

THE STATES-ITEM

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The States-Item prints the news impartially. It supports what it believes to be right. It opposes what it believes to be wrong, without regard to party politics.

TWELVE

New Orleans, La., Monday, November 2, 1970

Just like Caracas?

"Just like Caracas!" said Rose Mary Woods, President Richard M. Nixon's personal secretary.

That eye-catching appraisal of the San Jose violence which greeted the President of the United States on his California campaign tour last Friday referred to the hostility which Mr. Nixon, as vice president, incurred in the capital of Venezuela in 1958. In that unforgettable encounter, Mr. Nixon was spat upon and otherwise insulted.

In San Jose, the President was the target of rocks, eggs and other objects plus dirty language.

The San Jose encounter is, of course, deplorable and repugnant to most Americans. If, in truth, it really was "just like Caracas," then U.S. domestic politics is in serious trouble. What happened in Caracas is, or should be, alien to our democratic system, which depends on freedom of speech and an enlightened discussion of the real issues before the country.

A new barbarity has emerged in the political life of the U.S.

Violence of deed and language, the elevation of rudeness and bigotry, are supplanting rational discussion. The fist and the gun are competing with the ballot for power.

This must stop.

The President has strived during his congressional campaign travels across the country to exploit the hecklers and the demonstrators

who have turned up in his audiences.

It is a dangerous game. Mr. Hugh Sidey, in the current issue of Life magazine, writes that the President's assistants encourage local police to let a few demonstrators confront the President to his advantage. If so, the tactic almost got out of hand in San Jose.

When President John F. Kennedy and Robert F. Kennedy were slain, Americans for the most part recoiled in horror and grief, and violence was assailed from the rostrums and pulpits of the land. There were prayers and hopes that Americans would renounce violence once and for all.

The irony is heavy. Violence has overtaken those words and hopes, and the tenor of violence grows louder.

The peace cause is profaned by violence. Free speech is proaned by obscenity. Bigots wave the flag and desecrate the flag. Civility and human decency are ground in the mud.

Unfortunately, the President is not calming the violence or quieting the land as he promised in his 1968 campaign. After tomorrow's congressional election, he may find this his greatest challenge if he is to be re-elected.

The challenge is also there for all Americans. We must restore civility to our political life.