

Nixon's Strategy for 1972 Beginning to Take Shape

By ROBERT B. SEMPLE Jr. MAY 10 1971
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WASHINGTON, May 9—With-ago but have grown restless out completely doffing the with some of the Administra- Presidential hat he pledged to tion's policies.

wear after his disappointment
at the 1970 elections, President
Nixon has begun to channel
larger amounts of his time and
the resources of his staff to
the political tests that await
him in 1972.

And, bit by bit, the essential
ingredients of a strategy de-
signed to win re-election are
becoming increasingly clear.

Publicly, Mr. Nixon is ad-
dressing himself with greater
frequency and fanfare to ele-
ments of the constituency that
carried him to power two years

ago but have grown restless
with some of the Administra-
tion's policies.

Privately, meanwhile, a skel-
eton campaign operation has
been established in an office
on Pennsylvania Avenue, and
new faces have been added to
the White House staff to help
promote the President and his
policies, while some of his
senior people have quietly shift-
ed their energies from the cre-
ation of policy to the task of
consolidating Mr. Nixon's grip
on the bureaucracy and mer-
chandising the legislative agen-

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da already before Congress.

The most visible result of all
this has been a month-long
campaign to re-establish Mr.
Nixon's credentials with farm-
ers, businessmen, Southerners,
advocates of law and order,
and various ethnic and religious
groups. This followed an earli-
er effort to test his appeal in a
variety of formal and informal
settings on television and radio.

During the same period, by
contrast, he has devoted less
and less energy to attempts to
promote his Indochina policy
or mollify its critics. Five weeks
ago in San Clemente, Calif.,
where he drafted his most re-
cent troop withdrawal an-
nouncement, Mr. Nixon in-
structed his speech writer Pat-
rick J. Buchanan to keep it
short and to the point. The re-
sult was a far cry from the
emotional appeals for national
support that marked his earlier
words on Vietnam.

Similarly, with the notable
exception of a long and unpub-
licized discussion between 13
Williams College students and
H. R. Haldeman, the President's
chief of staff, Mr. Nixon's ad-
visers made little effort to open
their offices to this year's crop
of youthful antiwar demonstra-
tors, as they did after the in-
cursion into Cambodia last year.

This does not mean that Mr.
Nixon is any less convinced of
the correctness of his course.
On the contrary, his senior
aides insisted in a series of in-
terviews, he is optimistic—and,
in a sense, fatalistic—about the
outcome of his withdrawal
strategy.

They quote him as saying
in more than one staff meeting,
"Anyone who tries to make a
political issue out of Vietnam
in 1972 will have the rug pulled
from under him." And, in any
case, he is said to believe that
any further major efforts to ex-
plain his policy would be repe-
ditious or a waste of time, or
both.

The fact that, after two
weeks of ignoring demonstra-
tors, he opened his own back-
yard to a colorful, canopied
"Salute to Agriculture" is of-
fered by his staff as a clue to
his present sense of political
priorities.

To summarize the President's
activities and demeanor in the
last month is to suggest where
he feels he now ought to be di-
recting his energies and also to
suggest the outlines of a strat-
egy for 1972. His audiences
have been composed of faces
he has always found reassuring
—Republican Governors in Wil-
liamsburg, the Chamber of
Commerce, the Daughters of
the American Revolution, the
leaders of the American Farm
Bureau Federation in Washing-
ton, the men of the First Ma-
rine Division in San Clemente.

Both in word and deed, mean-
while, he has recalled some of
the conservative themes of his
1968 campaign: a strong de-
fense of free enterprise to the
Chamber, a tough stance
against the legalization of mari-
juana in his San Clemente news
conference. When addressing
any group on the subject of
welfare, he has chosen to em-
phasize the work requirements
in his welfare reform program
rather than its provisions for a
minimum income.

Over roughly the same period
he has resisted the critics of
J. Edgar Hoover, although there
is evidence that he will seek a
graceful exit for the director of
the Federal Bureau of Investi-
gation when the criticism dies
down. He has announced he will
review the war-crimes case of
First Lieut. William L. Calley
Jr., a move defended by his
staff as a necessary response
to national unrest and con-
demned by his critics as a po-
litical overture to the right
wing. And, less ambiguously, he
has said he would uphold the
Supreme Court's recent decision
permitting school busing while
refusing comment on its merits,
and has instructed his Cabinet
officers, for both tactical and
political reasons, to maintain a
low profile in the enforcement
process.

As for his potential oppo-
nents, both Democratic and
Republican, Mr. Nixon has au-
thorized increased criticism of
Senator Edmund S. Muskie,
Democrat of Maine, who has
been challenging Mr. Hoover;
while at the same time he has
sought to keep harmony in the
Republican family, and assure
himself of an ally in his quest
next year for California's 45
electoral votes, by giving Gov.
Ronald Reagan what some
critics think is an excessive
amount of time to bring him-
self into compliance with Fed-
eral welfare regulations.

In the last few weeks, too,
Mr. Nixon has taken a strong
stand against liberalized abor-
tion laws and has called abor-
tion itself an "unacceptable"
means of population control;
his panel on aid to private
schools has made a tentative
finding that parochial schools
need and deserve vastly in-
creased Federal aid. And while
there is nothing that resembles
a coherent "Catholic strategy"
emerging from the White
House, there is increasing dis-
cussion of ways to tap the
Roman Catholic vote and the
President himself has long re-
garded Catholics, who make up
23 per cent of the population,
as a strong source of conserva-
tive sentiment.

Behind the tone and tempo
of Mr. Nixon's activity lies a
set of basic political calcula-
tions. The first is that, while Mr.
Nixon cannot lose points by
ending the war and stabilizing
the economy, he may not win
points either, in part because
the country is not likely to re-
ward the achievement of ob-
jectives it has been conditioned

to expect anyway.

The second calculation is that the Democrats remain superior in the industrial Northeast, that even New Jersey, which Mr. Nixon won in 1968, is highly vulnerable to Democratic assault, and that the President must therefore make certain that he recaptures the affection of those who carried him to victory two years ago in the South, the Border States, the Middle West and the West.

The urgency of Mr. Nixon's task has been reinforced by the polls, which have shown a steady erosion of support even among the faithful. Efforts to reverse the trend earlier in the year by exposing Mr. Nixon to the public in a variety of

newspaper and television interviews failed—the President himself told Barbara Walters of the National Broadcasting Company that there was little he could do about his "image." Thus, the decision was made to focus the President's energies on selected groups and issues, and that is what he has been doing for the last month.

In the same period there have also occurred politically suggestive changes in the personality and functions of Mr. Nixon's palace guard. The basic staff structure remains as before, with Mr. Haldeman the central figure around whom the President's other senior advisers on foreign and domestic affairs revolve. But changes in, and

additions to, the public relations apparatus provide the evidence of a mounting preoccupation with 1972.

The catalyst for these changes was the departure of a young aide, Jeb Magruder, from the staff of Herbert G. Klein, the Administration's Director of Communications. A Haldeman protégé, Mr. Magruder was instructed to form an embryonic Citizens Committee to Re-Elect President Nixon in space a half-block from the White House and one floor below the Washington offices of the old Nixon law firm.

Several other aides soon joined Mr. Magruder, who had been a key figure in Mr. Klein's operation, and Mr. Haldeman

instructed Charles Colson, a senior political strategist, to replenish the public relations staff by bolstering the Klein apparatus. Mr. Colson's first discovery and appointee was John Scali, the former diplomatic correspondent for the American Broadcasting Company.

Various others have been added to the staff on either a full or part-time basis to advise Mr. Nixon how best to use the communications media and reach the public. But perhaps the strongest sign of the President's belief that the time has arrived for promotion of existing policies, as opposed to the invention of new ones, is the sudden drop in creative activity

in the Domestic Council, which formulates policy initiatives for the President under the direction of John D. Ehrlichmann.

Many of the interagency subcommittees formed last year to devise policy have fulfilled their functions (mainly the creation of the revenue-sharing and health proposals) and have disbanded. And, while individual staffers continue to discuss new proposals and initiatives, the essential business of the council today is to win Congressional acceptance of the President's welfare, health and revenue-sharing programs, an effort conducted by a small group led by Edward Morgan, a senior Ehrlichman aide.

Given the quickening pace of

political activity on the part of the President and his aides, some observers here believe that the next logical step, and final confirmation of Mr. Nixon's interest in 1972, would be for Attorney General John N. Mitchell to leave his post at the Justice Department and assume direction of the campaign.

Mr. Mitchell has reportedly told friends he would prefer to remain at Justice, but observers here, including those at the Citizens Committee, believe that Mr. Nixon's recent rhetoric is merely a prelude to Mr. Mitchell's arrival, in September, to take charge of what is already a serious and sustained effort to retain the White House.