

The making of the President as disclosed at Miami Beach

MIAMI BEACH — 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 he 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 Nixon's is "bemused with surrender." In fact, although 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 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. 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 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 Nixon ever had anything to do with that wicked isolation, and that is what politics is all about.

Moreover, this was the "open-door convention" of the "open-door party." Every convention speaker managed to suggest what a splendid contrast this makes to the rigidly controlled Democratic convention of last month. Nothing

was 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 proclaimed, "This hotel is closed to the public" and the security men, some with menacing bulges under their jackets, others with graustarkian jackets and caps, swarmed like the Nixon youth that were bused from rally to rally here. But this fortress mentality (and Nixon was not even in residence at the Doral) did not surface in the righteous "open door" rhetoric; the people aren't entitled to know.

Speaker after speaker warned 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.

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 Nixon what they are. Come to think of it, it's that kind of thing that makes American politics.