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Nixon, the Liberal

It is at least 20 years too late for President Nixon to assume a liberal posture.

Liberals could never learn to love him. Particularly in California where they know him best.

Maybe the President's policy changes only give the appearance of leaning to the left.

Still, it's impressions that count. Few know this better than the present White House occupant.

Many of Nixon's homestate conservatives are restless.

They will long remember Aug. 2, the day Secretary of State William Rogers announced that the U.S. supports the seating of Red China in the United Nations.

Others may view this and other foreign policy switches as part of the President's search for new roads to peace.

To the ultra-right, Aug. 2 is a day of infamy. Peking's admission reinforces their gravest doubts about the UN.

They call themselves concerned Republicans. They shudder at deficit financing and won't be put down as unfortunate victims of budget balancing paranoia.

If Nixon fails this year to carry California — biggest of electoral prizes — he may be the first President defeated for reelection since Herbert Hoover.

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THE PRESIDENT'S chief Southern strategist isn't idling away the winter whistling "Dixie." Instead, Harry Dent is watching California. The former South Carolina Republican chairman sat up in an Oakland hotel room until early hours last Sunday rapping with disenchanted Republicans from all parts of the state.

It was a charming soft sell by Sen. Strom Thurmond's former administrative assistant.

Dent came on the scene with no prepared text for the press. His after-dinner speech to the California Republican Assembly was a restrained plea for unity, noting that division could lead to disaster for the Republican Party.

At Dent's closed door conference later, there were no kooky right wing radicals, but rather solid conservatives such as Piedmont's Frank Adams, treasurer of the GOP State Central Committee, Republican Assembly President Hugh Koford of Cas-

tro Valley and volunteer party leaders Fred Nagel of Susanville and Dick Darling of Riverside.

Dent promised that the "apprehensions of the conservatives" would be carried back to the White House.

A similar message was delivered there by Governor Reagan, who demonstrated in Washington last week that he still has star quality as a conservative.

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THE PRESIDENT personally picked Reagan to head the state's Nixon delegation to the GOP national convention in San Diego.

This time a secondary role in the President's campaign is being assigned to former Lieutenant Governor Bob Finch, who still bears the title, White House adviser, and a few years ago was California's most popular moderate Republican.

Conservatives are dedicated. They raise money, organize precincts and provide most of the votes for the GOP in California.

A popular Republican governor could frustrate dissidents' plans to run an independent slate against the President in the June primary.

Ohio's ultra-conservative Congressman John Ashbrook is no dangerous challenge to Nixon.

And San Mateo's liberal Representative Pete McCloskey, home from the snows of New Hampshire this weekend, is even less of a threat and sounding more like a candidate about to bolt his party. He abhors Nixon's Southern strategy.

Three Ashbrook boosters have offered me leaflets and copies of his speeches. In reply to questions, not one of them seriously rated the Ohio right winger as an actual alternative to Nixon.

Yet Ashbrook backers include members of "RN Associates," Republicans who pungled up \$1000 or more for Richard Nixon in 1968.

They are merely a GOP splinter group.

Ashbrook is their vehicle to move the President to the right. An Ashbrook bumper strip, at the moment then, is only a symbol proclaiming a conservative's dismay.

Dick Nolan is recuperating from eye surgery