

# Who Wears the Pants?

By Dorothy McCardle

President Nixon is dubious about women wearing slacks and said so yesterday in an exchange with a woman reporter at the White House.

The reporter, Helen Thomas of United Press International, was teased by the President in his Oval Office:

"Helen, are you still wearing slacks? Do you prefer them, actually? Every time I see a girl in slacks it reminds me of China."

Miss Thomas wore slacks to Peking when she accompanied President and Mrs. Nixon. She found all the women in China in pant suits, she says. She also wore them to Moscow where she went with the presidential party and to the presidential homes in Key Biscayne, Fla., and San Clemente, Calif.

"I knew he didn't like women in slacks," she said, "but then I didn't expect to see him yesterday. We see him so rarely."

She and other reporters were summoned unexpectedly to the Oval Office where a bill-signing ceremony was taking place with Attorney General Elliot Richardson, FBI Director Clarence Kelley and other top-ranking law enforcement officials.

The President continued to joke about women in pants.

"This is not said in an uncomplimentary way," said the President with a broad smile, "but slacks can do something for some people and some it can't."

Then he added:

"I think you do very well—turn around."

Miss Thomas pirouetted around like a model with her cheeks burning.

Then the President added:

"Do they cost less than a gown?"

"No," she replied.

"Then change," the President suggested, and every one in the room laughed.

"I didn't take offense," said Miss Thomas later, "but I didn't appreciate being singled out before so many people. Thank God, they were clean."

She was wearing white slacks with a navy blue overblouse.

She said she "may never wear them again," but she did not rush home and change. She still had on her slacks when she went to Camp David later with the presidential party.

"But I don't expect to see the President at Camp David," she added. "We rarely ever do up there."



United Press International

Said President Nixon of reporter Helen Thomas, above: "Every time I see a girl in slacks it reminds me of China."

See Watergate chronology for unpleasant situations of his own which Mr. Nixon was encountering just before this incident.