



Photos by Bob Burchette—The Washington Post & AP

Pro-Nixon crowd carries banners and flags, left, and President beams with two visitors after light went on.

"Nixon Turns on Tree's Lone Light

By Cathe Wolhove
Washington Post Staff Writer

President Nixon last night lit the energy-saving national Christmas tree behind the White House, a 42-foot Colorado blue spruce with only one light—a 36-inch-wide star at the top.

"We have a problem this year—an energy crisis. But it is a problem of peace, not of war . . . as we have had for the past 12 years," Mr.

Nixon told a crowd of about 10,000 people trying to keep warm in the 43-degree weather.

"With only one light, Americans might think this could be a dreary Christmas, but the spirit of Christmas is not measured by the amount of lights; it's measured by the amount of love in our hearts," he said.

As the President spoke, sections of the crowd waved

banners saying, "God Loves America. God Loves Nixon." When the televised speech was finished, they chanted, "We want Nixon" and "We want the President."

For the first time since the Pageant of Peace started in 1954, the tree being lit was a live one, which, Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton, said, "will take deeper root each year and remind us of the

lasting legacy of Christmas as well as for the legacy with which our land has also been blessed—the legacy of our natural resources."

The tree, from northern Pennsylvania, was surrounded by eight spotlights around the tree's base. Before the energy crisis was announced, the National Park Service says it made

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By Bob Burchette—The Washington Post

A young visitor to the annual Christmas tree ceremony on Ellipse last night carries a flag backing President.

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TREE, From E1

plans to light the tree only by reflection because the heat from lights on the tree was considered harmful.

Overall, the pageant will use 90 per cent less energy than last year, park officials said, because the 57 living trees that form the "Pathway of Peace" have no electric lights either; they are lit only by several foot-lights for safety.

Earlier in the day, Mrs. Nixon showed a bird's nest she found in the White House tree and called it "an omen, a sign of very good

luck." She said the nest was discovered when workmen were spreading the branches, and added, with a smile, "I imagine the bird had some little ones last year."

Unlike previous years when the tree was lit from dusk to dawn, this year it will be lit from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. Daily programs, featuring choruses, bellringers, and instrumental groups, will perform from 4 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Also missing this year is the traditional nativity scene, because a federal court ruled in September that such explicitly religious

displays constituted excessive government involvement in religion.

Just beyond the Ellipse, however, is a privately spon-

sored nativity scene built by the American Christian Heritage Association, a group formed solely to build the Christmas creche.