

Quaker President Worries Quakers

By Drew Pearson
and Jack Anderson

Eight years ago the first Catholic ever elected President, John F. Kennedy, defeated Richard Nixon, a Quaker. There was a great deal of discussion at the time over religion. Now, as the man he defeated takes office, there is very little public discussion about religion.

But there is private discussion within the new President's own church as to the sincerity of his religious convictions.

Peace is the No 1 tenet of faith of the small religious group which fled from England in 1680 to found Pennsylvania. Since then, members of the Society of Friends have stood so fast on this issue that they are automatically given noncombat duty in time of war.

Nixon's views on peace have caused much discussion among his fellow Quakers.

On Florida Avenue in Washington there is a Friends "meetinghouse," where another Quaker President, Herbert Hoover, worshipped regularly. When Nixon was Vice President he is known to have attended Friends' meeting only once.

Rebuffs Quakers

There have been several attempts inside the Society of Friends to ascertain Nixon's

views on the essential problem of peace. Quakers recall that, as Vice President, Nixon was a known hawk, and in 1954 favored landing American troops in what was then French Indochina, to rescue the French. Recently, Nixon's views on Vietnam have been considered on the hawkish side, though during the campaign he said he had a formula for getting out of the war, not yet made public.

In order to get clarification of his position, the Friends Committee on National Legislation tried to arrange for a meeting of leading Quakers with Nixon. His appointments secretary, Dwight L. Chapin, replied that this was impossible. Again, well before the election, the Friends Journal, a Quaker magazine, wrote to Nixon about the possibility of an interview regarding his religious views and affiliations. Herbert G. Klein, then Nixon's press spokesman, replied:

"On behalf of Mr. Nixon I wish to thank you for your letter of Aug. 30. I believe you will find much of the background material you seek in 'The Real Nixon, an Intimate Biography' by Bela Kornitzer (Rand McNally and Co. 1960)."

Members of Nixon's religious faith, though not advertising it, persevered. On Nov. 16, the American Section of Friends World Committee, meeting in Wilmington, Ohio, decided to initiate a pastoral visit with the President before

his inauguration. A pastoral visit is a Quaker custom whereby a committee of his fellow members calls upon one of their faith who is about to undertake an important mission or who may have become wayward and need reform.

Accordingly, a committee was appointed by the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, considered the parent Quaker group in the United States, to seek a meeting with the new President in conjunction with the Friends World Committee and the Friends Meeting of Washington.

A letter was sent Nixon, Nov. 20, proposing a pastoral visit of five or six friends. It was suggested that the Quakers might find ways to strengthen and uphold the President-elect.

In reply, appointments secretary Chapin telegraphed, Dec. 6: "President-elect Richard Nixon regrets that present demands upon his time will not allow him to schedule the requested appointment with you. We thank you for your kind letter, and extend to you our best wishes."

Quaker "Concern"

Quakers are not unaware of the fact that his early political career was based upon support of the late Sen. Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin. As a member of the House Un-American Activities Committee, Nixon had even used "McCarthyite" tactics before Mc-

Carthy was elected to the Senate.

At the same time Nixon was using these tactics, Quakers were defending many of those attacked by Nixon and McCarthy. There was considerable Quaker sympathy for Alger Hiss, whose wife was a Quaker.

Most members of the Society of Friends believe in letting bygones be bygones, and hope that the new President has permanently abandoned political witchhunting.

More important, they are concerned over their fellow member's current outlook on peace. Will he accept the challenge which President Johnson gave him in the State of the Union Message regarding peace? Will he continue Mr. Johnson's talks with the Soviet Union seeking long-range peace? Will he push the Paris start toward an early peace in Vietnam?

These are "concerns" which Quaker leaders had hoped to discuss with their fellow member before he entered the White House. They will be watching—as will be most Americans—to see how he acts, when he is President, regarding his most important tenet of the Quaker faith.

Drew Pearson will predict how Gov. Hickel will work out as Secretary of the Interior in his broadcast with Jack Anderson over Radio WTOP today at 9:40 a.m. and 6:40 p.m.