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The Lessons of a Landslide *Part 2/4/73*

On one point, at least, Republican as well as Democratic politicians see eye to eye on Watergate. They think it proves that Mr. Nixon is in trouble because he relied on "amateurs" to run his re-election campaign rather than on "tested" politicians.

The general line is that the "old regulars" would never have planned or approved an operation as bizarre as Watergate, which may be true up to a point, but it is not proof, as the "pros" contend, that the amateurs don't know how to run highly successful national campaigns.

Painful as it is to admit, the outcome of the 1972 election demonstrated that the White House iconologists are masters of modern image-making. All the lessons of Watergate will be in vain if this is not acknowledged, and if the public is indifferent as to how it was done.

The plain, albeit unpalatable, fact is that Mr. Nixon's so-called amateurs, many of them former advertising men steeped in the techniques of Madison Avenue, did produce last year one of the greatest U.S. landslide victories of all time, even though their candidate has never been an appealing personality.

Joe McGinnis, in "The Selling of the President," told how it was done in 1968, but that was a simple, unsophisticated operation compared with the super snow job of 1972. Because of Watergate, the hucksters are now being dismissed as bumblers, but had it

not been for the incredible actions of Watergate, all the hucksters would now be rated as political geniuses, as they were just after the November election.

The old-line politicians, it is true, probably would have instinctively shielded off from bugging the Democratic National Committee headquarters, but then, instinctively, they also would have shrunk from some of the techniques that did so much to convert a 43 per cent eyelash winner in 1968 to a 60 per cent landslide victor in 1972.

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David Wise, in "The Politics of Lying" (recommended reading for everybody), observes that Mr. Nixon, like all modern Presidents, "was concerned about his image." Wise discovered that within the White House "the problem was handled by the Image Committee, then composed of Communications Director Herb Klein, special counsel Charles Colson and deputy assistant Dwight Chapin."

The existence of the committee was little known. Its title was wholly se-

cret. It began by "encouraging Mr. Nixon to participate in news events that would counter the belief that he was 'cold.'"

Their advice was good. Their warm-hearted hero easily won re-election, after which he permitted Chapin, Colson and Klein to resign. They had all lost their usefulness for one reason or another.

In the wake of Watergate, other top Nixon leaders have been liquidated, notably Jeb Magruder, the deputy chairman of CREEP (the Committee

for the Re-Election of the President). Magruder has confessed to a principal role in the Watergate raid and the subsequent coverup, but he is still proud of the campaign that put over Mr. Nixon so successfully.

"In spite of what's been said about poor old CREEP," Magruder notes, "we did a hell of a good job. We got the message to our people, and we got them out to vote. The substantive work we did in that campaign—the work with computers, telephones and direct

mail—will be used as a model in the future."

Alas, it is all too true. After Watergate is forgotten (God forbid), the campaign techniques of the Nixon-hucksters will be remembered and, worse, no doubt imitated. The old-line politicians may be more prudent than the upstarts they despise, but most of them know little about the Madison Avenue methods and the Orwellian double-speak that have won the last two national elections.

Next to the President, the most important man in the White House was H. R. Haldeman, former J. Walter Thompson vice president and once the account executive for Black Flag insecticide. Dwight Chapin, former White House appointments secretary, came from the same ad agency. Before Chapin and Haldeman were ousted, the former said, "It's easy to knock an adman, but a good advertising man is a good marketing man, and he knows what's going on."

When Magruder, another young huckster, was being cross-examined by the Ervin investigating committee, Sen. Lowell Weicker (R-Conn.) asked the witness if he would agree that left to themselves, the Constitution of the United States and the American people were equal to the task of governing within legal means and legitimate ends. The repentant Magruder replied, "Senator, I couldn't agree with you more—now."