



BY STEWART ALSOP

SHIFT TO THE RIGHT?

WASHINGTON—Political Washington—the village-size town inhabited by political journalists and the people they write about—is puzzled, indeed flabbergasted, by the hugeness of President Nixon's lead over Senator McGovern in the polls. There is an uneasy feeling that there must be something wrong somewhere.

President Nixon, the unloved leader of the minority party, should be hurt by unemployment, inflation, huge deficits, and the unending war, and by such episodes as the ITT uproar and the Watergate scandal. Senator McGovern, a new and appealing face, the leader of the majority party, and the very symbol of opposition to a hated war and a grossly unfair tax system, should be a formidable challenger.

Then how in heaven's name can Mr. Nixon be running so amazingly far ahead of Senator McGovern?

There are some obvious answers—the Eagleton imbroglio, the party-splitting rows at the convention, the defection of labor, the other stumbles and mix-ups of the McGovern campaign so far. But, except for the Eagleton affair, most of these stumbles and mix-ups are really of the kind that interest political journalists deeply and the voters hardly at all.

This suggests one reason for Washington's puzzlement—that the candidates and the issues, as perceived by political Washington, are markedly different from the candidates and the issues as perceived by the rest of the country. Take, for example, the Nixon personality.

PERSONALITY

It is an article of faith in the McGovern camp that the Nixon personality will yet make George McGovern President. "All you have to do is look at them and ask which man you trust," a McGovern strategist remarked confidently after the Democratic convention. Senator McGovern is accordingly keying his campaign, as *The Washington Post* has reported, to attacks on "Tricky Dick, a callous and manipulative fellow."

This is the way a lot of the denizens of political Washington perceive the President. But to judge by the fascinating poll published in this magazine recently, it is not the way the voters perceive the President. The poll showed that the respondents rated the President more "earnest, sincere," as well as more "interesting" and "talented," than the senator, and by a wide margin.

In fact, it is Senator McGovern who is having the most troublesome "image problem." It is one of the advantages of incumbency that the President points with pride, while the challenger views with alarm. Viewing with alarm can sound to a lot of voters like bad-mouthing the United States. Sure enough, polltaker Oliver Quayle reports that words like "whiney" or "whining" or "always complaining" are used with surprising frequency about McGovern.

Another advantage of being the incumbent is that, in his bid to reach the White House, the challenger has to appeal to two quite different constituencies. To get the nomination, McGovern co-opted the left wing of his party, and let his rivals divide the center.

CONSTITUENCY

The strategy worked, but it involved winning a minority of a minority, which is a very different thing from winning a majority of the total vote. To cite a specific example, McGovern really locked up the nomination when he won his plurality of 45 per cent in California. That 45 per cent represented just over a million and a half California voters. In the general election in November, more than 8 million Californians will go to the polls. To win the most populous state, McGovern will therefore have to nearly triple his basic California constituency. Obviously, he can only win a majority in California, and elsewhere, by reaching for what Arthur Schlesinger used to call "the vital center." This is not easy for a man who was saying firmly only a few months ago, "I am not a centrist."

And this suggests what may be the basic reason why political Washington has been so taken by surprise by the President's huge lead in the polls. While the liberal Democrats—a category that includes most of the most influential Washington "opinion makers"—have been moving to the left, the rest of the country seems to have been moving rather sharply to the right.

There is evidence that this shift to the right has been going on for some time. In 1968, the combined Nixon and George Wallace vote came to 56 per cent. It would have been a lot higher than that if George Meany had not moved heaven and earth to shift labor votes from Wallace to Hubert Humphrey. George Meany is not going to move heaven and earth for George McGovern.

As Wallace's remarkable showing in this year's primaries also suggests, the move to the right has racial underpinnings, with school busing as the symbol issue. The Supreme Court opinion written by the President's appointee, Chief Justice Warren Burger, helped make busing the symbol issue, but this does not faze Mr. Nixon—he has almost out-Wallaced Wallace on busing. George McGovern has certainly been hurt by the issue; and he will be hurt a lot more if the House-passed anti-busing bill comes to a vote in the Senate.

Logically, the issues that ought to help McGovern most are the war and the economic issue. The war ought to help McGovern because it is still going on, and because it is the most unpopular war in our history. But to a lot of Americans it is not really going on any more—draft-age boys now know they won't be sent to be shot at in Vietnam, and so do their mothers and girl friends. As for the bombing, most Americans, despite all the lessons of recent history to the contrary, are as sold on air power as any General LeMay.

CATAclysm

A recent poll showed a solid majority against a cutoff of military aid to South Vietnam, which McGovern, faithful to his left constituency, espouses. Most Americans would certainly like to see the war end, but not on Communist terms. They don't like the war, but they don't like defeat either.

McGovern has now come forward with a serious tax and welfare plan, meriting serious debate. But the memory lingers on of his original proposals, directed at that minority of a minority, for an inheritance cutoff at \$500,000, \$1,000-for-everybody, and so on. According to polltaker Quayle, the McGovernite phrase, "redistribution of income," scares a lot of middle-income and even lower-income voters—they don't want their incomes redistributed, thank you very much.

Such evidence, admittedly inconclusive, suggests that a historic shift to the right is going on in this country, like the shift to the left in the '30s that made the Democrats the majority party. If this is what is happening, it will take some sort of cataclysm—a really foul money scandal involving the White House, say, or disaster in Vietnam, or a totally unexpected recession—to give George McGovern a serious shot at the Presidency.

fashioned by Coplans and Lieder quickly became the voice of the new, post-abstract expressionist American art and the new, formalist criticism that came with it. It was the pages of Artforum that showcased the emergence of the new articulate, polemic American artist, pages that crackled with lively intellectual yat-a-tat between artists involved as much in ideas as in the creation of esthetic objects. As McLuhan would put it, Artforum is "hot" and engaged, not cool and removed. "We weren't interested in maintaining a distance between ourselves and the art we wrote about," says Coplans. "We wanted to be writing from the inside out. We still do."

Artforum's influence is predominant now, down even to its sans-serif typeface, severe layout and square shape ("Close to the shape of the paintings themselves," says Coplans). Following this lead, *Avalanche*, *Flash Art* and the new *Arts* are heavily engaged, drawing many contributions from artists, and tough-minded to an extreme. "We publish articles by artists," says Willoughby Sharp, "photodocumentation, and works executed specifically for the magazine. No critical bull---." Politi merchandises his idea-heavy journal (now circulating to 25,000 readers) in ways fully consistent with his editorial policy: "We sold the T shirts to deconsecrate art," he says. Indeed, the deconsecration of art, the attempts by younger artists to be both sophisticated and socially relevant, is the chief theme of the new art journalism. *Art International* devotes much space to the non-visual arts and to politics and sociology, confirming the complete demolition of the ivory tower.

Seminal: What all of this documents is the growing, seminal importance of the art magazine. No longer the passive judge and recorder of art, it is now a part of the action. Without *Artforum*, the art of the 60s would have taken another, less innovative form. *Art News* (whose 70th anniversary issue, out this month, is ironically its last under the old management) is responsible for even more. Hess was the first activist editor, opening up his journal to the concerns and crosscurrents of the present. Last week he recalled the in-house debate over the merits of the new American painting of the 1950s, fashioned by men like Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko and Willem de Kooning. "Everyone put their chips on the surrealists and realists," he says. "They felt that abstract painting was either academic or a fraud, like the emperor's clothes."

In time, however, Hess won the battle at *Art News* and American art had at last a vigorous public champion. When *Artforum* and its heirs emerged as counter-voices to the positions that *Art News* established, that was inevitable and healthy. The magazine's strong, defining voice as Hess articulated it will be missed. By its example, *Art News* made the art magazine an organic, shaping force in American culture.

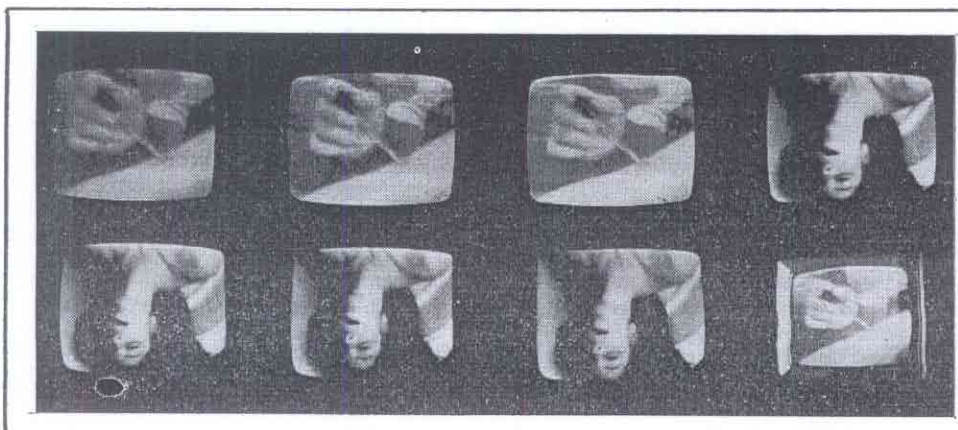
Newsweek, September 18, 1972 □

We Are the Camera

As the entire human race goes on camera in the media age, every human being and every human life becomes at once a thing of cosmic importance and of absolute triviality. As everybody gets into the act, as everybody *becomes* an act, the global village becomes a tribe of itinerant performers who, when not performing, are drama critics passing judgment on those who are. Of course, their act of judging is itself on camera, being monitored by others who are judging *that*, and who themselves . . . etc. So the media age is a hall of mirrors in which human beings are finally locked up with themselves in an inescapable perpetuum of narcissism and self-regard. As everyone in the world passes in review before us, we sink more and more into our separate, slumped, seeing selves. When ev-

but needless to say there are problems. They decide to solve these problems by getting married. We see the wedding, a homemade ceremony in what could be called the First Church of St. McLuhan. "You, Carol and Ferd, are here to present a media show," intones the minister. "We, your friends, are the media of that media, as it is the media of us. For in truth we are both the media and the message." And his message of hope for the newlyweds is that "you must lose identity until you are only media."

Images: The cameras follow the couple as they fight, make love, agonize and torment one another with everything from tenderness to withering malice. They go to Chicago, get jobs, go back to school, attempt to drop drugs, finally part—or do they? The monitors show now the same image, now a permutation of



Robert R. McElroy—Newsweek

'Carol and Ferd': Mainlining and making love on eight monitors

everyone is a see-er the act of seeing becomes nothing but oversight.

All this comes to mind as one sits in front of eight television monitors, watching **THE CONTINUING STORY OF CAROL AND FERD**, perhaps the most remarkable irruption thus far of media into theater. Carol and Ferd are real people—whatever that means in this context—who allowed themselves to be videotaped over a period of about fourteen months by a San Francisco group called Video Free America, led by Arthur Ginsberg. Working with Brooklyn's Chelsea Theater Center, VFA created the brilliant production of Heathcote Williams's "AC/DC" two seasons ago and last season's powerful adaptation of Allen Ginsberg's "Kaddish," the strongest mix of live and video theater yet produced.

Carol and Ferd are nonheroes of our time. He is a junkie, a bisexual, a dropout student of classical languages; she is an actress in pornographic movies, twice married, a former mistress of Lenny Bruce, and as for drugs is into "a little speed, a little coke when I can afford it, a lot of grass. I don't feel I take any dope at all." Carol and Ferd are lovers

images working with and across each other—Carol's lovely haggard face; eight naked Carols like a chorus of metaphysical Rockettes; Ferd mainlining on four monitors while on the other four Carol has a melancholy sexual ecstasy.

"Carol and Ferd," being shown in San Francisco and intermittently at the Mercer Arts complex in New York, moves into that area where television, movies and theater are increasingly being preempted by the overriding concept of media. In allowing the video cameras to record the problematic shiftings of their relationship, Carol and Ferd become actors, communicants in a kind of group therapy and super-diarists who convert their lives into a giant electronic notebook. They are intelligent people, both seduced and repelled by the idea of media as the new god, without which people are cut off from reality and from themselves. The result is something disturbing and moving, something very much of our time, a strange cross between entertainment, documentation, therapy and a kind of instant religion—the super soap opera in which we are all being cast.

—JACK KROLL