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Incumbent Nixon Still Faces a Difficult Campaign

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 WASHINGTON, Jan. 17 — President Nixon enters his campaign for re-election with all the advantages of incumbency but still burdened by the fact that he is a minority President leading a minority party.

His political position is clearly not what it was in 1968. A lonely figure then, with an even chance to win the nomination and only a handful of aides to help him,

he now controls not only the machinery of his party but also a personal campaign apparatus of impressive dimensions.

Yet, judging by recent polls, he commands the sympathies of less than half the voting population while his party holds the allegiance of less than a third. Once again — as Mr. Nixon himself privately concedes—he faces another difficult race.

In strictly institutional terms, the last four years

have made a vast difference to him. The rented limousines he used to campaign for votes in the bitter New Hampshire snows of 1968 have been replaced by sleek Presidential jets that can whisk him across the seas and will enable him, in the months ahead, to woo those same voters from Peking and Moscow.

The rag-tag loyalists of his comeback years—one recalls a quivering Pat Buchanan, now a speech writer, making

impromptu policy on a Concord street corner — have been superseded by a staff of 65 serious young men and earnest, pretty young girls who operate the present campaign machinery in comfortable offices across from the White House.

Men who had to be talked into helping him in 1968 are eager to get aboard in 1972; and the Republican National Committee, indifferent to his

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efforts then, is clearly subservient to him now, and indeed wonders anxiously whether it will have anything important to do in the months ahead.

Even the slogan has changed. Though the new bumper stickers have not officially been distributed, the chummy and eager "Nixon's the One" of 1968 has been replaced by a subdued and magisterial command that does not even mention his name: "Re-elect the President."

But the mathematics of the matter are, from Mr. Nixon's point of view, disturbingly similar to what they were.

To begin with, strategists here figure that any Republican candidate can count on a bedrock 31 or 32 per cent of the electorate, the Democrats about 40 per cent. They do not believe that Mr. Nixon has improved the Republican "base," and thus he must not only hold that base but also pick up 8 per cent to pull even and even more to win.

"We have always been looking for those 'extras,'" one of Mr. Nixon's aides said the other day, "and we still are."

Secondly, Mr. Nixon's narrow victory in 1968—he received 302 electoral votes, 32 more than necessary—was achieved by putting together an unusual coalition of some Southern states, most of the border states, all of the traditional Republican states, and four big ones: Illinois, Ohio, California and New Jersey.

Big State Insecurity

The strategy this year is much the same, but while the calculations have not changed the conditions have. Mr. Nixon is said to feel more secure in the South, where he is better known and liked. But he feels far less secure in California, Illinois, Ohio and New Jersey.

There is unemployment in all four states, and political problems as well. In California, for example, Gov. Ronald Reagan's popularity has slipped, and so has the popularity of Gov. Richard B. Ogilvie in Illinois.

Mr. Nixon can find cause for cheer, however, in the knowledge that the men around him are far more experienced and further ahead than they were in 1968.

His campaign manager is Attorney General John N. Mitchell—in fact if not yet in name. No major tactical move is made without his consent, and he spends a good part of his day on political matters.

Another old ally, Secretary of Commerce Maurice H. Stans, was reported by The Washington Star this week to have agreed to leave his post to return to his 1968 role as finance chairman, and the report has not been denied.

When Mr. Mitchell and Mr. Stans leave their present posts, they will move into offices at 1701 Pennsylvania Avenue, about 150 yards from the White House Gates.

There, the Committee to Re-

elect the President is already firmly in place, complete with orange carpeting, at least seven operating divisions, miniskirted secretaries, and an administrative aide who listens to quiet music on the radio while typing memos to Mr. Mitchell, and rides a \$250 red 10-speed Raleigh bicycle to work, which he parks in his office.

Money Problems Cited

The aide is Jeb S. Magruder, 37 years old, who was hand-picked by Mr. Mitchell and H. R. Haldeman, the President's powerful chief of staff. Mr. Magruder is optimistic but hardly euphoric about the year ahead.

"We're still a minority party," he says, "and we don't have anywhere near the money Larry O'Brien [chairman of the Democratic National Committee] says we do."

Mr. Magruder shares authority on the re-election committee with Harry S. Fleming, 31, who is in charge of outside political operations and has been busily installing satellite committees in the states. Nine are now in operation; the rest are expected to be in business by March 1.

As custodians of the committee, these two men have already established operating divisions to oversee advertising, policy research, public opinion surveys and scheduling of speakers.

This week, Van Shumway, a former newsman and assistant to Herbert G. Klein, the President's director of communications, arrived to assume command of the committee's press relations, along with Tom Girard, former White House correspondent for Metromedia.

Meanwhile, a special youth division under Kenneth Rietz, a former political consultant, has conducted studies of the 25.1 million potential first-time voters in the 18-25 age bracket and is planning registration drives aimed at the 13.8 million members of that bracket identified as wage-earners.

Seemingly spontaneous events are in fact the committee's handiwork. Later this week, for example, when Senator William E. Brock 3d of Tennessee announces formation of an advisory group on young voters, he will be reading from material prepared by the re-election committee.

Dole's Role Not Vital

As a vehicle for re-electing the President, the committee's influence clearly exceeds that of the Republican National Committee, which is theoretically supposed to remain impartial anyway when more than one Republican is seeking the nomination.

Mr. Nixon now has two challengers, Representatives Paul N. McCloskey Jr. of California and John N. Ashbrook of Ohio, neither of whom, the White House maintains, seriously scares the Nixon people.

The national committee's chairman, Senator Robert J. Dole of Kansas, has been

something of a figurehead in recent months, and his relations with some members of the White House staff are far from perfect.

However, the co-chairman, Thomas Evans, a former Delaware national committeeman, carries the responsibility of registering voters other than those aged 18 to 25.

Some sources maintain, however, that Mr. Evans had hoped for a bigger say in Presidential strategy than he now has or is likely to get, and he is also vulnerable to raids on his treasury and his staff by the Nixon committee.

For example, Mr. Evans's chief of communications, Franklyn C. Nofziger, has already been lured away to take over day-to-day direction of the California citizens' committee under Governor Reagan.

What of the President's own role? It will be much as advertised. He will resist overt campaigning before the convention, while building his image as statesman-diplomat, keeping his fingers tightly crossed on the economy, and hoping the North Vietnamese will let the United States escape from Vietnam before Election Day with the Saigon regime reasonably intact.

But while Mr. Nixon stays aloof from campaigning and tries to build a record, he will not lack for stand-ins. Mr. Magruder and his speaker's bureau have already drawn up a list of 20 "surrogates" for the New Hampshire primary, drawn from the Cabinet, the Senate and the White House staff.

Weicker and Volpe

Senator Lowell P. Weicker Jr. of Connecticut, for example, will appear there this week. Secretary of Transportation John A. Volpe was there recently, reminding the voters of Mr. Nixon's continued interest.

Vice President Agnew is not now on the list of surrogates. Despite Mr. Nixon's ringing words of praise for him two weeks ago, Mr. Agnew will hew to his once or twice a week speaking schedule.

It is not clear whether the Nixon men are afraid that overt campaigning in the primaries by the Vice President would provoke discontent, whether they think his presence would weaken Mr. Nixon's vows of nonpartisanship, or whether they simply have not made up their minds about his role.

But the Nixon men do want to use Secretary of the Treasury John B. Connally, whose name has been prominently mentioned as a possible Vice-Presidential candidate should Mr. Agnew falter.

They regard Mr. Connally as colorful and persuasive—the more so because he is a professed Democrat who backs the President's policies. The decision to ask him to join the effort will, of course, rest with the three Republican powers in Washington: Mr. Haldeman, Mr. Mitchell, and the President, himself.