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The Many Invitations to Inauguration

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Sometime this month, a select group of about 200,000 Americans will find oversized, cream-colored envelopes protruding from their mailboxes. Inside will be an engraved invitation to "attend and participate" in the inauguration, and a small slip of paper stating that the suitable-for-framing "invitation" is just a souvenir.

The real invitations to the pomp and festivity surrounding the inauguration next Saturday of Richard Milhous Nixon and Spiro Theodore Agnew—also engraved on heavy ivory-tinted stock, but in a more functional and conventional size — went out about two weeks ago to an even more select group of 40,000 people—most of them Republicans — across the country.

And the choicest invitations are those to the only event required by law rather than by the victors' yearning for triumphant hoopla, the swearing-in ceremony at the Capitol.

Invitations to the inaugural events are being handled by the Inaugural Committee, a decidedly profit-making and suitably partisan group. Invitations to The Event itself come from the Joint Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies, a bipartisan group whose co-chairmen are Senators Marlow W. Cook, Republican of Kentucky, and Howard W. Cannon, Democrat of Nevada.

These invitations look different — they are engraved on stiff, parchment-like white paper — and are different: They are the only "invitations" that do not require the recipient to spend money in accepting them.

There is space allotted for many people—seats on backless benches for 19,200 and standing areas, preferential and general, for 60,000 more. But there are "about 10 times as many requests" as there are available places, according to Joseph E. O'Leary, assistant director of the committee.

Congressional Power

Mr. O'Leary refers these requests to the appropriate Senator or Representative, for it is they who have the power to decide who gets most of the available space. The President and Vice President have an allotment "in the neighborhood of 5,000" places, but each Senator is given 155 — 13 seats and 142 standing-room spaces — and each Representative is given nine seats and 57 standee spots. How they parcel out the places is up to them.

Cabinet members, the Supreme Court, the diplomatic corps, Presidential electors, State Senators, Medal of Honor winners, and, of course, members of Congress are among the groups invited automatically.

And there are, as at every public spectacle, a certain number of what might be called "house seats" to be doled out quietly to rich or powerful people.

The list of those invited to the events — receptions, balls and variety shows—is devised by processes far more complex. The "souvenir" invitation list is made up basically of those who have worked for the party but who, in the words of Powell Moore, the press director of the Inaugural Committee, "probably don't want to come" to Washington — or, it could be speculated, those who deserve some recognition but not that much.

According to Jim Kolstad, head of the committee's "invitation control" division, the names that were fed into the computers came from "approximately 66 sources." These include inaugural co-

ordinators in all 50 states, allotted all sorts of ex officio invitees such as members of Congress, and many of the lists used during the campaign last fall by the Committee for the Re-election of the President.

The list includes representatives of most of the "constituent groups," formed during the election campaign — older people and young people, Jews, blacks and other "heritage groups," labor and industry.

Mr. Moore was asked if the guests who were invited to spend \$40 each for a ball ticket or \$10 to attend a reception for Mr. Agnew included some who might not have voted for Mr. Nixon. The press secretary said that he was "sure that critics of the President were included," but, when pressed, he conceded that the "special invitees" were "people who will want to come."

According to Harry Cohan, the New York State inaugural coordinator, the real trouble is that there are many more people who want to come — and feel they are entitled to — than the state's allotment of "roughly 1,500" invitations. New York's is the largest allotment, he said, but it is "nowhere near enough."

But Mr. Cohan thinks that much of the problem was caused by the committee's plans. The "Salute to the States," he said, is being held in the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, with seating limited to about 2,700 persons. The equivalent gala in 1969, he said, was held in the Washington Armory, which can hold more than 20,000 per-

sons. "Right away, you've got 20,000 people mad at you," he remarked.

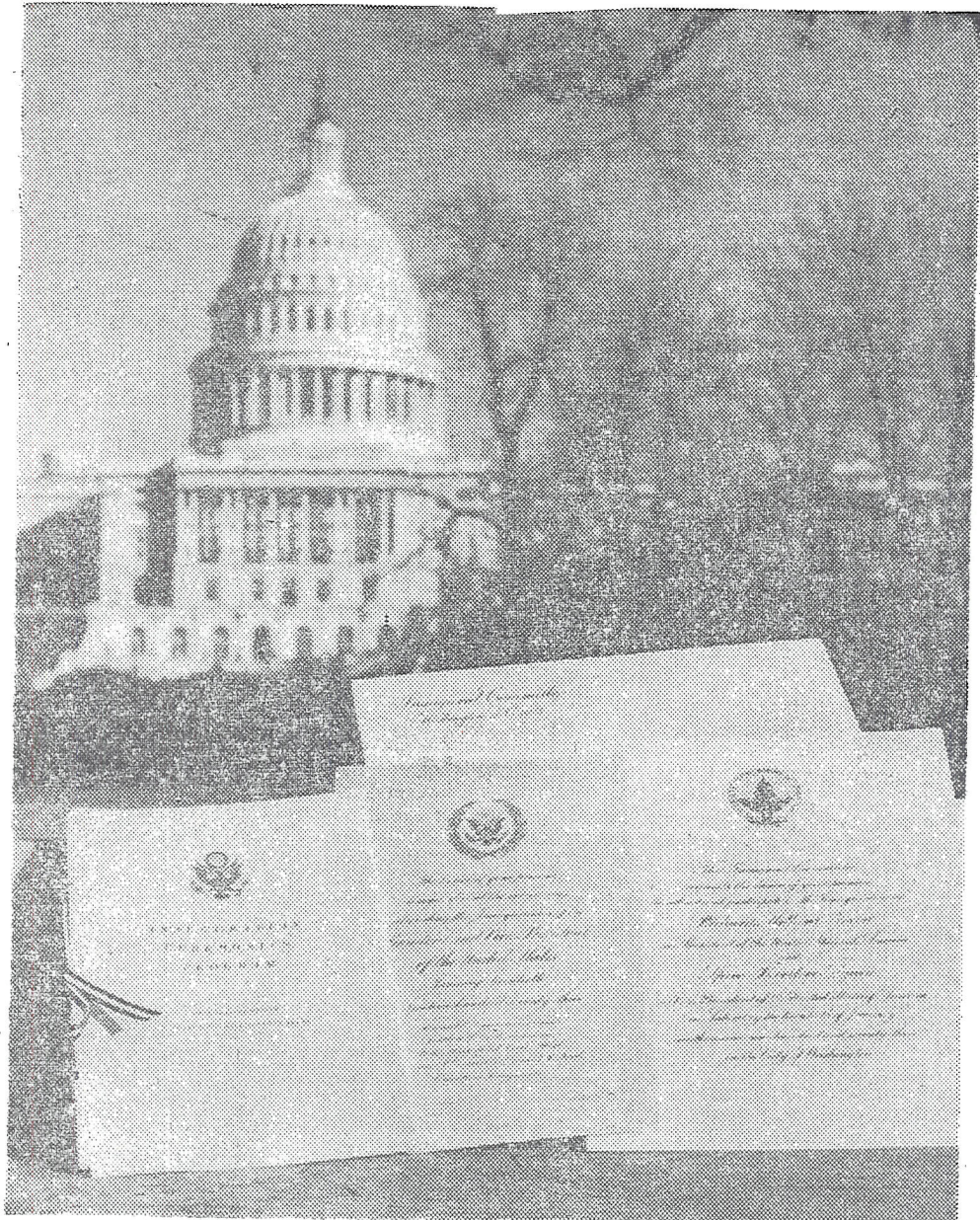
Mr. Cohan said he had spoken recently with other state coordinators, and reported they shared his dissatisfaction. "The Inaugural Committee has oversold this thing," he said. "I'm not too happy with the way it's being run."

But the committee is very happy with the response to their invitations, which they expect will bring in about \$4-million and hope will more than cover expenses. The best seller is the ball — really five separate balls — for which 10,000 acceptances were processed in the first two days of last week, the committee said. A total of 30,000 is expected.

(The committee does not handle the seats along the parade route, which are selling on a first-come, first-serve basis, at prices ranging from \$2 to \$50.)

Much in the manner of a hostess who asks 60 people to a cocktail party and buys enough liquor for 40, the committee has invited more people than could be handled to some events. The committee has sent out about 40,000 invitations to the various events — far fewer to some of them — and is "planning" for 30,000.

"Overselling," said Jeb S. Magruder, executive director of the Inaugural Committee and a former top-level staffer on the Committee for the Re-election of the President, "is a good problem to have." Mr. Magruder's name, like those of most of the committee's staff, is on the invitation list.



The New York Times/Mike Lien
A program, left, and some of the invitations to the Inauguration. About 200,000 invitations are being sent out with a slip saying accompanying invitation is just a souvenir.