

Nixon News Sessions Well Rehearsed

By Jack Anderson

The public is supposed to think that presidential press conferences are spontaneous and that President Nixon is as sharp as he appears fending off all those clamoring reporters.

His press conferences, in fact, are prepared and produced with all the showmanship of a Broadway performance.

Hundreds of people put together the answers that the President clicks off. The facts pour in from the various government departments to two White House teams. One prepares foreign policy answers under the guidance of adviser Henry Kissinger. The other works on domestic answers under the supervision of aide Pat Buchanan.

To guide them, communications czar Herb Klein and press secretary Ron Ziegler submit a list of questions the press is likely to ask.

The two teams boil their material down, put it into question-and-answer form and stuff the sheets into two loose-leaf notebooks. The President studies the research and rehearses his act for as many as five days.

In search of catchy phrases, he makes notes and underlines material. Updated information, of course, is continuously submitted to him.

90 Per Cent Proof

White House aides boast they are frequently able to anticipate reporters' questions with 90 per cent accuracy. On occasion, they have solicited the help of friendly newsmen to make sure that some of the right questions get asked.

Just before he goes on the air, the President shaves and jogs in place to bring color to his cheeks. A technician slaps a light coat of makeup on the presidential puss. Then Mr. Nixon is ready for his "spontaneous" sparring session with the press.

The reporters, on the other hand, rarely spend more than a few minutes in preparation. They tend to ask lengthy questions and occupy themselves trying to outmaneuver each other for the floor.

The seats directly in front of Mr. Nixon are reserved for the regular White House press corps. Before the conference begins, a seating chart of this section is made available for the President to study.

The "regulars" are often called upon for questions. They depend upon White House goodwill for stories, and they usually treat Mr. Nixon gently. Often they toss up a nice, easy "softball," then

the President knocks it out of the park.

Washington Whirl

NASSIKAS PAPERS—The Federal Power Commission has finally made public the confidential Nassikas papers, which show how Chairman John Nassikas sought to jack up gas rates by \$4 billion. He suppressed studies challenging the natural gas industry's data and accepted the gas magnates' word that the \$4 billion increase was necessary. However, we got hold of the suppressed documents and published the facts he had tried to hide. Citing our stories, the pro-consumer American Public Gas Association demanded that the FPC make the complete Nassikas papers public. The commission complied, putting both our stories and the confidential memos into the public record.

HARTKE'S HYPOCRISY—Sen. Vanne Hartke (D-Ind.) complained at a recent Senate hearing: "There is not one black member of the Interstate Commerce Commission." For the record, Hartke has a personal staff—both in Washington and Indianapolis—of some 30 persons. Not one is black.

PUBLIC WORKS—The AFL-CIO is lobbying on Capitol Hill for votes to override President Nixon's veto of the public works bill. In a private

letter to Senate Public Works Chairman Jennings Randolph (D-W.Va.) the labor organization pointed out that work could be started on 3,000 water and sewer projects and 1,900 hospital and health centers. These projects, the letter contends, would create about 170,000 urgently needed jobs and generate enough additional economic activity to produce as many as 450,000 job opportunities.

BUDDY SYSTEM—The House Manpower Subcommittee is investigating how military retirees use the buddy system to hustle civil service jobs. The Dual Compensation Act permits retired military personnel to "double dip" from the Treasury by collecting both their pension plus pay from a second-career federal job. This is a privilege not open to other federal retirees. Subcommittee investigators have learned that military retirees on the federal payroll tip off their buddies, who plan to retire from the armed forces, about civil service job openings. Subcommittee sources estimate that 100,000 retired military men now hold civilian jobs on the federal payroll, that the civilian work force in some agencies is rapidly being militarized.