

Mr. Nice Guy

By Russell Baker

OBSERVER

None of the ways being proposed for solving the country's President Nixon problem are going to work. Let us look at the defects in each and then consider a different kind of plan which can bring the nation more relief faster.

1. *Impeachment*—This is a terrible idea. Congress doesn't know how to do it, and wouldn't want to do it if it did. What's more, if Congress tried to do it, President Nixon wouldn't show up. He would claim an obscure privilege, and this would throw everything back into court where it began. (Was it years ago?) Writs would still be flying in 1977 when his term ended, but he would go back to court arguing that, term's end or not, a President could not leave office as long as he had cases still pending in court. We would never be rid of him.

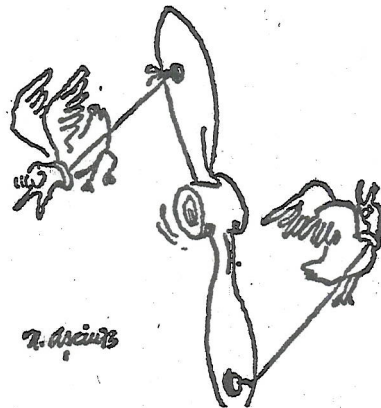
2. *Amnesty*—Under this plan the President would simply issue an amnesty proclamation declaring himself home free. This would be hard for him, because it would renew pressures for amnesty to young men who refused service in the Vietnam war, and he has promised that such derelictions will be harshly paid for while he is top man.

3. *Presidential pardon*—At first glance this seems the surest solution. The President would very rapidly dispose of all his problems by pleading guilty and immediately granting himself a Presidential pardon. This the President will never do. It smacks too much of the leniency for which he has criticized "soft-headed judges" who don't send crooks to jail for long terms. If the President took this way out he would have to denounce "soft-headed Presidents." This would weaken the office of the Presidency, which he has always refused to do.

4. *Resignation*—This would involve a deal, as in the Agnew case, under which the President would be permitted to retire to Baltimore, use Key Biscayne on weekends, and keep the tapes. In return, the news media, but especially television, would agree never to criticize him again. The President will not take this way out for two reasons: (1) He doesn't like Baltimore; (2) he doesn't think Gerald Ford is qualified to be President of the United States.

Obviously, any proposed solution along these commonly discussed lines is no solution at all. There is a simpler solution, however. The odd thing is that the President himself seems not to have thought of it, for it is the solution most fully consistent with his temperament.

All he needs to do is replace himself with another new Nixon. The present new Nixon, which was created in the late nineteen sixties, is badly worn in



any case and should have been replaced before the 1972 election.

New Nixons are something like new tires. No matter how well they are made, you are pushing your luck if you try to get 40,000 miles out of them at high speed on turnpikes. This is what the President has done by keeping his late-1960ish new Nixon too long. He should have changed tires 10,000 miles back, which would have been at a pit stop on the road to the Watergate.

When a new Nixon wears out, the old Nixon on which it is built invariably begins to come through. Then there is trouble. This is what accounts for the President's exotic behavior in such matters as the tapes and the special prosecutor over the past several months. Younger Americans who believe the new Nixon was the only Nixon there was tend to question the President's stability. Older Americans who have seen all those new Nixons come and go know what is happening. The old Nixon is beginning to be the only Nixon left.

This is the Nixon that people who are now the old folks used to call "Tricky Dick." Fortunately, he was recapped in the early nineteen-fifties, and the first new Nixon entered American life. From that first primitive new Nixon have come many elegantly modeled new Nixons with such pioneering innovations as the anti-Communism reverse action and the universally tapped wire.

Considering the state of the new-Nixon art nowadays, two decades after the first model appeared, there is good reason to believe that a simple telephone call from a highly placed Government office could solve our problem.

It would be placed to New Nixxon Inc., a subsidiary of I.T.T. in Whittier, Calif. "We need a new miracle Nixon with twice as much heartwarming power, and we need it right away," the caller should say. Because we really do.