

Nixon in Public-- Like a Campaign

By John Herbers
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Washington

President Nixon's public appearances about the country are taking on the flavor and scope of a national political campaign.

Mr. Nixon has stepped up the number and variety of his public contacts as he seeks to show himself as a

President firmly in control of his job and unperturbed by impeachment proceedings.

Some of his appearances, as in Nashville Saturday night, have all the trappings of a campaign stop shortly before an election — crowds, banners, bands, advance men, controversy and crowd-pleasing oratory.

Mr. Nixon returned to Washington shortly before midnight and yesterday morning, wearing a shamrock given him by the ambassador from Ireland, John Gerald Malloy, he was host at church services in the East Room.

The Rev. Dr. Norman Vincent Peale delivered the sermon before 350 guests, including a group of congressmen. Missing, however, was

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Mr. Nixon, who was suffering from the flu.

Tomorrow, the President will fly to Houston and submit to questioning by members of the National Association of Broadcasters.

All of his appearances appear to be calculated to draw a friendly reception with just enough opposition to add interest, and the Nashville rally was no exception. Ostensibly, he was there to help dedicate a new hall for the Grand Ole Opry, and he did that. But all the noise and ceremony at the airport was a clear signal that much else was

involved.

At the Tennessee Air National Guard area Saturday, a big hangar was the center of activity long before Mr. Nixon arrived.

White House technicians had been there five days trying to install a public address system that would eliminate echoes. Signs and bleachers had been set up. Secret Service agents, National Guardsmen and state troopers milled about as the crowds began to trickle in. First there were the friendly people asked to attend by local Republican leaders, who moved about handing out pro-Nixon banners.

Tennessee is a new stronghold of Republicanism, where Mr. Nixon has carried large majorities and where both U.S. senators and the governor are Republicans. Governor Winfield Dunn had employed state personnel to help set up the rally.

Bands arrived two hours before the President and played, alternately, martial and country music. Scores of American flags were distributed, and the scene began to take on a festive air.

Words of a song entitled "Stand Up and Cheer for Richard Nixon" were distributed and a country combo led the singing, to the

tune of "Okie from Muskogee." It included the following:

*I've been hearing talk
about impeaching
The man we chose to lead
us through these times.
But talk like this could
weaken and defeat us,
Let's show the world we're
not the quitting kind.*

After that, anti-Nixon demonstrators arrived carrying signs such as "If it was wrong why did you do it?"; and "Opry yes, Nixon no." But the hangar was filled by then and they had

to remain outside, where they could not confront the President and most of the crowd.

When Mr. Nixon's big blue and silver jet, the Spirit of '76, arrived shortly before 6 p.m., the crowd numbered several thousand and was in a frenzy as the band played "The Tennessee Waltz" and "Hail to the Chief."

A few minutes later an almost identical Air Force jet, carrying Mrs. Nixon from South America, arrived and pulled up majestically directly in front of the crowd.

The President, his hair blown by the wind, waved and boarded Mrs. Nixon's plane. Then they descended together and approached the microphones with Governor Dunn.

In a few moments, Nixon was talking about national defense and warning that "the United States must never become the second strongest nation in the world." The anti-Nixon demonstrators, numbering perhaps a hundred or so,

screamed slogans, but could not be heard above the cheering.

After a few moments of this, the Nixons were whisked to the opry hall a few miles away, where the President was soon playing the piano, jerking yo-yo with Roy Acuff and turning Nashville's love of country music to his current political theme: what is important is patriotism and national defense, not Watergate.

"The peace of the world for generations, maybe centuries," he said, "may depend not just on our military might or wealth but on our character, our love of country, our willingness to stand up for the flag — and country music does just that," he said.

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AP Wirephoto

PRESIDENT NIXON WITH THE BAND IN NASHVILLE
He threw up his hands after playing Happy Birthday on the piano for his wife