

Deciding on the Nixon Treatment

By Drew Pearson

Several of my editors have been complaining that I should have written the account of Mr. Nixon's psychotherapeutic treatments in the column before the election, not given it after the election at the National Press Club.

Under the circumstances, I owe them and my readers an explanation. It is true as some have pointed out that if this had been published before the election the outcome might have been different. The problem of news confirmation and its timing is exactly what I was trying to illustrate at the Press Club luncheon.

The Press Club, of which I have been a 40-year member, was kind enough to give a luncheon in my honor. This I appreciated, especially because I have on two occasions caused headaches to my fellow members — once when I helped block Benito Mussolini's honorary membership in the club during the heyday of the Italian dictator; later when I proposed the first Negro in club history for membership.

During the question-and-answer period, I was asked the criterion for putting news in the column. Was it "the inane," "the spectacular," "the unconfirmed," or what? I replied that naturally I selected "the inane and spectacular."

Then, as a serious illustration of the problem of a columnist, I told of the report that kept cropping up during the

campaign that Mr. Nixon when Vice President had undergone psychiatric treatments, and that finally I had obtained the name of his doctor, Arnold Hutschnecker of New York, and had called him at about 9 a.m., Oct. 31.

I now find upon checking my calendar that I called him on Oct. 29 and that the time was nearer 10 a.m. I told the doctor I understood he had been giving Mr. Nixon psychiatric treatments and had been concerned as to whether his former patient was the right man to have his finger on the nuclear trigger.

Doctor Confirms

Dr. Hutschnecker confirmed that he had treated Mr. Nixon, said that it was a delicate matter and that he was reluctant to talk about it. He had a patient with him, he said, and asked me to call back at 4 p.m.

I immediately asked Jack Anderson, my associate, to telephone Nixon's communications director, Herbert Klein, tell him that we had information that Nixon had received psychiatric treatments from Dr. Hutschnecker and ask for comment. Klein flatly denied that Nixon had ever consulted a psychiatrist. At 4 p.m. I telephoned Dr. Hutschnecker a second time. This time he stated that he had treated Mr. Nixon for a brief period when he was Vice President but only for problems involving internal medicine.

In view of Dr. Hutschnecker's statement, I killed the story I had written on Mr. Nixon. It seemed to me strange that Nixon should go all the way to New York to consult a well-known Park Avenue psychotherapy specialist concerning his internal medical problems when some of the best internists in the United States are located at Walter Reed Hospital and Bethesda Naval Hospital where Nixon as Vice President could have had their services on the cuff.

Subsequently, and toward the very end of the campaign, further information came to my attention that Dr. Hutschnecker had told friends he received a telephone call from Nixon's office between my morning call and my 4 p.m. call on Oct. 29, which had led him to change his earlier statement to me.

Nixon Nerves

We also learned from one of Dr. Hutschnecker's friends that he had definitely been concerned about Nixon's reaction under pressure; second, that he had received a call from Mr. Nixon in 1960 requesting him to come to Washington for consultation. According to the dates given me by Hutschnecker, this was long after he claimed to have stopped treating Nixon.

In addition, I was told by Dr. Hutschnecker's receptionist that she had handled a call from Nixon as late as 1961.

She informed me that at that time, and for three preceding summers when she had been Dr. Hutschnecker's receptionist, his patients had been given 50-minute appointments each, which indicated psychotherapeutic treatment. Furthermore, Hutschnecker's book, "The Will to Live," on psychotherapeutic problems, was copyrighted in 1951; yet the doctor says he was practicing internal medicine in regard to Nixon in 1953-56.

Some of this information, I admit, was learned during the closing days of the campaign, and I could have published it at the last minute. But, as I explained at the Press Club luncheon, I decided it was unfair to use it so late.

However, now that the hectic rush of the campaign is over, I continue to be convinced that a President or candidate for President should make all the facts public regarding his health, mental or otherwise, just as Dwight D. Eisenhower did after his heart attack; and that there should be no covering up of the facts or blatant denials such as issued by Ron Ziegler, Nixon's press secretary.

Personally I sympathize with Nixon and the mental strain under which he has labored. He deserves credit for getting help with his problems of stress and strain.

Jack Anderson will report on scandals in the George Wallace organization of Alabama in The Washington Merry-Go-Round broadcast over radio WTOG today, 9:40 a.m. and 6:40 p.m.
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