

Mr. Nixon and the Press:

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 9—President Nixon will hold his first news conference in 19 weeks tomorrow evening, and the event has raised many more questions here than he can possibly handle in the allotted 29-minute television slot. When the President last submitted to public questioning, there was still official hope of negotiating an end of the war in Vietnam. There were plans to submit a balanced budget next year in expectation of full economic recovery. There was no quarrel over Soviet cheating in the Suez cease-fire zone. There was hope of enacting a major welfare reform. There had been no acknowledged bombing and landing in North Vietnam. There was no dispute about the President's campaign tactics or claims of victory at the polls. There was no Marxist government in Chile and no threat of another missile-crisis in Cuba. There was a Walter Hickel in the Cabinet.

Now, in what seems like a wholly new phase in the life of the Nixon Administration, these subjects and many others cry out for clarification. Some citizens have written to Washington reporters suggesting questions and asking why the President is not facing them more often.

Ironically, Mr. Nixon's announcement of tomorrow's news conference has provoked not only the usual compilation of possible inquiries but also a great deal of discussion among reporters and with White House officials about the value and format of the whole proceeding.

18th Session in 2 Years

This will be Mr. Nixon's 18th news conference in two years, the 12th on television. His three immediate predecessors held an average of 22 to 27 a year, including many impromptu gatherings in his office by President Johnson, mostly televised meetings by President Kennedy and mostly formal but untelevised sessions by President Eisenhower.

President Nixon has steadfastly refused to commit himself to any fixed schedule of meetings with the press, reserving the right to decide when they served the public (and the Administration's) interest and suggesting that he often preferred other forms of communication such as formal speeches and background briefings with editors and publishers around the country.

His policy has evoked complaints not only from Washington newsmen but also from students of the political scene. Some have deplored the infrequency and irregularity of the news conferences. Some have

blamed the presence of television cameras for the allegedly excessive "politeness" of reporters' questions. Others have criticized the random selection of questioners, the lack of follow-up inquiries to incomplete answers and the absence of the sharp give-and-take heard at question time in the British Parliament.

Mr. Nixon has tried on a few occasions to limit the subject matter of the questions but most other suggestions for change have been ignored. So the news conference remains, as in other recent administrations, primarily as a vehicle for the President with relatively little risk that he can be forced to deal with a point he prefers to ignore.

A List of Questions

Nonetheless, even some Administration officials have hoped for more regular appearances to convey their purposes and programs to the country. Some have also recalled that President Kennedy had a strong private motive for regular sessions because the preparation for them forced the huge Federal bureaucracy to brief him on every potentially embarrassing matter.

Probably more important than these procedural questions, however, are the many inquiries that have been piling up in recent months for tomorrow's news conference. Here is a random list from one newspaper office:

The economy—Now that recovery has been delayed, what is your new target for unemployment in 1972? Do you share the view of your principal advisers that further inflation will be due almost entirely to excessive wage increases? Precisely how much growth in the money supply have you been promised in the "commitment" of the Federal Reserve Board? What have you done to ease the conversion from military to civilian production and what special efforts are planned to help job-seeking Vietnam veterans? Have you changed your mind about vetoing the trade bill if it limits imports other than textiles?

The war—Did the raids and landing in North Vietnam violate the 1968 "understanding" on a bombing halt and do you plan other new forms of attack? With negotiations going nowhere, is "Vietnamization" the only remaining path out of the war? If that is going well, can you announce another annual target for troop withdrawal or a deadline for total disengagement? How long will Americans have to fight or fly in combat in Asia? How will "Vietnamization" win the release of American prisoners?

The campaign—What limitations do you think should be applied to the financing and conduct of political campaigns? Why did you risk injury before a hostile crowd in San

Jose? In what ways are Republicans less "permissive" than Democrats toward radicals? What is your answer to Administration officials who believe your party suffered a setback last month, partly because you and the Vice President preferred attack on the Democrats to emphasis on your record? Will you debate your opponent in 1972?

Law and order—Why have you waited six months without appointed a director of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration? Do you approve of J. Edgar Hoover's making undocumented public charges about a kidnapping plot or his public rating of his superiors in the Justice Department? Will you seek new internal security legislation? Why have you not commented for 10 weeks on the Scranton commission's analysis of campus unrest? Having found the pornography commission's report to be morally bankrupt, how will you deal with the subject? Do Government-paid attorneys have different responsibilities in representing the poor than private attorneys for paying clients? Will you permit Secretary Romney to promote racially integrated housing in the suburbs? Do you favor the amendment on equal rights for women?

Domestic programs—what have you personally done to win over Republican Senators or support of the welfare reform? Are you having trouble filling long-vacant positions in the fields of health and education? What kind of new health programs can the country afford? When will you reveal an urban policy for new communities and to guide pattern of

city growth? Should the Federal Government help rescue struggling parochial schools? What has happened to your first five-years-of-life program for children? How did Secretary Hickel lose your confidence and which of his policies at the Interior Department will you change?

Foreign Affairs—What can we do to protect democracy and American assets in Chile? What was the Soviet threat that evoked warnings of another crisis in Cuba and what are the terms of your new understanding with Moscow? What new arms are being sent to Israel and what can the United States do to offset Soviet involvement if the fighting at Suez is resumed? Passed the United States in strategic strength? Do you favor the seating of both Communist China and Taiwan in the United Nations? What explains the deterioration in relations with Japan?

Finally: Would you give more news conferences if you could always read the questions in advance?

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A Few Questions

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Nixon Administration
beginning 30 Sep 70