not so long ago they used to practice that art in this city. Harry Truman, with all his independence and gutsiness, went through exhaustive consultations with Pentagon and State Department officials, down to the third levels of authority, before he committed forces to Korea. Alben Barkley, the mellow Kentuckian Senator and Vice President, was heard to rip into a Democratic colleague who kept attacking Republican leaders. Night after night Sam Rayburn and Lyndon Johnson would go down to Eisenhower's White House breathing partisan fire, but something magic always happened when the old General uncorked the bourbon and told the Texans how much he admired them and needed them. Back on the Hill, those two passed the legislation that Ike wanted and a little extra for themselves. And it was about that time that Lyndon Johnson brought up some of that country wisdom of his. "After all," he would say, "he's the only President we've got." That is a far cry from what the men on the Hill are saying now about Richard Nixon.