



William S. White

MAILED
15 NOV 71

Nixon Starts '72 Campaign

PRESIDENT Nixon's decision to announce now his candidacy for re-election without quite doing it in so many words—specifically through his addresses to Republican fund-raising dinners in New York and Chicago—might fairly be called operation fly swat.

For one of its principal motives, quite apart from picking up some \$5 million for the GOP for use in the 1972 elections, was to smash down any possibility that the challenge to his renomination to be offered in the New Hampshire primary of March by Rep. Paul McCloskey Jr. of California might produce any kind of substantial vote for this symbol of the tiny far-out "antiwar" bloc within the party.

This is not to say that McCloskey is being treated by the White House as any real threat. The idea behind the President's extraordinarily early proclamation of his own candidacy was simply to impress upon all and sundry in the GOP that a man named Nixon wished all and sundry to know that even now was not too soon for all good Republicans to come to the aid of their party.

"We figured," says one Nixon adviser, "that what the hell, McCloskey for all we know might get some kind of a vote up there in New Hampshire and we thought it would do no harm to try to hold that vote closer to, say, 8 per cent than to 25."

THE NIXON PEOPLE deny that what happened in New Hampshire in the 1968 Democratic primary to Sen. Eugene McCarthy, who ran up a substantial minority backing as an all-out "peace" candidate, had any connection with their calculations. The fact is, however, that though the man whom McCarthy was really challenging, President Lyndon Johnson, was not even on the ballot and that even his stand-in still beat McCarthy, the notion has become entrenched in American political folklore that this was some kind of repudiation of Mr. Johnson himself.

It remains an article of faith with many to this day, notwithstanding the circumstance that Mr. Johnson did not enter New Hampshire

for the very good reason that many months before, to this columnist's direct knowledge, he had decided neither to seek nor to accept renomination and in plain fact didn't really care a damn about the New Hampshire affair.

Still New Hampshire, as the site of the first primary in the nation, casts all sorts of odd spells upon people—as it did in the case of 1968—and the White House wants to make it absolutely certain this time that nothing happens up there that can be made to appear as and kind of setback to Richard Nixon. So the decision was made that earlier was better than later as to a disclosure of presidential intentions, and Mr. Nixon without ever uttering a word to that effect nevertheless issued notice in both Chicago and New York that he was already in the race for re-election.

ASIDE FROM THIS massive cannonading of what is surely no very dangerous adversary in McCloskey, the President was motivated not merely to raise money for his own campaign but to bring the individual states into the act to a degree never before seen in the GOP. It is not merely the Republican National Committee—which is essentially a presidential apparatus—that is being enriched. There is going to be a split right down the middle of the \$5 million—half to the national committee and half to the state organizations.

Few things so stir the heart of a state party chairman as the splendid, jingling sound of campaign money coming to him without toil and sweat and arm-twisting on his own part. The President, in a word, surely made no state organization angry. But, more importantly, he put his money where his mouth is to prove that the national party is truly interested not merely in the re-election of Richard Nixon but also in the election of Republican senators, governors and members of the House.

This, then, is the story of a seemingly premature unannouncement, for re-election that managed to be an announcement in fact.

United Feature Syndicate