

K-O. STATES ITEM



Partisan War Rally Gets Nixon's Veto

WASHINGTON — What was shaping up as a major confrontation with the kind of head-bashing that would have made the sad climax of last November's student moratorium look like a Sunday school picnic has been averted here, thanks to the ultimate good judgment and decency of President Nixon. It all began a few weeks ago when some administration strategists headed by Charles Colson, a bright hard-liner, got together with a local impresario named Mark Evans to see if July 4 could not be turned into the biggest "Support the War" rally ever. The troops would be victorious in Cambodia, so the thinking went, and the success of marshaling hardhats suggested the possibility that the country was ready for a gigantic "Thank you, Mr. President."

With the liberal use of Mr. Nixon's name, a committee was quickly formed. Evans, who staged the inaugural for the Republican National Committee, got together with GOP financier J. Willard Marriott and began to book the standard names.

Lyndon Johnson headed the list as honorary co-chairman, thus lending a bipartisan note without diluting the prowar sentiment by so much as one part per million, and former President Harry Truman and Mrs. Dwight Eisenhower soon joined up.

Bob Hope and Billy Graham were added to the cast, followed by Johnny Cash and some astronauts. Although Washington for years has enjoyed a spectacular fireworks and band music show on the Mall between the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial, the sponsors began to talk about "going back to a traditional Fourth."

Early on, some of the planners noted the absence of anyone opposed to the war, any blacks, any young, anyone identified with the young or anyone who ever faintly criticized the administration. The plans to bring in 100,000 buses and to aim at a million people seemed to mirror an administration intent upon proving that it had overwhelming support for the Cambodian venture.

The trouble with the plan, in addition to the overkill characteristic of public relations schemes, was that it aroused instant resentment.

If the administration really intended to put on that big a demonstration, so moratorium-minded youth leaders specu-

lated, they could hold a counterdemonstration. Moreover, antiwar senators and congressmen were annoyed at the implication they were somehow unpatriotic.

It was at this point that the President realized that what had been presented to him as a nonpolitical and nonpartisan celebration was being rapidly turned into what might appear, at best, as a self-serving circus and what, at worst, might lead to violence. Mr. Nixon immediately got in touch with Marriott. There was an about face.

Democratic Chairman Lawrence O'Brien was added to the list of sponsors. Then Sen. Mike Mansfield was asked to round up some doves, on the promise that no one would be embarrassed by prowar speeches. The majority leader quickly got Sens. John Sherman Cooper and Frank Church.

The rally is now indeed back on the track of a traditional Fourth. The only fireworks will be artificial; the only speaker will be the President, and the patriotism of all Americans—prowar and antiwar—will be celebrated.

A problem remains. Unknown to the White House planners, there had been planned some time a sort of regional smoke-in, an East Coast pot festival on July 4 on the Washington Monument grounds, talked up in the movement and spread by means of the various "underground" newspapers distributed in centers of hippie culture.

That plan cannot be checked by good taste, in the White House or elsewhere, and a confrontation is possible. The test now facing the sponsors—joined as they are in a celebration of America—is to convince both audiences that there is patriotism in just sharing this city—in peace.