

Flashback to 'Checkers' speech

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## Washington

In their respective moments of personal political crisis, Senator Thomas F. Eagleton and then—Senator Richard M. Nixon went on national television to defend themselves against being dropped as vice-presidential candidates.

Eagleton appeared yesterday on the CBS program "Face the Nation" — an appearance he decided upon two or three days ago amidst the mounting pressures on him to withdraw as the Democratic vice presidential candidate.

Almost 20 years ago, Nixon, then the Republican vice presidential candidate, appeared on national television to give his now famous "Checkers" speech in the wake of disclosures that he, as a senator, had an \$18,000 political fund contributed by wealthy supporters in California.

There were similarities in the pressures that led up to the two television appearances but great differences and contrasts in the format and performances of the two men.

Both were fighting for political survival — Nixon, then a senator from California, even more so — at least outwardly — than Eagleton.

Like Eagleton, Nixon, in what he later was to describe as "an acute personal crisis," was confronted with newspaper editorials demanding his resignation as the Republican vice presidential candidate and recurring reports that members of the staff of General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the presidential candidate, believed he should voluntarily step aside. But Nixon was left dangling by General Eisenhower, who neither publicly nor privately issued statements of support for his

running mate and finally called Nixon to tell him. "You are the one who has to decide what to do."

In contrast, on Friday — the day that the Eagleton staff called Prentis Childs, the producer of "Face the Nation," to say that the senator would appear on the program — Senator George McGovern was still giving the impression to reporters that he was standing behind Eagleton and resisting pressures from his staff to dump his running mate.

Nixon was explicitly instructed by Eisenhower to go on a nationwide television program to explain the political fund — which was raised to pay some of his political expenses as senator,

with the General reserving judgment until after the program on whether he would retain his vice presidential nominee. If McGov-

ern urged Eagleton to appear on the television program, it has not been disclosed, and there has been no indication that the Democratic presidential candidate viewed the program as a crucial test for his running mate.

Nixon deliberately decided against appearing on a television news program, although he had an invitation from "Meet the Press," because he believed the program should give him an opportunity to state his case alone, without interruption by the Republican National men.

With \$75,000 contributed by the Republican National Committee and the Senate Republican Campaign Committee, Nixon purchased a half-hour of prime television time on a Tuesday evening, Sept. 23, 1952, immediately following the Milton Berle Show. He originally had wanted time immediately

after the "I Love Lucy" show but that spot was not available.

Nixon worked for three days on the speech that he was to deliver in a Hollywood television studio with only his wife, Pat, present.

The result was a patently political speech. Nixon defended the "supplementary expenditures" as legally and morally beyond reproach and got in a few jabs at Adlai E. Stevenson, the Democratic presidential candidate, for having his own fund while he was governor of Illinois.

In addition, the speech contained some family references — to the "Republican cloth coat" worn by his wife and to Checkers, a cocker spaniel dog, which was a gift from some supporters in Texas and which, he said, "regardless of what they say about it, we are going to keep."

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