

The Making Of the President

By TOM WICKER

MIAMI BEACH, Aug. 23—You understand, of course, if you've been watching television from Miami Beach, that President Nixon has put an end to the war in Vietnam—"so bloody, so costly, so bitterly divisive," says the Republican platform, when Mr. Nixon came to power.

But then you also understand—surely you do—that anyone who wants us to get out of Vietnam on any terms other than Mr. Nixon's is "bemused with surrender." In fact, although Mr. Nixon already has ended the war in the prologue of the platform, in the very same prologue the Republicans declare that the nation's choice this year is one between "negotiating or begging with adversary nations."

You really have to hand it to Mr. Nixon and the Republicans. Here at Miami Beach they have shown themselves past masters of some of the finest political arts—having it both ways, turning black into white, and making something out of nothing.

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These techniques are in the finest American political tradition, Democratic as well as Republican, and can only be admired by connoisseurs.

With what matchless cool, for instance, the platform deplores the undeniable fact that before Mr. Nixon zoomed off to Peking, "the isolation of the People's Republic of China, with one-fourth of the world's population, went endlessly on." No voter could suspect from such chiseled prose that either the Republicans or Mr. Nixon ever had anything to do with that wicked isolation, and that is what politics is all about.

Moreover, this is the "open door convention" of the "open door party." Every convention speaker has managed to suggest what a splendid contrast this makes to the rigidly controlled Democratic convention of last month. Nothing is said, naturally, of actual results in the admission of young people, women, blacks; who needs to know the facts?

The "open door" does not, naturally, extend to Republican convention headquarters at the Doral Beach Hotel. There, a prominent sign proclaims "THIS HOTEL IS CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC" and the security men, some with menacing bulges under their jackets, others with Graustarkian jackets and caps, swarm like the Nixon youth that are bused from rally to rally here. But this fortress mentality (and Mr. Nixon is not even in residence at the Doral) does not surface in the righteous "open door" rhetoric; the people aren't entitled to know everything.

Speaker after speaker warns here of the profound threat to the free enterprise system posed by the extremists said to have stolen the Democratic party from rightful heirs the Republicans seem to consider remarkably virtuous. These speakers do not say who imposed wage and price controls on the economy, or whose policy failures made those controls more or less necessary. But let us not ask too much of fallible human beings.

Let us not inquire, for instance, how the Republicans can defiantly declare their flat opposition to "programs or policies which embrace the principle of a Government-guaranteed income," when only three years ago Mr. Nixon became the first American President to propose a program embracing precisely that principle—his once-vaunted Family Assistance Plan. Pat Moynihan, rest in peace.

And it is reassuring, isn't it, that the open-door party also vowed to "continue to defend the citizen's right to privacy in our increasingly interdependent society"? It may, of course, be unfortunately true that the Nixon Administration has heretofore boasted of its wiretapping and bugging policies, which ultimately had to be curbed by the Supreme Court, but perhaps this is nit-picking. Watch what we say, not what we do, or vice versa in some cases.

And what fair-minded man would try to make a connection between the Democrats' troubles with organized labor and the fact that this year's Republican platform promises a continued search for "realistic and fair solutions to emergency labor disputes"—in sharp contrast to the 1968 plank on which Mr. Nixon was elected, which said emergency strike legislation was "imperative"? Everybody is entitled, after all, to grow and mature in office; no politics in that.

Of course, the open-door party and its President are "irrevocably opposed to busing for racial balance." And though it may seem superficially contradictory, they also "strongly oppose the use of housing or community development programs to impose arbitrary housing patterns on unwilling communities." But, really, nothing could be more logical, because if you don't want to bus black kids into white neighborhoods, you certainly don't want their black families moving in next door.

It's that kind of thing that makes the Republicans and Mr. Nixon what they are. Come to think of it, it's that kind of thing that makes American politics.