

The Committee to Re-Elect Somebody



Arthur Hoppe

THE COMMITTEE to Re-elect the President, you will be dismayed to learn, is in serious financial trouble.

They have millions upon millions of dollars in their coffers and they can't figure out what on earth to do with them.

The basic problem is that the President the committee wishes to reelect has wisely decided to maintain a low profile during the campaign.

"There is only one candidate in this election, not two," says Peter Dailey, the committee's advertising chief. "There is the incumbent. The President. Mr. Nixon. And then there is the only candidate, McGovern."

So you can see the bind Mr. Dailey's in. How can you purchase ads, buy television time and spend money for all the costly techniques it takes to sell a candidate if you don't have a candidate to sell?

Some committee members have advocated still another expensive mailing to every voter in the country soliciting funds. But, if successful, this would of course only add to the committee's financial difficulties.

Others feel the cleverest course would be to give several dozen million to Mr. McGovern so that he could step up his campaign — on the theory that the more he campaigns the more votes he loses. But this was vetoed. "We don't want to look," as one member put it, "as though we're pouring it on."

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SO TO GET RID of \$20 to \$30 million, the committee finally decided to risk disaster and go ahead with a peril-fraught advertising campaign — the peril being that the President just might look like a candidate.

The first pilot television spots proved disastrous.

In one, the President merely stared sincerely into the camera and intoned: "Give to the needy."

In the second, to liven things up, he

appeared in a forest ranger's hat, pointed at the camera, and said: "Remember, only YOU can prevent forest fires."

The third featured live action. It showed a careless tourist tossing a gum wrapper over the fence onto the White House lawn. Immediately, the President dashed out of the bushes, picked it up and, turning to the camera, said sternly: "Every litter bit hurts!"

All three were promptly scrapped by Image Director Barton Batton. "We can't have the President identified with poverty, forest fires and garbage," he said with a shudder.

A five-minute spot proved more successful. It showed the President, his wife, Pat President, and their two daughters, Trish and Julie President, praying together in the Lincoln Bedroom. A dignified voice then said solemnly: "The family that prays together, stays together."

Unfortunately, FCC regulations required an additional line: "This public service message was brought to you by The Committee to Re-elect the President."

"Damn it!" snapped Batton. "We can't have the President identified with The Committee to Re-elect the President. It makes him look like a candidate."

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NOT BEING ABLE to use the President in their ads has put a crimp in the committee's plans.

As a real public service, some have suggested mailing every voter \$1000 in small, unmarked bills — preferably during the first week in November. But others worry that Mr. McGovern might somehow get the credit.

"As it stands now we're in desperate financial straits," confessed one higher-up, wringing his hands. "It looks like we'll wind up with a surplus of \$26.3 million."

But have faith, fellow Americans. If Mr. Nixon drops ten more points in the polls, they'll think of something.