

1972 See also this file, SFExaminer 29 Oct 72.

The Nixon Campaign Version

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WASHINGTON, Oct. 31—

President Nixon has perfected the ultimate in campaign methodology—the campaign day in which technique and showmanship transcend substance. It was exhibited in its finished form in northern Ohio Saturday.

Mr. Nixon decided early that he could best campaign by not campaigning and he has clung with conspicuous success, to that idea. He has left the whole swimming pool of American politics to Senator George McGovern and enjoyed himself watching Mr. McGovern thrash about in the deep water.

But tradition must be served if only modestly; so Mr. Nixon could not avoid a few forays into the country in the last hours of the campaign, even if all evidence suggests that he could have been re-elected if he had never appeared before a crowd larger than five staff members.

Assist For a Friend

A few close friends among Senatorial candidates (such as Senator Robert P. Griffin, for whom Mr. Nixon appeared in Saginaw Saturday night) needed help. Some of the powerful local Republican leaders (such as Robert Hughes of Cleveland, in whose fief Saturday's Ohio motorcade began) wanted to show off the party's star. And it appeared wise for the Presi-

dent at least to make token pleas on his own behalf in the largest of the states.

So Mr. Nixon and his advisers decided to go into most of the 10 states with the largest electoral votes. His late efforts mean he will have campaigned for a few hours in all except Massachusetts, where he is relatively weak, Florida, where he is seemingly unbeatable, and New Jersey.

On some trips, Mr. Nixon has performed conventionally, making speeches, holding rallies and the like. But first in Westchester County and then in Ohio, the President used the motorcade. These were not mere modernizations of the old whistle-stop tour, because they had a different purpose.

The trains that carried candidates across America for a century served to provide spectacle, but they also enabled the candidate to make speeches in a large number of towns and cities in a short span of time, as Mr. Nixon did in 1968. In the Richard Nixon motorcade of 1972, there are no rallies, no speeches, no news conferences, only the ceremonial itself.

For the President, it works well. He is shielded from hecklers, because the motorcade simply speeds past them, as in the college town of Hiram Saturday. He has no encounters with the press; most of the 300 reporters who followed him in five buses in Ohio got their only impressions of the tour through a description broadcast from a car at the head of the line into the buses.

It makes good television, and for the writing press there are reams of White House state-

ments on drugs or crime or wages and prices.

But there is always serendipity. The President, discovering that the flags in the Cleveland suburb of Parma are at half-staff in memory of a slain policeman, stops to denounce "scroungy-looking people that are spitting on policemen and calling them pigs." He sees a sign opposing amnesty, erected by a family that has lost a son in Vietnam, and declares with unusual fervor that no one needs to worry about that. "Never," he tells a soldier's mother.

It is all controlled in the manner of the Nixon Presidency. And yet, while it is true that the President in no sense is mingling with the public as President Johnson liked to do in 1964, there is an occasional flash of his real feelings on this trip—more passion than one senses in his news conferences or speeches.

He seemed tired all day Saturday, for all his obvious enjoyment of the crowds that lined the way from airport to airport. By the time he reached Saginaw, his usually precise speaking style had given way to loose construction and slurred words.

But it is when a public man is tired, when he has not carefully rehearsed his words, that he most often speaks his mind. Then the tough words about the "scroungy-looking people" and the draft-dodgers have offered the public more insight into the President's views than all of the careful pronouncements produced by the Committee for the Re-election of the President.