

LETTER FROM MIAMI BEACH

THE morning after his arrival here, Richard M. Nixon called a press conference in his headquarters hotel, the Hilton Plaza, and declared, with no more than his customary portentousness, "This is now one country, despite what anyone says." Among those who had responded to his summons were several people who felt there was evidence very close at hand that the radical John Dos Passos of some thirty or more years ago had summed it up quite accurately when he wrote, "All right, then, we are two nations." The Southern Christian Leadership Conference was picketing the main Convention hotel, the Fontainebleau, about two dollars south of the Hilton Plaza in moderate traffic, and there were already rumors that violence could be expected across Biscayne Bay, in Miami proper. But Nixon, who knows as well as anyone else that the country he hopes to lead is in big trouble, was not pronouncing any judgment on the present most uncertain state of the Union. He was thinking for the moment of the triumphs of American technology in "communications" and of what this implied for an ambitious politician like himself. The fifty states are certainly "united"—in the sense that they are held together by wires of one sort or another. "You cannot," Nixon went on, "have all of these television cameras and all of you ladies and gentlemen from the newspapers reporting on a national basis what the candidate says in one part of the country and then go to another part of the country and take another view."

It was scarcely a deep or novel thought; Nixon has uttered it time and again, as have most other politicians of his generation. All it means is that crime—of a certain sort, anyway—doesn't pay any longer. What made his repetition of it on this particular morning somewhat arresting was the fact that he didn't bear it in mind when his meeting with the press came to an end. Either that or he took leave of his senses and became possessed of the notion that he could beat the electronics revolution all by

himself. Whatever the explanation, the candidate, who was a day and a half later to become the nominee, took off not for another part of the country but for another part of his own hotel and began saying things that he certainly would not have said within the hearing of John Lindsay or Walter Lippmann or in the presence of anyone with a tape recorder. Since the occasion was a closed caucus of delegates from Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina, Arkansas, Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia, and the District of Columbia, neither Lindsay nor Lippmann was there, and it is to be presumed that some competent technicians had assured the Nixon staff that the room was not bugged. However, someone—maybe an anti-Nixon delegate, perhaps a maid serving coffee, or possibly a gate-crasher from the enterprising *Miami Herald*—got into the room with a tape recorder and shortly thereafter provided the *Herald*, which published it the next morning, with a transcript of everything Nixon had said. As a document, it influenced the Convention not at all; it could have been read from the platform of Convention Hall and would probably have produced cheers not only from the Southern delegations but from those of many other parts of the country. But it was a gift of some worth to needy Demo-

crats in the North and a severe blow to many Republicans who will be soliciting Nixon votes among Democrats and independents outside the South. Some of what Nixon said to the Southern delegates he repeated in his acceptance speech last night—that the country needed an Attorney General with views dissimilar to those of Ramsey Clark, that the courts had gone too far in protecting defendants, that he proposed to increase American military power, and so forth—but he told the Southerners much that he has not yet told the country. He said, for example, that he was himself opposed to federal open-housing legislation but that, strictly in the interests of Party unity, he had encouraged Republicans to go along with it "to get it out of the way." "I made that hard decision," he told the caucus he believed was closed, "[because] I think it vitally important to get the civil-rights and open-housing issues out of our sight so we didn't have a split Party over the platform when we came down here to Miami Beach." He said that his own feeling was that housing regulations, "just like gun control, ought to be handled at the state level," and that he still hoped that "now"—meaning, presumably, when he is President—"we can move in another direction." He said that he was flatly against the bussing of schoolchildren, and continued, "I know there are a lot of smart judges, believe me—



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and probably a lot smarter than I am—but I don't think there is any court in this country . . . including the Supreme Court of the United States, that is qualified to be a local school district and to make the decision as your local school board." He said he would keep his Attorney General on a short leash—"I personally am going to take charge of this because I am a lawyer"—and promised to stamp out pornography as well as drugs, rioting, and looting.

In his acceptance speech and in other recent statements on foreign policy, Nixon has declared himself an apostle of negotiation and—apart from an insistence on maintaining nuclear superiority (whatever meaning such a concept may have in 1968)—of military restraint. He has acknowledged that "world Communism" is no longer what it was, or what he thought and said it was until earlier this year, and he has promised "a reappraisal of America's policies in every section of the world . . . [beginning] with Vietnam." But in his appearance before the Southern delegates he managed to combine the worst of Dean Acheson's thinking with the worst of John Foster Dulles's rhetoric. The Barry Goldwater of 1964—a very different character from the one who appeared here on opening night and charmed his former detractors far more than his former supporters—never, if memory serves, spoke more threateningly than Nixon did when he thought he was all alone with a bunch of friendly Southerners. Nixon did not, to be sure, repudiate negotiations—no one does that nowadays—but the clear implication of his talk was a willingness to force Hanoi's acceptance of the American position by threats of escalation to the point of using nuclear weapons and stirring up trouble in other parts of the world. He began with a bit of dubious history: "I'll tell you how Korea was ended. We got in there and had this messy war on our hands. Eisenhower let the word go out—let the word go out diplomatically—to the Chinese and the North [Koreans] that he would not tolerate this continual ground war of attrition. And within a matter of months they negotiated." (There has been a good deal of recent disagreement among historians over Korea, but no one has denied that the negotiations were taking place before Eisenhower was inaugurated or that Truman had from time to time reminded our adversaries of our possession of nuclear weapons. Nor is there disagreement over the general proposition that

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we got out when we did because Eisenhower—for a number of reasons having mostly to do with the domestic policies of the period—was able to accept a settlement that Truman could have accepted only if he had been willing to be impeached for doing so.) But Nixon went much further. In the Fat Chance Department, he promised a “sharing of the load” in Vietnam with “other nations”—the only one of which he named was South Vietnam—and then went on to say that he would approach Moscow with a series of threats not to North Vietnam but to the Soviet Union itself. “You’ve got to broaden the canvas,” he said, “because in Vietnam they [the Soviet leaders] have no reason to end that war. It is hurting us more than it is them.” Then he described his “canvas”: “We could put the Mideast on the fire. And you could put Eastern Europe on the fire. And you could put trade on the fire. And you put the power bombs on the fire. . . . I give you this only to indicate the kind of approach I would have.”

There may have been a few hawkish and gullible souls among the Southern delegates who actually believed that Nixon was accurately describing the “kind of approach” he would take, and there are indubitably a large number of Democratic politicians who in the awful autumn that lies ahead will use the transcript the *Miami Herald* made public to persuade voters that Richard Nixon is a more dangerous “brinksman” than Dulles ever was. It is important to note, however, that although there were a good many people here who had been genuinely alarmed when Dulles and the old-model Goldwater talked this way, these same people merely shrugged when they read the *Herald* story. Dulles was a moralist, approximately eighty-six proof most of the time, and that other Goldwater was a bit of a moralist and a bit of a sport. Neither was really a politician. Certain judgments, some by no means unflattering, may be made on Nixon’s character, but, whatever the quality of his personal and political morality, he has never been and has rarely pretended to be a moralist. Nixon is a politician—a politician of a characteristically, though not exclusively, American type. At the start, he was a rather mediocre one who advanced more by good luck than by good management, but in recent years, with very little luck and much industry, he has developed the skills of his trade to the point at which in many areas favorable comparisons may be made with such other

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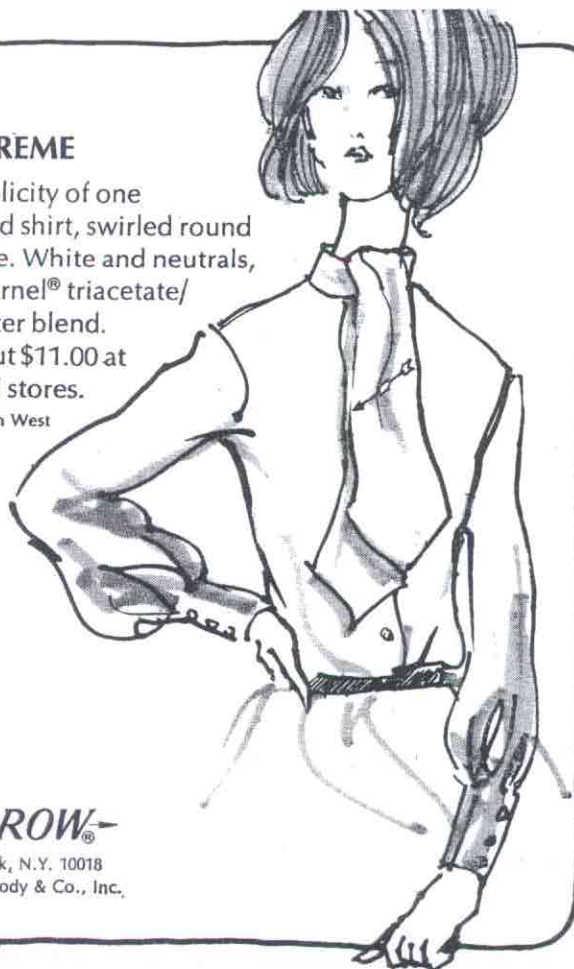
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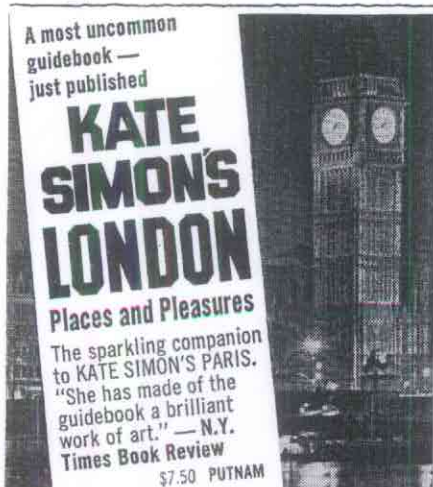
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professionals as Franklin D. Roosevelt, Lyndon B. Johnson, and Charles A. J. M. de Gaulle, whose mystique of "distance" Nixon is said to have studied carefully and to have put to excellent use by virtually zippering his mouth in the last several weeks of the campaign now closed. Although it was surely a miscalculation (or aberration) of sorts that led him to talk as he did, and when and where he did, before the Southerners, it was one of the very few mistakes of the kind that he has made in the last two years, and if he happens to lose the election it will not be because he spoke a few unguarded words here. Hubert Humphrey or, more plausibly, Eugene McCarthy could score a number of points with them, but if either did so he would be doing it in the knowledge that Nixon wasn't really talking about how he thought the country or the world should be run but—no doubt more damning in the minds of true moralists—was simply trying to get a nomination without splitting the Party.

So widespread was this view of the matter that even after the *Herald* story had appeared many people who are regarded as perceptive observers of political affairs were unshaken in their belief that Nixon, once nominated, would "balance the ticket" with Mayor Lindsay, Senator Percy, or some other Northern liberal. When it was objected that, in the light of Nixon's having assured the Southerners that he planned to choose a man who would "be acceptable to all sections of the country," this would involve a double cross of rather towering proportions, the answer was "That was yesterday." "Yesterday" Nixon had a problem that "tomorrow" he would no longer have. He needed

the South to get the nomination. The work cut out for him on Tuesday was to keep Senator Thurmond from being taken into camp by Ronald Reagan. But who would need Strom Thurmond after Thursday? Once the nomination was his, Nixon could forget about Strom Thurmond, who has made defection something of a career and may end up backing George Wallace anyway, and, for that matter, he could forget about the whole South, whose electoral vote can safely be lost provided one carries most of the rest of the country. *Ergo*, the work cut out for Nixon on Thurs-

day was to turn his back on the South and start thinking about getting himself elected. Could Nixon be that cynical? Sure, but "political" was the more appropriate word. But how about Lindsay? How about Percy? Could *they* be that cynical—or, if one must, that political? Since Nixon never approached Lindsay or Percy with any offers, before or after his nomination, his admirers are free to infer, perhaps accurately, that he could not have been that cynical. It would be rash at this stage to draw the same inferences about Lindsay or Percy. As far as anyone here could learn, either one would have accepted the nomination on Thursday. In politics, there can be many synonyms for cynicism—"realism," "responsibility," "victory," "party unity," even "national unity." And only the most self-righteous can assert that these are dishonestly employed. Every public man has known moments when such abstractions became heavy with flesh and he felt compelled to rise above such other abstractions as "candor," "consistency," and even "honor."

In the end, Nixon did turn his back partway on the South—perhaps forty-five degrees from the viewpoint of the Virginia delegation, ninety from that of Georgia or Alabama. His choice of the Governor of Maryland did not lead any Southern delegates to defect, though it may do so yet—when they

get home and hear what George Wallace has to say about it. Nor has it thus far led to any defections outside the South. Senator Brooke, of Massachusetts, though he joined last night's mini-revolt against Spiro T. Agnew, had several hours earlier told the press that he intended to keep the faith in November.

Republican defections there are bound to be, North and South, but they are not expected to be numerous, and fewer will be brought about by the nomination of Agnew than by the nomination of Nixon himself. Though Agnew is no one's beau ideal of a candidate, his selection undoubtedly did more for unity in the Party as a whole than would have the choice of almost anyone else who was reported to be under consideration by Nixon and his advisers. But there are distinctions—some of them trivial, some important—to be made between the Party as a whole



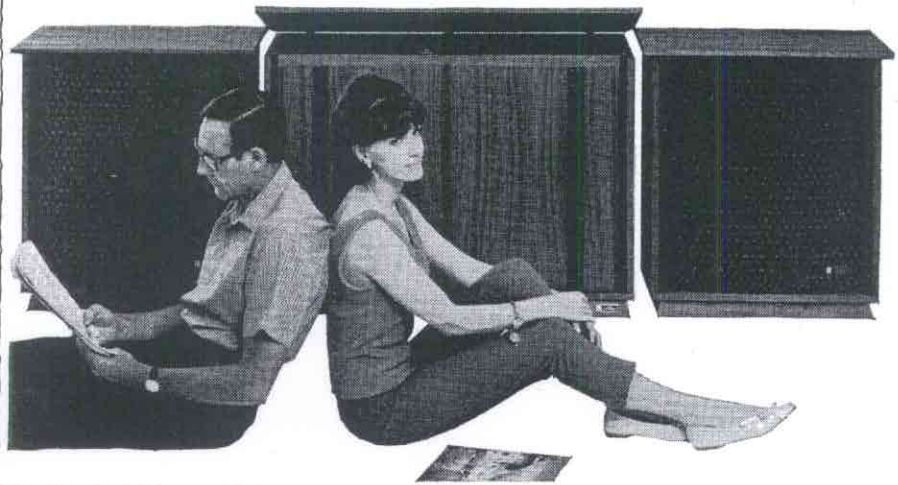
and the Convention delegates. Among the latter, most of those who were willing to make their views known to outsiders (and willingness was more often the rule than reticence) would vastly have preferred Ronald Reagan to Agnew; in fact, most would have preferred Reagan to Nixon, which is, of course, why Nixon had to rattle the missiles and denounce gun control, the Supreme Court, and pornography—this last in a city that could be described as pornography in 3-D and Living Color. When one considers the platform, the candidates, and most of what the candidates have been saying lately, it is fairly clear that this Convention accepted policies and spokesmen measurably to the left of those they accepted in their last several Conventions. Nixon is to the left of his former self, of the former Goldwater, and of the former and present Eisenhower. Spiro Agnew is to the left of the former William Miller and of the former Nixon. All this the delegates accepted, but they accepted it in much the spirit of those Republicans who assembled in Chicago sixteen years ago aching to vote for Robert A. Taft, only to find themselves sweet-talked or strong-armed into voting for Eisenhower. Here what sweet-talking and strong-arming there have been came mainly from the losers—the Reagan forces being long on talk, the Rockefeller forces long on the muscle known as money. Nixon locked it up long ago with superior organization and appeals to regularity and gratitude, which may be taken as heartening evidence that glamour and money still aren't quite everything in this society. Nixon is better known to these delegates and probably better liked by them than was the case with Eisenhower in 1952, but anyone who lingered awhile in the hotel lobbies or circled the floor in Convention Hall found it hard to avoid the conclusion that this time the ache was for Reagan. The delegates gave Nixon and Agnew the nominations, but they shook the rafters only when they were being addressed by Reagan, by John Wayne, and by Max Rafferty, the right-wing theoretician of pedagogy who will probably be United States Senator from California next year. (The biggest hand of all went to Goldwater when he first appeared on the rostrum. But the enthusiasm waned when he insisted that he was "not here to gripe about yesterday," and said that "hate of race is wrong, dead wrong, sick, and wrong, wrong, wrong.") The Republican Party of 1968—at least as represented in conven-

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tion here—is a party chastened by defeat and appreciative of the uses of unity, but it seems otherwise little changed.

There is more than the evidence of one's eyes and ears to confirm this judgment. The Ripon Society, an organization made up largely of Republicans in the major academic communities, has performed a service to the Party and to the public by publishing a heavy and tedious but rewarding volume entitled "Who's Who at Convention '68." It contains brief biographies of most of the delegates, and these cannot be faulted by references to the liberal proclivities of the Society, since the delegates themselves provided the data. Reading the biographies, one could get the feeling that it is precisely people of this kind to whom the country's future could and should be entrusted. The level of education is extraordinarily high. Practically all—ninety-six per cent, according to the editors—have completed high school, and an astonishing number—forty-three per cent—hold advanced degrees. Scarcely one has failed to acknowledge some civic duty other than participating in Republican politics. Nearly all have achieved the kind of success that is not only honored by the American middle class but sought for others by spokesmen for the poor and by the militant proponents of the "black capitalism" whose doctrines both Richard Nixon and the leaders of CORE find so appealing. But this is what the Republican Party—or at least its leadership—has been during most of this century, and most of the time it has produced candidates and policies of a sort that seemed more appropriate to the last century. In a country that is now less than thirty-five per cent white Anglo-Saxon Protestant, these delegates, keeping body and soul together on kosher food, were seventy-five per cent WASP.

There were twenty-six Negro delegates in a total of thirteen hundred and thirty-three. The number who had served in the Air Force far exceeded those who had ever belonged to a labor union. Membership in the Chamber of Commerce ran to forty-six per cent, in the American Legion to thirty per cent. No figures were compiled by the Ripon Society on the ages of the delegates, but from what one could see and from the rough calculations a reader could make, it appeared fairly clear that those from the South averaged out at somewhere in the middle thirties and those from outside the South in the middle fifties.

It is easy to say—and many are now saying it—that while Nixon has done a technically laudable job of unifying this Party, he and the delegates have at the same time unified the Democrats. This is what most liberal Republicans, most Democrats, and a majority of political correspondents appear to believe, and events may prove them right—despite all the evidence that at this moment the Democrats are at least as seriously divided as the Republicans were four years ago. There is no doubt that Nixon over the years has generated more personal antipathy than almost any other figure of his time, with the possible exception of Lyndon Johnson. But while Johnson is despised by many, he continues to command respect and admiration of a kind that Nixon enjoys only among middle-echelon leaders in his own party. Johnson still has it where it counts for much—in the ghettos, in the labor unions, and among millions who have yet to be persuaded that the war in Vietnam is anything but a just and honorable crusade. (Opinion polls taken shortly before this Convention showed that Johnson, if he were to run this year, could defeat any Republican without great difficulty.) Nixon lacks the verve of Nelson Rockefeller and Hubert Humphrey, the studied but nevertheless winning ease and casualness of Ronald Reagan, and the wit and the modesty (some would say the bogus modesty) of Eugene McCarthy. On television, he is better than he used to be but still barely adequate. And on the record, of course, he is a loser. These assessments buoy the morale of

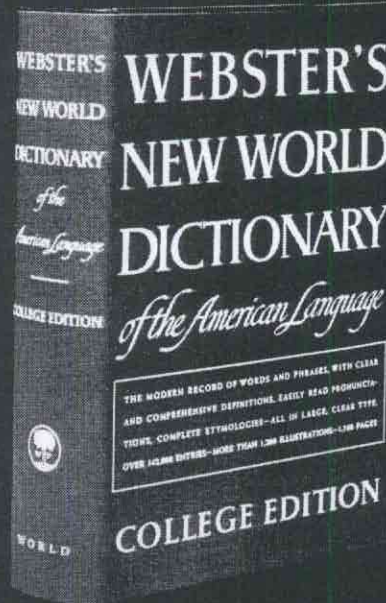


those Democrats who have any morale left, and lead many respected journalists to predict with confidence that Nixon doesn't stand a chance. However, the impressive thing about Nixon is that, with all these handicaps, which have been nationally advertised for years, he has shown an extraordinary gift for survival. In 1960, when he was a far less polished performer than he is today, he came very close to defeating an opponent who had the nomination of the majority party, a great deal of money, and a charm that is not to be counted among the assets of anyone in the running today. It can be argued that in 1960 Nixon had the backing of an administration in power, and one that had lost little of its popularity, whereas in 1968 he lacks this formidable advantage. However, it seems unlikely that in 1968 the record

of the incumbent administration will be of great help to the Democratic candidate, and it is not inconceivable that the present administration will decline to give even *pro-forma* support to the Party's ticket. It has just been announced that Nixon and Agnew will spend part of the weekend at the L.B.J. ranch for a "briefing" on Vietnam. There are some who would not be at all surprised to see Lyndon Johnson support Nixon and Agnew if the Democratic National Convention repudiates his Vietnam policy. Nor is it inconceivable that both Republicans and Democrats would choose to decline Administration support.

It is becoming clearer with each passing day that the principal issue this year will be, in a word, race. Nixon and Agnew may insist that they are not using a "code" term for race when they speak of "law and order," but race is what voters, Negro and white, understand it to mean, just as most of them did in 1964. There were several other issues of importance four years ago, but all analyses of Johnson's victory and Goldwater's defeat seemed to show a sizable majority of whites ready to accept integration as a goal and to regard as alarmist that year's Republican propaganda about "crime in the streets." In white America, that mood has clearly passed. Bigotry of the kind represented by Strom Thurmond and George Wallace may not have increased, but fear of the consequences of integration or of substantial steps toward that seemingly unattainable goal has grown enormously. The assassination of Martin Luther King generated a certain amount of white guilt and helped in the fight for federal open housing, but even last April, according to the Harris Poll, "sixty-nine per cent of all whites... think that Negroes are asking for more than they are ready to absorb"—certainly a code phrase meaning what whites are ready to absorb. To say that any single issue is the "principal" one in any given campaign is not, to be sure, to say that it will determine the outcome of the election. Not everyone votes his principles or his prejudices. Party and regional loyalties are not altogether dead. Moreover, the tendency in our system is for the candidates to dispose of issues by saying the same things about them; Hubert Humphrey, if he is nominated, may find himself attempting to close the law-and-order gap between himself and Nixon merely to hold on to the Democratic vote in those industrial districts in which racial fear has been running especially high. But if this

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issue is as important as many observers now believe it to be, Nixon will have to go further in appealing to fear and bigotry than any Democrat could possibly go, for he, far more than the Democratic candidate, will have to hold the ranks against Wallace, who could throw the election either to the Democrats or into the House of Representatives. Nixon might find this distasteful, as might some of those who nominated him here, but there is nothing in his record to suggest that he would not do it, and there is nothing in the ugly facts of American life today to show that it would necessarily be a losing strategy.

IT has long been customary for losers to complain about the convention system as inefficient, wasteful, inequitable, and at times—as in such antics as the nominations of Harold Stassen and Senator Hiram Fong, of Hawaii—ridiculous. This year, for a change, the major losers, Governors Reagan and Rockefeller, had no complaints and, in fact, were quick to assure the delegates that they considered they had been given a fair shake, and that they were happy to support decisions of what had been an "open Convention." It was about as open as national Conventions generally are, which means that just about anyone was free to speak his piece and that it would survive an investigation by the Honest Ballot Association. But if Reagan and Rockefeller went away satisfied, practically no one else did. Hundreds of delegates and correspondents found it "boring"—an almost universal judgment—and productive of nothing good that could not have been achieved in some other fashion. The proceedings in the hall were boring indeed, though there was something to be said for the sideshows inside and outside the hotels. The S.C.L.C. picket line around the Fontainebleau was a display of dignity that somewhat relieved the despair one felt inside the hotel, where the Reverend Dr. Billy Graham could be seen striding about in the kind of pastel sports outfits that one somehow associates with Richard Burton in Acapulco, and where H. L. Hunt, the oil and propaganda tycoon, was, from early morning until early evening, passing out his books and his eccentric opinions to anyone who would listen. (At one point, some Soviet journalists listened avidly, their tape-recording systems A-O.K., as Hunt explained to them that Communists had murdered Senator Kennedy, after which one of them said, "Mr. Hunt, this is historic occasion. First time you have been interviewed by Soviet newsmen.")

Meanwhile, just across the street, the Governor of Florida, wearing a jacket that appeared to have been made of pure orange peel, held what may have been the world's first political press conference to take place aboard a yacht at its mooring; most correspondents left because they could not hear the Governor above the roar of his air-conditioner, and felt they had neglected no duty of importance when those who remained later informed them that the Governor had said nothing anyway. Still and all, there seems to be a widespread feeling, among participants in both parties and among Americans generally, that the convention system is passé and, in some undefined and probably undefinable way, undemocratic. If this has become just about everyone's conviction, it represents a major change in American thinking. For as long as the system has existed—about a hundred and fifty years now—democratic politicians and democratic theoreticians have been in agreement on (to use a term modish among both groups) its viability as an instrument of democratic politics. In 1940, when no one was talking much about "participatory democracy," Pendleton Herring, one of the noblest of the theoreticians, wrote, "Our conventions are a romantic and flamboyant attempt to get a high degree of popular participation in the high drama of democracy." And only five years ago another academic of distinction, the late V. O. Key, Jr., wrote, "When the national convention was contrived to designate presidential nominees, viable national parties came into existence." No one made any such observations here this week, and no doubt most of the country agreed with David Brinkley, an arbiter of taste and a power in the land, when he called his labors to an end by offering the judgment that this Convention, like all others he had labored through, was a "mess." He did not explain how he thought messiness and democracy were incompatible.

—RICHARD H. ROVERE

The rising use of harmful drugs by teenage children has unquestionably become one of American society's big headaches.

But three professionals who deal with youth and their problems say that the major teenage corrupter in Boston and probably around the country is still alcohol—and by a wide gin.

—*Boston Herald Traveler*.

With a twist of lemon.