



*Art Buchwald*

## Old Nixon Comes Out of the Closet

THE QUESTION that still has Washington puzzled is: When did President Nixon change his mind about appointing Dr. John H. Knowles to a post in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW)? At the beginning of the week it looked like a sure thing that Dr. Knowles was in. But at the end of the week the appointment was shot out of the water.

I can now report what happened.

Wednesday night, the New Nixon was getting ready to go to bed when the Old Nixon stepped out of the closet.

The New Nixon was startled. "What are you doing here? I thought you had gone long ago."

"I've just been hiding in the closet, waiting for a chance to get out."

"Well, what do you want?" the New Nixon asked nervously.

"I don't want you to appoint Dr. Knowles to the Department of Health, Education and Welfare."

"IT'S TOO LATE," the New Nixon said. "I've already told Bob Finch he could have any man he wanted in the job."

"You fool," the Old Nixon snarled. "Do you want to alienate every conservative Republican in the country?"

"I don't care," the New Nixon said indignantly. "Bob Finch is my friend. Do you know what I'd do to him if I reneged on Knowles' appointment now?"

"Dicky boy," the Old Nixon said, "You can't let loyalty or friendship get into this. You have to think of your legislative program. You need all the conservative votes you can get, and you're not going to get them by putting Knowles into HEW."

"It's too late," the New

Nixon cried. "Finch has practically announced Knowles' appointment and I said I'd back anybody he wanted. I can't doublecross him just to get the surtax and ABM programs through."

"Why not?" the Old Nixon shouted.

"Please lower your voice," the New Nixon said.

"LISTEN TO ME. This is a question of priorities," the Old Nixon said. "You're going to have to make up your mind which comes first, the country or the Republican Party."

"I wish you hadn't put it in those terms."

The Old Nixon said, "The American Medical Association is the biggest contributor to the Republican Party. They've already said they won't come through with the money in 1970 if you put Knowles in. Isn't that enough for you?"

"Oh, this is terrible," the New Nixon said. "Why do all these decisions come to me?"

"Because you're the President of the United States, and you have to call them as Senator Everett Dirksen sees them."

"But what about my image? Ever since the election, people think I'm fair, honest, loyal and a middle-of-the-roader. How can I change that image overnight?"

"Try," the Old Nixon said.

"Okay. I'll call Finch now and break the news to him."

"Good boy, Dick. I knew you'd see it my way. But whatever you do, keep my name out of it."

"Where are you going?"

"Back into the closet," the Old Nixon said. "But I'll be here whenever you need me."

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