

a profession away from home, Canadians are culturally wary of moving to a "foreign" province.

There are certain British influences, such as the English language and the reverence of the Queen, that at times seem to unify the nation, but perhaps what sustains this country as Canadian, rather than as American or as British, is the French undercurrent. The current is stronger than we expected. It runs from Quebec through the entire country. Last summer we traveled the John Cabot Trail in Nova Scotia. As we rounded the northwest corner, the countryside became *la campagne*. Suddenly we were in Acadian territory. Grocery was *épicerie*; bakery was *boulangerie*, and we had a difficult time buying whole-wheat bread. I ordered in broken French and wound up with an unwanted loaf of *pain blanc*. The village of Petit Etang seemed poorer than the hamlets on the Scottish side of the island, and the people seemed less friendly. But there was a barrier to our understanding Petit Etang, a linguistic one. I am convinced that knowing French is an integral part of being Canadian.

Perhaps the French influence is Canada's salvation from the unkind legacies of the American hardsell and the English chancery. When outsiders imagine life in Toronto, they visualize pallid Britons in coal-gray buildings, stoking the last dim fires of the Empire. The imaginings about Montreal are different. They conjure up a sparkling port city, where French tastes are pampered at sidewalk cafés. However extreme the caricatures, the two traditions do set different tones and support the separatists' argument about the impossibility of harmony.

We were not prepared for the degree of bitterness between the English and the French. While the analogy with U.S. racial strife is an overstatement, the parallels extend into the very vocabulary of segregation. Canadians describe the French and English as "the two founding *racés*." Some Anglos still insult the French by telling them to "speak white." Throughout Quebec, as well as in "English Canada," economic tradition identifies the Anglos as the big businessmen and bankers and the French as the laborers and small shopkeepers. In a broader spectrum, the English government has directed the country's history. For instance, the French opposed conscription during both world wars. Montreal's mayor was interned in 1940 for denouncing military registration; Pierre Trudeau is one of the era's better-known draft dodgers. The recent emergence of "Frog Power" and the growing strength of the separatist *Parti Québécois* as well as the terrorism of

the Quebec Liberation Front underline the poignant title of Hugh MacLennan's famous novel *Two Solitudes*.

I view separatism through prismli confusion. I appreciate the spirit of independence; yet I hope for reconciliation. As an American who came to Canada for some semblance of personal autonomy, I must grant freedom to those who demand it. Thus, the determined choice of Quebecers would be more crucial to me than the legality or the economic feasibility of secession. Certainly, the French are already separated by language, culture, and a sense of injustice (pointed up by the irony of a country that acknowledges its bilingualism on cereal boxes rather than in the classrooms). As a future Canadian citizen, however, I hope that secession never occurs, because I would rue the loss of that dimension of Canadian identity.

Of course, Canada is not just French and English. The "ethnic" immigrants (the Italians, Ukrainians, Germans, Portuguese, and Poles) add a third distinction to Canadian life. More than two million such immigrants have come into Canada's population of twenty-two million since World War II ended. Their impact is especially felt in the big cities. They are called "New Canadians" rather than "immigrants" from the day they arrive. Canada's composition, theoretically at least, is a mosaic rather than a melting pot.

Last year we lived in a Portuguese district; this year we live in an Italian neighborhood. Now we know why the young man in the Hart House pub said we are not "real immigrants." The point can be proved by taking a stroll through our neighborhood. The evening heat brings everyone out on front porches. The men are usually standing, their short bodies tokenly clad in v-neck undershirts and wrinkled wash-and-wear slacks. The women, in perpetual mourning for husbands, brothers, and uncles, sit pinched inside black habits. A photograph of the porch would be as much a classic of New-Canadian domesticity as *American Gothic* is of WASP rural life.

There is an almost unseeming romance about living among the colors and smells and sounds of a downtown neighborhood. These post-World War I dwellings string out, one, two, three, four, sometimes fifteen or sixteen attached in a row. Last year on Robert Street Manuel Neto, who owned his house, lived with his wife and two daughters on the ground floor. We lived on the second floor. The Valeras from Uruguay—Guadalupe, Marguerita, and Lupe—lived in the three rooms above us. We would meet one another briefly, on the way to the wash-

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On several occasions we communicate with the people of English, French, and Spanish. The diversity in the States is not shared by the second and third generations. Whether it has been suburbanized or simply lost in the machinery of American cities, I can't say. Here the immigrants are strongly felt. We have never known an American city as cosmopolitan as Toronto.

The open-air booths in Kensington Market are piled high with fresh fruits and vegetables. Pinching and tasting are a respected part of the game. The smells from the Jewish, Rumanian, and Italian bakeries mingle with the people in the street, and a Bavarian polka plays loudly from the old phonograph in the German draperer's stall. The market is forever crowded with short, dark-skinned men, round, clear-skinned women, and children who are their exact miniatures.

On first comparison, we may not seem like these *real* immigrants. On reflection, their presence tells us much about our own. Our dreams are similar, dreams of freedom and renewal, though perhaps we have awakened to different realities. Certainly, we have awakened from Utopia. We now know that Canada is not the fresh flower grown from the American compost heap. This country suffers its own injustices. But in Canada's development, especially in the growing independence, we sense a potential that we would like to be our own.

The potential is social, political, and ecological. We appreciate the regional and ethnic diversity, the viability of a socialist third party, and the sheer space of the country. While Canada does not embody all the answers that the States lacks, it does bespeak potential solution rather than dissolution. As young immigrants, this potential is all we can want.

We may be immigrants, but we can never be Canadians. Like other people of our time, we have lost hold of nationality. We are no longer bound by the vertical heritage of a nation, but by the horizontal spirit of a generation. People of this ethic have an extranational allegiance to "social change" or "revolution." It is possible to work such rhetoric into reality in Canada. We do not have to "love it or leave it." We can grow with the country and contribute to it without being compromised, something we could not do in the United States, and such distinctions mark the border. □

THE QUESTION OF PRESIDENTIAL CHARACTER

Neither the war nor the economy is the key campaign issue, says a noted political scientist, but rather the character of the next President. The author examines the pasts of Richard Nixon and George McGovern to determine how well each candidate would perform in office.

BY JAMES DAVID BARBER

The next President of the United States is the grandson of western pioneers and the son of a father out of the hell-fire-and-damnation Methodist tradition. His family endured hard times in their modest white-frame house, but eventually, as a young man in his early thirties, he won election to the House of Representatives. His parents, small-town, middle-class Republicans, were pleased when the boy turned out to be a topflight student, a champion debater, a passable pianist and play-actor, and they were content that he could live at home while attending college. Compared with his younger brother, who was forever getting into minor scrapes, he was somewhat withdrawn—especially with girls—but he found a way to popularity and was repeatedly elected president of his college class. Never much of an athlete himself, he became an avid sports fan and today enjoys watching a good pro football game on television. After service overseas in World War II and years of arduous graduate study, he tried out several different fields of work before embarking on a political career. He won his first race for Congress against apparently insuperable odds, unseating a long-term incumbent in a campaign featuring a flurry of soft-on-Communism charges. As a young congressman he became identified with the liberal wing of his party and acquired a reputation as a hard worker with a mind of his own. His political career was launched. Elected to the U.S. Senate after two terms in the House, he quickly established himself as a national figure with presidential potential.

Such was George McGovern—and Richard Nixon.

Those who think the “facts” of a man’s life—his social class, professional experience, and educational background—speak for themselves are going to have a hard time evaluating the 1972

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presidential nominees. Their superficial biographies are just too similar to be of much help in making a choice. It is safe to predict that from next January to 1977, our President will be a middle-class ex-senator with advanced education who climbed rapidly up the traditional political ladder. Nevertheless, we sense that there are profound differences between President Nixon and Senator McGovern—differences of character—that belie these superficial resemblances.

They do differ, of course, on the issues. But the issues and the candidates’ stands on them come and go. (In 1964 Johnson won election as a dove against a hawkish Goldwater; four years later Nixon’s free-enterprise economics contrasted with Humphrey’s support of price controls.) What persists is the slow shift of national directions, which a President can advance or retard. To move the country forward, a President must excel in the art of political leadership. Such an ability requires, first and foremost, that his character be attuned to the possibilities of the office and to the temper of the times. It requires, in short, a “presidential” character. And on the level of character, Nixon and McGovern are about as dissimilar as any two candidates could be—a fact that McGovern himself has noted. “I can’t think of anyone,” he recently said, “who is more of an antithesis of me than Richard Nixon.”

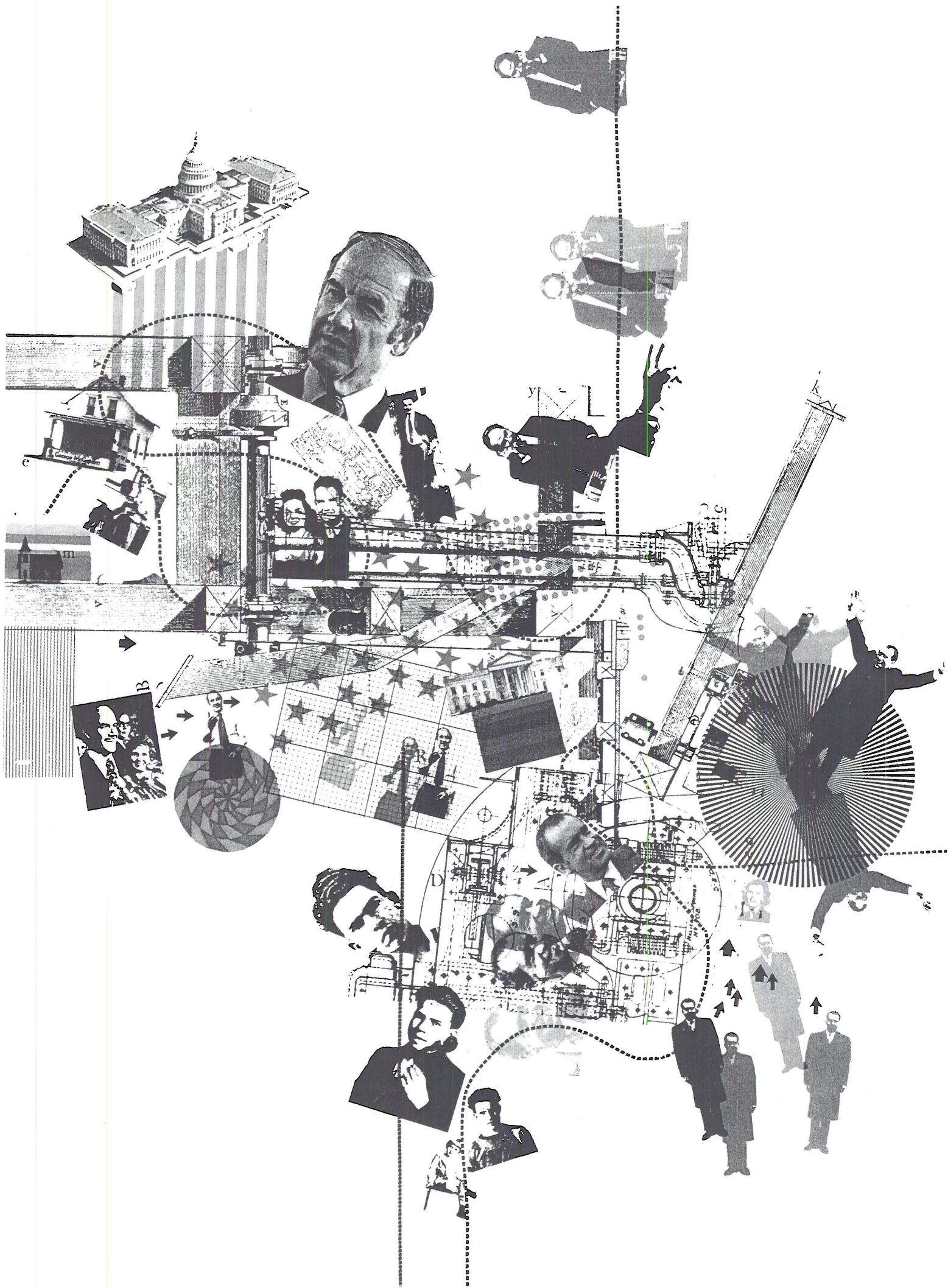
They do, however, share certain traits. Clearly, both men are activists. They believe the President must be an energizing force and practice that belief in their daily lives. McGovern complains when his schedulers get him to an airport ten minutes early with nothing to do. Nixon’s every vacation is a working one. But the term “activist” is surely too broad to tell us much about the character of our next President, especially since the demands of the office are so great today that an essentially passive man like Calvin Coolidge, who often slept eleven hours a night and still found time for a midday nap, would scarcely be able to deal with them.

History shows, however, that activist Presidents tend to divide into two opposite types, which I have termed active-positive and active-negative. Active-positive Presidents—recent examples are Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and John Kennedy—experience the office as an opportunity not only to implement social reform but to fulfill themselves personally. They value productiveness highly and adopt flexible approaches toward achieving their goals. They exude confidence and the sense of enjoying the power of the presidency. And, as it happens, Presidents who *like* to do what a President *has* to do are far better able than their opposites to make the American governmental mule move forward.

By contrast, active-negative Presidents—Lyndon Johnson, Herbert Hoover, and Woodrow Wilson, for example—start out strong and flexible but wind up defeated and rigid. They experience in the office a basic contradiction between intense effort and low emotional reward for that effort. In fact, the harder they work, the worse they feel. They are the hyperambitious, compulsive, endure-today-to-enjoy-tomorrow types. Deeply unsure of themselves, they feel aggressive and suspicious toward those around them. And even though active-negative Presidents often come across as adroit political realists, they eventually endanger themselves and perhaps even the country by taking a stand on “principle” and sticking to it regardless of the consequences. Such a stand cost Wilson his League of Nations, lost Hoover his humanitarian reputation, and sent Lyndon Johnson back to his ranch prematurely.

Richard Nixon’s nearly four years in office confirm, I think, his place among active-negative Presidents.

For George McGovern, of course, there is much less evidence to go on, but in my judgment his character closely resembles those of past active-positive Presidents. Both cases become clearer, I think, when we step back from today’s news and look at these men as whole human beings—persons like the rest of



us whose basic characters were formed a long time ago.

As a law student in the Thirties, Richard Nixon was known as "Gloomy Gus." Last January, when a reporter asked Nixon whether he enjoyed being President, he replied: "Well, in terms of all the trappings of office, all the power of office, that does not appeal to me. I must say I don't particularly enjoy the struggle with the bureaucracy, the press, and all that. But what I do like about the job is the possibility, in the brief time I have, of doing something that someone else might not have been able to do. . . . Just the way the cards happen to fall I may be able to do things which can create a new structure of peace in the world. To the extent that I am able to make progress toward that goal, I would very thoroughly enjoy that job. But if you put it in terms of 'Do you enjoy the job in terms of the everyday battles?'—no, not particularly. I could do without a lot of that."

There are many similar personal testimonies to the fact that Nixon experiences his political life as painful and tense, earnest but sad, worthwhile only because the effort may produce some good. At the time of his recent Moscow trip one of the television networks ran the film clip of his famous "Kitchen Debate" with Premier Khrushchev in 1959. There was Nixon, smiling and apparently serene while the Soviet premier mocked and insulted him. But, as he wrote later in *Six Crises*, Nixon was really under heavy strain: He was "walking on eggs," trying "to restrain myself time and time again from expressing views I deeply felt and wanted to get across," feeling "like a fighter wearing sixteen-ounce gloves and bound by Marquis of Queensbury rules, up against a bare-knuckled slugger who had gouged, kneed, and kicked."

As he has often said of himself, Nixon is a pessimist and a person plagued by doubt and tension when he approaches a big decision. Deciding whether to take on a crisis is "far more difficult than the test itself," an experience that "takes a heavy toll mentally, physically, and emotionally," the part that "tears your insides out." Only "tough, grinding discipline" can carry one through the test.

George McGovern is not much given to such confessions. On one occasion a reporter asked him, "Aren't you a little intimidated at the prospect of being President of the United States?" "No," he answered, "as a matter of fact, I'm thrilled at the prospect." The reporter pressed on: "As exhausting physically and emotionally as it certainly is going to be, do you dread or look forward to the next fifteen months of campaigning?" To which came the reply, "I think it will be a very zestful experience."

The point is not only that McGovern seems much more positive as he looks toward his future but also that, unlike Nixon, he is rarely preoccupied with the tension, pain, and doubt of life. Indeed, McGovern insists that he enjoys politics a great deal. The part of the game he finds "the most fun" is "the development of ideas and issues," but like Harry Truman he can wind up the most grueling day of political labors—twelve hours of meetings and greetings—calm and fresh.

McGovern's good feelings about his job come out in his humor. No Adlai Stevenson, he belongs to the cornball school of political wit, though his writers occasionally invent a swift line. Significant as a sign of character, however, is the fact that he can—and often does—laugh at himself, in marked con-

The danger is that some day Richard Nixon may transform a passing crisis into a permanent disaster.

trast to the aggressive humor of an active-negative type such as Richard Nixon or Lyndon Johnson. "Some people say I'm too decent to be President," McGovern told one audience, "but I've got members of my staff working on a list of my inadequacies." And in the midst of the Eagleton crisis early last month, he could remark with a smile, "I don't say it's been a perfect campaign." Over and over he relates stories of his own campaign stumbles—his habit of forgetting names and places, for example. He is not above poking fun at other eminences of the political world but ends up the butt of most of his own jokes.

Again like the other active-positives, McGovern does not seem to mind sounding sentimental; as when he said after the Democratic Convention that "the great effort to win this nomination was a concrete demonstration of the power of love . . . a labor of love." Neither does he hesitate to let people know that he really enjoyed (and saw repeatedly) such maudlin films as *The Sound of Music* and *Doctor Zhivago*, that he enjoys mundane tasks like cleaning out his swimming pool, that he took pleasure in retiling the kitchen floor to cheer up his wife at a time when she felt low. Both the humor and the sentimentality underline McGovern's basic self-esteem. One need not defend every little outpost of the personality if the central fortress is secure.

McGovern's cool, his frequent assertions of self-confidence (once he com-

pared himself with Charles de Gaulle in this regard), and his undramatic public demeanor can irritate staffers concerned about some campaign crisis. And it is true that McGovern's cool can often be a kind of blindness, a typical active-positive myopia that makes such a rationally oriented man unable to see and deal with the daimonic and irrational in politics. It evidently did not occur to him that Senator Eagleton could forget or conceal his medical history, or that various shufflings of votes at the Democratic Convention (such as the sudden shift of tactics in the credentials fight over the South Carolina delegation) could be construed as a somewhat disingenuous maneuver. Roosevelt, Truman, and Kennedy had the same trouble, leaving behind a good deal of political wreckage as they tramped blithely along. Often they had to stop at inconvenient moments and pick up the pieces.

Like his active-positive predecessors, McGovern tends to skate along the top of many a crisis, not exactly oblivious, but selective in his involvements. "I think I have a steady dependable temperament, as well as a sense of history and some degree of imagination," he says. He stresses the larger continuities in his life—his long-standing opposition to the war, for example, rather than his occasional backings and fillings on the issue, or his deeply felt indignation over poverty amidst affluence, rather than the details of his welfare plans.

That sense of continuity stands in marked contrast to Nixon's feeling that life is just one damn thing after another. He sees his experiences as an irregular series of peaks and nadirs, each a unique and novel break with the past, and describes them in superlatives ranging from "the most exciting day of my life" down to "the worst experience of my life." His political career, Nixon recalls, "has been one of very sharp ups and downs." The fact that he chose to write his book about six unconnected personal crises is a broad clue to his vision of the way life unfolds.

Nixon's political style—his penchant for surprise, for example—reflects a need to create these abrupt breaks in his career. In form, each crisis follows a set pattern—the initial decision to become involved in it, then a time of intense preparation, then the sudden psychological release provided by some decisive act, and finally a letdown period. But the content and direction of a Nixon crisis is essentially unpredictable. If McGovern's life is a prevailing wind, Nixon's is stormy weather, now from the east, now from the west.

There is another significant contrast between the two candidates' styles of leadership. A great deal of politics concerns decisions about what we (the

people, the Congress, the media) should be attending to these days—and a President's character helps determine the choices he makes. Richard Nixon, much like Wilson, Hoover, and Johnson, most often has his mind focused on himself. In the midst of his speech revealing the invasion of Cambodia in 1970, Nixon took time to discuss its possible effects on his chances in an election more than two years away. He explained his course of action—taken nearly on his own—as though he were a lone ranger mounting a one-man attack on an Indian camp: "I knew the stakes that were involved. I knew the division that would be caused in this country. I also knew the problems internationally. I knew the military risks. . . . I made this decision. I believe it was the right decision. I believe it will work out. If it doesn't, then I'm to blame."

Throughout his writings and speeches Nixon makes himself the central character. He saw the Haynsworth and Carswell defeats as assaults on his presidential authority, the trips to Peking and Moscow as triumphs of personal diplomacy. In these self-dramatizations Nixon becomes part of his audience, perpetually watching and correcting his own performance and managing his feelings. Here is Nixon at the airport in Caracas during his tense South American tour in 1958: "The minute I stepped off the airplane, while getting the salute, I cased the place. (I always do that when I walk out.) I looked it all over and watched the kind of crowd, thinking, where will I make an unscheduled stop, where will we move out and shake hands and so forth . . . we walked down the steps from the airplane, and I quickly made a few mental notes and decisions. As we trooped the line I decided not to wave to the crowd, but to ignore it since they were showing disrespect for their flag and their national anthem as well as ours."

It is impossible to imagine George McGovern being so self-conscious about the way he projects himself. Like Nixon, he was a college actor (Richard in the Thirties drama *Bird in Hand*, George in a play called *When Stars Shine*), but there the similarity ends. Nixon's speech in acceptance of the presidential nomination in 1968 has a long autobiographical passage about his fulfillment of "an impossible dream." McGovern's 1972 acceptance speech contains barely a whisper of self-revelation. McGovern's attention moves outward from himself to the world beyond; like Roosevelt, Truman, and Kennedy, he prefers to talk about the way things are, not about who he is. Nor is he much concerned, as Nixon is, with asserting and defending his own power, dignity, and manhood. With the invasion of Cambodia, the Vietnam War became for Nixon a matter of pride versus humiliation—the

"pitiful, helpless giant" theme. McGovern has said he is ready to go to Hanoi and "beg" for a settlement. McGovern stood back and smiled when Lawrence O'Brien upstaged him at a Washington press conference after the convention; partying later in the Black Hills, he was to be found over on the sidelines in a group sing. In a political crisis such as the Eagleton mess or his 1960 senatorial defeat, McGovern's habit is to get busy bucking up his staff rather than brooding over his own fate. By way of contrast, when Ike was considering dropping Nixon from the Republican ticket in 1956, the then Vice-President was, in his own words, "thrown into another period of agonizing indecision" in which "the tension dragged on" as he went through "some intense soul-searching."

Nixon's preoccupation with himself reflects, to a degree, his training as a lawyer. He perceives his enemies (Voorhis, Hiss, Khrushchev, et al.) with great vividness, much as opposing adversaries must view each other in a courtroom showdown. But when he thinks of larger groups of people and their purposes, he tends toward abstraction: "Frankly most people are mentally and physically lazy." "The American people generally cast their role in the world as an idealistic role and not as a pragmatic role." "We must have the lift of a driving dream." What is missing in his response to people is a sense of the concreteness of human experience. And when Nixon does try to establish a more intimate connection with others, he often fails miserably. At the time of the antiwar demonstration in Washington following the invasion of Cambodia, he attempted to engage young demonstrators at the Lincoln Memorial with talk of football

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and surfing. "Have a good time in Washington and don't go away bitter," he told these student activists in parting.

Historian McGovern resists generalization. Ideologues of differing persuasions are nearly always disappointed when they try to get him to link his policy ideas together to develop a model of America and its future. Like FDR, who used to tell his wife to look at clotheslines in mining camps to determine how people were faring, McGovern focuses on the concrete experience of individuals: the farmer he knew whose land blew away, the woman wiped out

by medical bills, the immigrant who wrote him that his candidacy gave her a reason to become an American citizen.

The roots of these contrasts in the characters of Nixon and McGovern can be traced back to their early days. From that long perspective, Nixon's pessimism and his crisis-haunted view of life can be partially explained by several traumatic childhood experiences, including at least three near-fatal injuries and illnesses, the sudden deaths of two brothers, the prolonged absence of his mother, and a growing awareness of the family's severe economic insecurity. Within the family young Richard developed strong ties to his mother, whose emotional restraint forbade her even the feeling of anger, much less its expression. On the other hand, his father, Frank Nixon, was, in the description of a local preacher, "brusque, loud, dogmatic, strong-willed, emotional, and impatient." The contrast thrust Richard into a mediator role, not only in practical terms but, more importantly, in emotional terms. He took the part of the responsible son, adapting his mood now to his mother's long silences, now to his father's diatribes. In that highly charged atmosphere he struggled to pattern himself after both parents; there was little room for developing an identity of his own. It was a difficult childhood. From it Richard Nixon learned the wariness he has practiced all his life, the importance of controlling his feelings and projecting them with great care.

The crucial difference in George McGovern's early years was space—emotional space for the children to move around in. Although there was some dislocation of the general serenity in the household—the family moved to Canada when George was four, then back to South Dakota to stay—Joseph McGovern had a steady, respectable job throughout the Depression as a Methodist minister. There were rules in that family, strict ones, about proper behavior. (George's favorite sin was to sneak off to the movies, a dark, secret place much like the elaborate "cave" the children built by burrowing into the foundations of an abandoned house.) But Joseph McGovern, for all his fundamentalist beliefs, was tolerant of other viewpoints, and his wife, twenty years his junior, was even more so.

Above all else, McGovern recalls, his father taught the children the importance of "making the best use of your time. He said you couldn't make the best use of your time if you were going to live by fear. That was his message to me: I couldn't be the kind of person who would let fear get me down." More important than any paternal instruction, however, was the fact that the children knew they were loved and approved of. They were expected to behave them-

selves, but old Joseph—he was in his late sixties when George was a teenager—never invaded his children's emotional territory. He never tried, for example, to push George into the ministry or even into any intense religious experience.

Like his eldest son today, Joseph McGovern was a quiet and reserved man, difficult to know. (Not until Joseph was sixty did his children learn about his first career as a traveling baseball player—an occupation he considered low-life and even a bit sinful.) “I admired him and respected him and loved him,” McGovern says of his father, “but no, I was not close to him.”

George McGovern's upbringing gave him an interior “landscape” similar to his early physical surroundings, the treeless plains of South Dakota, with their sense of limitless space and of life's possibilities. “Even though there were frequent droughts . . .,” McGovern recalls, “always you had the feeling that somehow the land would renew itself. They have a saying, ‘It's going to be better next year.’ And that's kind of a way of life out here, to feel that things are going to be better next year.”

Politics was a constant topic of family conversation in the McGovern household during George's teens. In the Nixon home, aside from Frank's occasional castigations of the “thieves” in the Harding administration, there was not much talk of politics. But Richard Nixon learned his profession quickly when, shortly after his discharge from the navy in 1946, he accepted the invitation of a group of prominent Southern California Republicans to run for Congress. Up until then, he has written, “The idea that I might myself play even a minor part in practical politics never occurred to me.” Nixon won that contest against very high odds, and he did it largely on his own initiative, by aggressively attacking his opponent in a series of debates that he prepared for in great detail. That victory set his political style; only then “did the meaning of crisis take on sharply expanded dimensions” for him. Nixon was then, and is now, a skilled rhetorician, who sees his strength as an ability to perform effectively in public and his weakness as an inability to relate well to other people in private. Despite his intention to share power in his administration, Nixon's lone-wolf style has become increasingly evident, while his own rhetorical talent has, if anything, improved. Success first came to Richard Nixon when he applied his immense energies to doing his homework thoroughly and skillfully projecting himself before audiences. And that's where he directs his energies today.

McGovern's style also stems from his initial political success. Long before he entered politics, school debating drew him out of his shyness. “It really

changed my life. . . . It was the one thing I could do well. It became the only instrument of personal and social power that I had.” Partly because of this newfound confidence in himself, he was named “Glamor Boy” of the year while at Dakota Wesleyan College.

After graduate school, wartime experience that left him with a deep detestation of killing, and short-lived jobs as a minister and a teacher, McGovern embarked on a political career. At age thirty, with four small children, he quit his safe position as a college professor to organize Democrats in South Dakota, a seemingly hopeless venture in that heavily Republican state. But in 1956 McGovern became the first Democrat elected to Congress from South Dakota in twenty years, bucking the Eisenhower tide and defeating a four-term incumbent who had been the state's top vote getter two years earlier. He did it, not through public debates, but by listening and talking to thousands of South Dakotans in visits to every corner of the state. It was a slow and quiet technique, well suited to the pace of South Dakota life. To this day a personal, conversational approach is the essence of McGovern's political style. He often comes across as dull in print and somewhat too preacherish before large audiences—“so plainly honest, kind, sincere, and good that he makes people feel rotten by comparison,” wrote one reporter in describing McGovern's public manner. His most effective method of communication as a President would, I think, be an extension of his direct face-to-face approach to people—an informal conversational rhetoric similar to Roosevelt's. “There's been a lot of misreading of George's popularity,” a South Dakota Republican commented recently. “It's mostly personal, not ideological.”

Ideology is a bent key for unlocking the character of either Nixon or McGovern. The danger in Nixon's case is not that he will first adopt some high principle and then demand public adherence to it. Far more likely is the possibility that Nixon, following the pattern of Wilson, Hoover, and Johnson, will become emotionally exhausted by compromise and criticism, fasten on to some cause, justify it in the name of principle, and use it to effect his personal salvation whatever the social consequences. His compulsive nature—the sense of life as a series of things one *must* do—weighs heavily on Nixon, always tempting him to transform a passing crisis into a permanent disaster.

McGovern's supposed ideological radicalism is also a poor clue to the way he would act as President. However much critical reporters and hopeful revolutionaries press him, he simply refuses to tie his collection of policy statements into a neat philosophical bundle. Nor are any of his positions—with the excep-

tion of his stand on the war—invested with absolute moral fervor. “You never get a hundred per cent of what you wanted,” he has said. “And I think the American people understand that. I think they would even support a presidential candidate who would say, ‘I'm not fully certain of a particular program, but we're going to try it out. And if it doesn't work, we'll try something else.’ I think the American people are willing to experiment.” That statement owes much more to F. D. Roosevelt than to V. I. Lenin. A President McGovern might charge off in several directions, but not over some ideological cliff.

Particularly because neither McGovern nor Nixon are ideologues, one or the other of their characters will be the most important factor in determining the kind of administration we shall have for the next four years. And in evaluating their characters, the chief concern is the matter of flexibility versus rigidity. Nixon's apparent readiness in his first term to shift his ideological principles might not hold true for a second term. Historically, active-negative Presidents have drifted from plasticity to rigidity as the political pressures erode their sense of personal integrity. To that danger must be added Nixon's appetite for crises; sooner or later one of them could deepen rather than disappear. Then there is Nixon's special political situation. Much of his life has been attuned to winning the next election. As a second-term President, however, there would be no next election, no need or requirement to moderate his moves to ensure widespread support. Alone with God, history, and himself, the temptations of power could weigh heavily on Richard Nixon.

Would McGovern go overboard in another direction? His indecision about Eagleton, the wavering numbers in his economic proposals, and, in a different way, his readiness to believe the best about people and cheerfully accommodate their points of view—does all this indicate a presidential softie, a man too flexible to stand fast as the political ground shifts? I doubt it. They talked about FDR the same way in 1932: Harold Laski called him “a pill to cure an earthquake,” and Walter Lippmann saw him as “a pleasant man . . . without any important qualifications for the office.” For different reasons, Harry Truman (too corruptible) and John Kennedy (too wet behind the ears) were dismissed as raw presidential recruits who would let other politicians push them around. Each managed to establish himself as ringmaster of the presidential circus, to make it clear that he was the decisive authority. McGovern's character suggests that he might be equally effective in that way. And, if the past is any clue, character will turn out to be the political compass we should be watching this year. □