

# NIXON BIDS RIVALRY NOT BLOCK PEACE

FEB 10 1972

He Asks Democrats to Say  
Nothing That Might Lead  
Enemy to Prolong War

NYTimes

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Feb. 9—President Nixon asked his Democratic challengers for the Presidency today to say nothing that "might give the enemy an incentive to prolong the war until after the election."

In a radio speech this morning setting forth the main themes of his foreign policy report, he assured his opponents that he welcomed criticism and did not question their sincerity or patriotism.

But he also expressed the view that such criticism should contribute to, rather than deter, the search for an "honorable peace." He reminded his opponents—none of whom he mentioned by name—that "we have only one President at a time, [and] only the President can negotiate an end to the war."

Mr. Nixon's remarks represented substantially the same view set forth in a television interview Monday by his chief of staff, H. R. Haldeman, that heavy Democratic criticism had damaged the President's search for peace.

But the President's tone was far softer. Mr. Haldeman had accused unnamed Democrats of "consciously aiding and abetting the enemy," which the Democrats immediately accepted as equivalent to the definition of treason.

Mr. Nixon, by contrast, stressed that he did "not question the sincerity of those who

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disagree with my policies to bring peace," even while telling them that he did not think much of what they were saying.

The reaction from leading Democrats was immediate and varied. The sharpest came from Mayor Lindsay of New York, who seemed to conclude that despite his quieter tone Mr. Nixon was no less guilty than Mr. Haldeman of what the Mayor labeled "character assassination."

"The Nixon technique is all too familiar," he said. "He disclaims any attack on the patriotism of his opponents and then accuses them of consciously aiding the enemy. This is McCarthyism pure and simple."

Senator George McGovern, Democrat of South Dakota, said in New Hampshire that Mr. Nixon's softer tone had not relieved his suspicions that Mr. Haldeman's comments Monday had been programed by the President himself. This is a point that the White House has steadfastly denied, asserting that Mr. Haldeman was speaking on his own authority.

### McGovern Stands Firm

Mr. McGovern also refused to retreat from his suggestion that the way to end the war was for the United States to withdraw unilaterally and end its recognition of South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu.

At a news briefing earlier in the day, Henry A. Kissinger, Mr. Nixon's national security adviser, commended Mr. McGovern for his "integrity and conviction and patriotism" but said that the Senator's views would require the United States to "join its opponents to destroy its friends."

Mr. McGovern, when asked for comment, readily agreed. "It really comes down to this," he said. "Which is the higher priority—ending the war and freeing the prisoners or saving General Thieu? You can't have it both ways."

Senator Edmund S. Muskie, also campaigning in New Hampshire, responded in a slightly lower key. Mr. Nixon said in his speech that Presidential candidates—presumably because they might be forced at some point to negotiate an end to the war themselves—had "a higher responsibility than an ordinary critic."

Mr. Muskie agreed and said that he had no intention of pre-empting the President's role as chief negotiator. But he said that he could not abandon his right to criticize, particularly on "a serious national issue."

### Humphrey's Viewpoint

Senator Hubert H. Humphrey, campaigning in Florida, said that while "the last thing I want to do is cause the President any difficulty in getting peace in Vietnam," Mr. Nixon was duty-bound to inform Presidential candidates of "all possible details" of his peace initiatives.

In his speech, the President recalled that when he was campaigning for the Presidency in 1968, he refused to criticize President Johnson's peace initiatives.

But Mr. Humphrey said that Mr. Nixon had profited from the war issue just the same. By hinting that he had a "plan" to end the conflict, Mr. Humphrey charged, Mr. Nixon exploited "the art of political demagoguery" without directly criticizing Mr. Johnson's efforts.

Today's exchange continued the running fight between the Administration and its critics that began when Mr. Muskie, on Feb. 2, criticized the President's eight-point peace plan for not offering Hanoi a simple pullout in exchange for the prisoners of war.

The conflict continued when Secretary of State William P. Rogers, the following day, accused Mr. Muskie of rejecting the plan before Hanoi had. It accelerated with Mr. Haldeman's televised remarks Monday.

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