

Merry-Go-Round

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# The Selling of Richard Nixon



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JOE MCGINNIS'S book, *The Selling of the President*, revealed in excruciating detail how presidential candidate Richard Nixon was marketed to the American public in 1968 like a bottle of bubble bath beads.

He was taken in hand by advertising and television specialists who prepared him for public display. They preened, powdered and pomaded him. They taught him to project a warm, fatherly, presidential image on the tube.

What Nixon stood for was of secondary importance. The overriding goal was to sell not the issues but the image to the people.

Now he is being fitted with a new image for 1972. The conservative Nixon of 1968 is rapidly being liberalized before our eyes.

The process began last fall with his personal appearance.

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HE FIRED his barber and hired Milton Pitts, a tonsorial artist, who is billed as "Washington's leading men's hair stylist."

Pitts promptly washed the oil and goo out of Nixon's hair, combed out the curly ends, lowered his sideburns, and gave him a razor-cut. Result: a more modern "natural" look. According to one insider, the President even colors his hair to hide the gray.

Nixon's tailor, H. Freeman & Son of Philadelphia, is also sending the President modestly designed double-breasted suits with wider lapels. Nixon has also started wearing more modern, three-inch wide ties.

He watches his weight (170 pounds), gets plenty of sleep (seven hours mini-

mum), and shaves as often as three times a day.

Attorney General John Mitchell, who is expected to resume his role as campaign manager in 1972, also appreciates the value of a good image. At a recent Washington party, he was heard to declare that the "Nixon men are not all squares." To prove his point, he rose to toast the hostess and told two locker room jokes of W. C. Fields vintage.

"We have got to change the Nixon image," he later explained. "People do not see the President for what he really is or see what he is really doing."

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FOR ALL OF the administration's bel-lying about the networks, Nixon has commandeered more prime time on the nation's TV screens than did all his predecessors combined.

Image experts note that Nixon is careful to choose formats that tend to project him as a "warm" figure. They also point out that when he is interviewed on television, he invariably chooses to be questioned by the network "anchor men" rather than by reporters who cover him daily and are more familiar with the White House operation.

No one will say how many image specialists are on the White House payroll. But confidential sources put the number at about 55, counting secretaries.

Of course, all presidents have attempted to sell themselves and their programs. But never in the history of the republic has a president attacked the task with more cold calculation and more expert help than has Richard Nixon.

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