

Capitol Punishment

A Hoof-Clicker?

By Art Buchwald

One thing that everyone in this country seems to agree on is that we must restore faith in the executive branch of the government. Although President Nixon has appointed new people to the White House, most of them are old faces that have been moved around from one post to another.

What the nation needs desperately is someone in the White House who has the complete and unequivocal backing of all the American people—someone who has never been touched by scandal of any kind, whose credibility is unquestioned and who is a symbol of everything Americans believe their leaders should be.

The only one on the American scene to do this is Secretariat, the Triple Crown winner of the Kentucky Derby, the Preakness and the Belmont Stakes.

If President Nixon would appoint Secretariat to an important position in the White House he would be going a long way toward his promise of cleaning house and restoring the image of the presidency. Mr. Nixon would be saying to the American people, "You want new faces in the White House. I'm giving you a winner."

Now before you scoff at my suggestion I would like to point out there is a precedent for such an appointment. The Roman emperor Caligula appointed his own horse as a pro-consul to Rome. It's true Caligula did this to show his contempt for the senate, but I don't think any self-respecting person believes that Mr. Nixon would appoint Secretariat for the same reason.

As a special assistant to the President, Secretariat could accompany the President to Camp David and San Clemente. Mr. Nixon could confide in him without fear that his conversation would be leaked to the press. And when the President gets tired and weary from all the affairs of state, he could ride Secretariat around the White House lawn.

The 3-year-old stallion could also fulfill other functions in the White House. When press secretary Ron Ziegler or his assistant, Gerald Warren, receive a particularly tough question they could say, "We'll check that out with Secretariat and get back to you later." Or if Secretariat can't answer it they can always reply, "That's a horse of a different color."

Secretariat could show up for political fund-raising dinners and at congressional hearings. He could get involved in the energy crisis, and go to Paris with Henry Kissinger.

But his most important function would be that when the President's enemies call for his resignation or impeachment, Secretariat could warn the country that you don't change horses in midstream.

As President Nixon has said many times he would go to any lengths to clear up Watergate, Secretariat could supply him 31 lengths to start with.

I have given reasons why President Nixon would want Secretariat in his Cabinet. But why would Secretariat take the job at this time?

The answer is that Secretariat is being retired from racing this year and therefore would have no conflict of interests. Also, America has been good to Secretariat and he would like to pay it back with some public service. At 3 years old he feels he still has a lot to give to this country.

When I suggested my idea to friends in the White House press corps they were quite skeptical that Secretariat could restore faith in the presidency. One said, "We've had horses in the White House before."

"Aha!" I said. "But this one has a head."