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President Nixon's Big Drive

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The 1970 mid-term election has become a characteristic Nixon effort.

Mr. Nixon, an intense ideological partisan, undoubtedly would consider it one of the major accomplishments of his Presidency—next to world peace probably the most important—if he could make the Republicans once again the nation's majority party. With this purpose in mind, he has been recruiting candidates for next week's election for more than a year.

Since many of them are Congressmen with seniority and safe seats, he incurred an implicit obligation to campaign for them and, if they lose, to reward them with patronage jobs. Behind the scenes, he has helped raise prodigious sums of money from businessmen for those House and Senate candidates.

Unlike his recent predecessors, Mr. Nixon also works hard to reshape his party as well as to increase its strength. He wants to consolidate the conservative grip on the party and isolate its weakened progressive faction.

The President does not go quite as far as Senator Goldwater who once expressed a wish to saw off the Eastern Seaboard and let it float out to sea. But there is no longer any doubt that Vice President Agnew was speaking for the White House when he read Senator Goodell of New York out of the party. Similarly, in Virginia, the White House has undercut Ray Garland, the liberal G.O.P. candidate, in order to help Senator Harry Byrd Jr., who is running for re-election as an independent.

His Political Speeches Push the Emotional Levers of the Fifties

If Republicans win the big victories that Mr. Nixon is working for, the right wing of the G.O.P. will be decisively strengthened. Most of the Congressmen whom the President is trying to get promoted to the Senate—Cramer in Florida, Brock in Tennessee, Roudsbush in Indiana, Wold in Wyoming and others—are hawkish on foreign affairs and extremely conservative in domestic policy.

The principal obstacle in Mr. Nixon's big political drive is his Administration's own record, principally the sharp rise in unemployment, the continued inflation and the failure to end the war in Vietnam. The war may be a more significant factor in this election than surface evidence suggests. Like a low-grade infection which weakens the patient, the dragging on of the war weakens the Administration.

The President's basic campaign speech is in the classic Nixon style. He believes in drastically simplifying the issues almost to a child's level—the peace forces vs. the crime forces; drawing the line against violence; the good silent majority standing up for America against four-letter words. If the President's listeners think that law-and-order problems are simple, his speech encourages them in this mistaken belief.

In the climax of his set speech, Mr.

Nixon actually suggests that his listeners can get rid of social unrest by simply voting against one party and for another. Vote against the Democrat, he says over and over again, who "has given encouragement to, has condoned lawlessness and violence and permissiveness."

There is a basic issue of accuracy in attacking one's political opponents in this fashion. Doesn't Senator Edward M. Kennedy, whose two brothers were assassinated, abhor violence? Is there any doubt that a sober, church-going Mormon like Senator Frank Moss of Utah is against smut and pornography? Does any one really believe that thoughtful, experienced Senators like Philip Hart of Michigan or Albert Gore of Tennessee are in favor of shooting policemen or bombing campuses?

To ask these questions is to answer them. Yet President Nixon tells the voters they can somehow get rid of crime, violence, and pornography just by voting against these Senators. He has now sharpened this issue by rejecting the report by the National Commission on Obscenity and Pornography as the product of his Democratic predecessor.

The "soft on crime and violence" issue is the 1970 version of the "soft on Communism" issue, on which Mr. Nixon rode to power in the early 1950's. Whether he can repeat his successes of twenty years ago by working the same emotional levers has become the great question which the voters will answer on Nov. 3.

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