

# Nixon's Activism: A New Personality for '72

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WALLA WALLA, Washington, Sept. 26—President Nixon, who likes to recite his own "historic firsts," is dominating the headlines and television screens all over the Northwest this weekend with an innovation that was presented merely as his natural and necessary duty: personal intervention, backed by threat of action, to end the painful West Coast dock strike.

**News Analysis** To the Montana wheat farmers and coastal fruit and lumber men who cannot ship their products, and to the crippled port cities that have been doubly hurt in this year's recession, the President brought a plea of urgency, the extracted promise that the negotiators would now try to settle in a week, a reminder that he had long ago proposed legislation to deal with this sort of thing and a warning that he would act further even if he had to stretch existing law beyond the tolerance of the course.

This is the kind of Presidential activism that Mr. Nixon and his economic theoreticians had foresworn in the first three years of this Administration. But so were wage and price controls, and so was recognition of China and so was pointless summitry and so

was dealing with Walter J. Hickel, whose home the President was to visit in Alaska while he awaited a half-hour meeting with Emperor Hirohito of Japan.

All of this Presidential action, travel and governance by pronouncement has its own justification in logic and events. But taken together it is having the further effect of creating a wholly new political personality for the coming campaign.

## Peace-Prosperity Platform

Mr. Nixon is now demonstrating the deft and powerful ways in which he can use the authority of a sitting President to focus attention on himself and to leave no issue, national or regional, to the grumblings of the opposition.

He is, in fact, running very hard on a platform of peace-for-a-generation and prosperity-withoutwar, though there exists at the moment neither peace nor prosperity. It is a formula to encompass whatever can be achieved between now and Election Day and to define the yearnings of an energetic leader for whatever degree of peace and prosperity will remain unaccomplished.

Unemployment, he tells hard-pressed Washingtonians here, is merely the momentary by-product of the conversion from war to peace.

Muted, if not banished, are

the slogans of the past about the excessive power of big government, because like it or not, Mr. Nixon's big government is going to be telling everyone how much he may charge for his goods and services.

Firmly resisted now is the old temptation to run against youthful disrupters and their permissive Democratic elders, because, justly or not, Mr. Nixon knows that he must now bear the responsibility for whatever has happened in his years at the helm.

Even in the most powerful political office, Mr. Nixon used to speak in the political jargon of the "outs" in the opposition. He now seems wholly persuaded that he is the "ins" and must change his ways to stay in.

## Swift on New Course

This may not be the way Mr. Nixon imagined events in his early "game plans," but he is above all adaptable and swift on a new course. Above all, he has a shrewd command of his subjects, so that he can milk them for political effect without upsetting sensitive policies.

When asked in Portland last night whether he came away encouraged from his meeting with labor and management in the dock strike, the President reported that he had asked the parties precisely whether he could tell the press he was encouraged. He then added:

"I can only say that I believe that my meeting with them in Portland could well help to get it off dead center. One can never be sure, because of the differences that are involved."

Despite this elaborate hedge,

Mr. Nixon's move was boldly headlined throughout the region and featured prominently on all local television stations.

The same technique—of positioning himself for credit while insulating himself from disappointment—is evident in the way Mr. Nixon now uses his scheduled trip to China on the political stump.

## Will Talk, Not Fight

"That visit does not mean that the differences between the governments of the People's Republic of China and that of the United States are going to evaporate, because they are very great and very deep," Mr. Nixon said.

"It does mean that as far as those differences are concerned, we are going to talk about them rather than fight about them, and that is terribly important to the future of peace in the world."

Though he plainly does not like the carping questions of the reporters in Washington, the President seems to enjoy the broader inquiries of business men and local newsmen around the country. In Detroit Thursday, this forum permitted a paean to the automobile and the profits it promotes.

In Oregon there was the chance to promise to do better by the Indians and never again to put Japanese-Americans in detention camps.

And with no opponent yet in sight, while all the pomp and planes and paraphernalia of the Presidency lie at their command, it is no wonder that the Nixon men have been heard to wish that, like the British, they could schedule their own election day—right away.