

The Distortions of Political Campaigns



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POLITICAL campaigns, like the comic mirrors at the amusement park, often distort a candidate's image.

I have known Richard Nixon and George McGovern, for example, since they were obscure congressmen fresh from the hustings. Neither is what he appears to the public to be.

Several bruising campaigns have given Mr. Nixon the image of a cold and crass and calculating politician without compassion. He is not like this at all.

The real Nixon, as a 23-year-old law student at Duke University, used to carry a crippled classmate up two flights of stairs. The classmate, Frederick Cady, had been deformed and dwarfed by polio at age 9.

The real Nixon is a warm, rather shy, basically decent human being. He put a black medical student and a black architectural student through college without their knowing that their tuition and expenses had been paid by the President of the United States. Only a few intimates, among them our source, were ever aware of this very private charity by a very private Richard Nixon.

The President also has the image of a politician who puts politics ahead of principle. On the contrary, the real Nixon is a patriot who would sacrifice his tremendous political ambition for the sake of his country. He demonstrated this in 1960 after he lost a close election to John F. Ken-

edy. The Republicans began gathering evidence of massive election frauds in Illinois and Indiana — evidence that could have thrown the election into the courts. The partisans around Mr. Nixon urged him to challenge the election.

When he called upon Mr. Kennedy to pay his respects, Mr. Kennedy said: "Well, I guess the outcome is in doubt."

"No," said Mr. Nixon. "The outcome is not in doubt. You are the winner."

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GEORGE McGOVERN, likewise, has come out of the campaign with a warped image. He has been portrayed as a political radical who can't make up his mind. The truth is that no one in politics has been more consistent than McGovern.

At age 24, he denounced those who placed "military pride" above "human life," who put "financial return" ahead of "human welfare." He has never, in all his political career, deviated from this theme. If he has changed his position on the details, he has never wavered in principle.

I know the fundamental decency of George McGovern. I have seen his eyes grow misty over the problems of others. Rare among politicians, he has always been as open as the skies over his native South Dakota. This inability to deceive has made him an awkward politician when he gives in to his advisers and tries to play pragmatic politics.