

JACK ANDERSON

Nixon Rarely Views TV, Only Scans Newspapers

WASHINGTON —

Sooner or later, after a decent honeymoon period, the President and the press must quarrel. For every President invariably has sought to regulate the flow of information to the public, and the press has responded by accusing him of trying to manage the news. It is only natural, of course, for a President to want to show his best side to the public. Invariably, he is thwarted by the news media which presents the facts in a different light than he would like. Thus an amiable hostility has grown up between the man in the White House, whomever he may be, and the newsmen who watch him from the wings.

At first, President Nixon merely kept newsmen at arms length. But when their questions and comments nettled him, he unleashed Spiro Agnew upon them.

The Vice President wasn't eager for the assignment. He felt, say intimates, that he was being asked to play Mr. Hyde to Nixon's Dr. Jekyll. But he dutifully assailed the networks, then lit into the newspapers that had offended Nixon. The voice was Agnew's but the words were Nixon's, arranged in literary form by the President's speech writer, Patrick Buchanan.

Quiet on the Potomac

It is also the President's view, apparently, that what newsmen don't know won't hurt him. His press aides have strived increasingly to keep the press comfortable, but keep them in the dark.

Press Secretary Ronald Ziegler — a 30-year-old rehabilitated advertising account executive who is a master of Madison Avenue prattle — refuses to answer the most innocuous questions, except in general terms, without presidential assent. The answers he does volunteer are often erroneous and incomplete. He also speaks the language of the advertising trade, laced with such terms as "time frame," "input," "output," and "program."

Twice a day, Ziegler meets with newsmen for press briefings. Any information that the President wants to put out usually is read from prepared statements and is seldom elaborated upon.

Ziegler's aides, like himself, are bright, young and inexperienced — Tim Elbourne, 31, Bruce Whelihan, 25, Alan Woods, 24. The dean of the press staff, Jerry Warren, is 39. Wherever the President goes, his press aides precede him, ostensibly to make preparations. However, their real assignment, seemingly is to protect him from any unfavorable exposure.

Almost All Don'ts

Before Mr. Nixon's visit to Chicago last February, for example, the press aides flew out ahead of him and prepared the press for

the great occasion. At one briefing, Tim Elbourne outlined to news photographers the "do's" and "don'ts" — almost all "don'ts."

"What can we do?" growled a veteran photographer.

"Well," replied Elbourne brightly, "all of you who want to can go with Mrs. Nixon to Goose Lake Prairie. And we have planned a nice picture of Mr. and Mrs. Nixon stepping off an elevator just before the reception." Having offered the cameramen these historic events to photograph, the business-like young Mr. Elbourne departed.

Marcos Insulted

The press aides' brusque efficiency in the Philippines almost caused President Ferdinand Marcos to call off the Nixon visit to Manila last summer. Marcos happened to overhear the advance party complaining about the inadequate facilities at the presidential palace where the Nixons would stay. Broke in the Filipino President angrily: "If President Nixon is coming to insult us and the Filipino people, tell him to skip Manila." Marcos cooled off only after a hasty apology was telephoned directly from Washington.

If reporters get little news from Nixon, the reverse is also true. The President gets little news from reporters, except as it is filtered through the White House staff. He personally receives eight newspapers, but his valet, Manola Sanchez, confided to this column that the President gives them no more than a quick scan. Usually he turns first to the sports pages.

The President also doesn't watch the TV newscasts. The only time Sanchez has seen Nixon in front of the TV screen, except on rare exceptions, is on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon to watch a sports event.

Nixon's News Summary

Mr. Nixon gets most of his news from a summary that is prepared daily under the direction of Patrick Buchanan, the same man who wrote Agnew's first attack upon the press.

Following a practice that started during the presidential campaign, Buchanan puts together newspaper articles, summaries of editorials and news broadcasts and inserts them into a blue, looseleaf notebook, with the title, "The President's Daily News Briefing," embossed in gold. Buchanan hand-carries the summary, which runs up to 25 pages, to the President each morning.



Ziegler

The news digest usually consists of three sections: A collection of articles culled from the wire services, summaries of columns and editorials from 54 newspapers, and detailed summaries of the prior evening's news broadcasts.

The summary of the NBC broadcast is always written in great detail, as evidence to support the President's conviction that NBC is biased against the administration. In the words of a top assistant, the President is "way down" on NBC.