



What's Happened To the Campaign?

— Joseph Kraft

WHERE are the issues of yesterday? How come nobody seems to bother much these days about bombing Vietnam, saving the cities or even preserving law and order?

The answer I think is that a landslide fever is building up in the country. Senator George McGovern is performing so badly, events and the public opinion polls are turning so steadily against him, that the disposition to question and criticize the President is being swept away in a general assumption that Mr. Nixon will win no matter what happens.

A good example is the puff served up to Mr. Nixon by Pat Moynihan, the former White House aide who is now a professor at Harvard, in the September 1 issue of *Life* magazine. For Moynihan, far from being a mere tub-thumper, is a trenchant social critic admired here and in many other quarters because he is usually so good at questioning assumptions and ridiculing pretensions.

★ ★ ★

THE TONE of Moynihan's present approach is arrestingly expressed in his claim that Mr. Nixon is "as much an intellectual as any President in modern times."

But what is Moynihan's proof? The answer, literally, is that Mr. Nixon told him so. The article says: "I heard him say just that — 'I too am an intellectual' — to a dinner at the Hotel Pierre."

As to substance, the only detailed argument in the article involves quotas. This, according to Moynihan, is how the president feels:

"He becomes personal and specific on this issue, pointing as any instance to the number of Jews among his closest advis-

ers. Henry A. Kissinger, assistant for National Security Affairs; Arthur F. Burns, chairman of the Federal Reserve Board; Herbert Stein, chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers; Edward E. David Jr., science adviser; Leonard Garment, his special consultant on the widest range of social and cultural issues; William L. Safire, a trusted speechwriter. If he had made appointments by quota, he asserts, he would have had to fire them all except Kissinger whom he would insist on keeping, but might have to settle for using on a quarter-time basis."

Occasionally, quotas have been advocated to change hiring practices in schools and on corporation boards. But not even Professor J. K. Galbraith, a far-out comedian on the quota issue, has ever proposed their use for the White House staff.

★ ★ ★

THE POINT of all this is not whether the President's policies have been good or bad. The point is that highly intelligent men now think that the way to find favor with the White House is to repeat utter nonsense just because Mr. Nixon happens to mouth it. The point is that the climate for the uncritical toadying that marked Lyndon Johnson's presidency is building up once again.

In the past Mr. Nixon has not been without his critics. We have not always been right, but where Mr. Nixon has been obliged to compromise — in the economy and on the Supreme Court — the country has been well served.

The electoral landslide now shaping up, and the climate of uncritical flattery emerging with it, will help neither the country nor the President.