

Nixon's Strategy Paying Off

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WASHINGTON — Picture a president who has sharply escalated a war everybody wants to abandon, who has imposed price and wage controls widely believed to be ineffective and inequitable, and who has been tarred by a Justice Department-big business scandal so smelly his nominee for attorney general is jeopardized.

That president should be in real trouble with the voters, right?

Wrong. Richard Nixon is still a runaway favorite for re-election to a second term this fall.

How long Nixon can maintain his masterful political juggling act is problematical, but for the moment he seems to be managing rather well. All things are relative. And, in comparison with the confusion and name-calling of his Democratic opposition, the President appears to be a reassuring island of stability.

Man of Action

While the Democrats are quarreling among themselves, Nixon has been using the powers of his presidency to create the image of a man of action. "I don't know that anybody can handle that White House job," a house painter who is a longtime Democrat said recently. "But I'm going to vote for Nixon because he's sure trying hard."

President Nixon's strategy for re-election consists of a well orchestrated public relations effort, constant personal attention to political nuance, emphasis upon policies that appeal to identifiable social and economic groups, and diligence in following trends as they appear in private public opinion polls.

And he is not above resorting to mirrors. For instance, he has appointed a few token blacks recently to high-visibility Administration posts, in an effort to distract blacks from his three-year record of indifference on civil rights. Superstar Sammy Davis, Jr., a lifelong Democrat, was so thrilled to become one of the tokens (on an advisory panel) that he declared Nixon has done as much for blacks as the past three or four administrations.

Unchallenged

This incredible claim went totally unchallenged by the black community; nobody, it appears, recalls that President Johnson's passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act represented the most important breakthrough for the black cause in a century.

One of the President's assets is his dedication to detail. He loves pandas and ping-pong. He may have a Democratic presidential opponent of Polish descent, so he plans a trip to Poland. He makes sports fans happy by helping to solve the baseball strike. He woos the Catholic vote by promising federal aid to parochial schools, though it involves grave constitutional questions. Public opinion polls indicate a majority opposes busing and high property tax-

es, so the President agrees. His secretary of agriculture is for high meat prices while his consumer advisers are for low meat prices.

Nixon has also profited by following the advice of the late Thomas E. Dewey. The unsuccessful, two-time GOP presidential nominee suggested that Nixon "always have a villain," a prominent scapegoat to blame for the nation's ills. Hence Nixon has been pounding away at AFL-CIO President George Meany as the chief economic villain