

Von Hoffman

Nader for President

Washington

FROM THE CANADIAN to the Mexican border, from Bellingham, Washington, to San Diego, the conversational pattern is the same up and down the Pacific Coast. First they ask you if you've seen the bumperstickers, next they make a joke about the tapes, then they speculate on how much the oil companies paid Nixon to let them have a shortage, and after that they ask who you think is going to be the next President.



Nicholas von Hoffman

It's easier to say who shouldn't be. The only qualification most of the leading contenders for the office have is that they haven't been convicted of a felony. Ronald Reagan would have to go into the campaign where Nixon leaves off explaining his income tax payments. Charles Percy is a closet Democrat who will never be nominated by any Republican convention. Rockefeller would be nearly 70, a spendthrift governor who has worked every side of every issue. Howard Baker's only achievement is being allowed to sit next to Sam Ervin when the TV cameras go on.

The Democrats have little more to offer. Humphrey is no longer worth the time to denounce; Muskie has been publicly exposed as being exactly what he appears to be; only 5 per cent of the electorate can still remember McGovern's name, and after him come the truly flashy candidates, Bayh of Indiana, that other Senator from Minnesota who's rumored to be so good, the governor of Illinois and assorted long shots.

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STANDING TO ONE SIDE is Teddy, a man who has had to bear so many sorrows it's hard to tell him that he'd be doing himself and the rest of us a favor if he'd get out of the race now. Perhaps the only ones who will tell him so are those who fear that if he

runs he will also be cut down by the Kennedy curse. They say they'll vote against him to protect him.

Millions more will vote against him because they think Chappaquiddick showed him to be a man who, at the very least, cracks under pressure. Believe what you want about him, but any Kennedy Presidential campaign will draw forth our ugliest side. Worst would be a Connally-Kennedy contest. While each was racing for the Presidency by telling the dreadful truth about each other the electorate would be racing for the bathroom.

Then the degradation of our politics would be complete. It need not be so. There is one man in public life who is clean enough, who has stature enough to restore respect for politics and public office, and that's Ralph Nader, our national ombudsman, the one person who is admired even when he is disagreed with.

There is no man who could be elected to the Presidency who knows more about how the United States government works on every level. He has fought it and studied it through nearly every department and agency as no other political figure in our time.

Since Franklin Roosevelt's first two terms our Presidents have been primarily occupied with foreign affairs, but the last ten years have shown that ultimately foreign success rests on domestic success. A discredited, dishonored President with a debased currency presiding over a citizenry that doesn't trust him enough to follow him has little choice but to take refuge in the Kremlin as Nixon has done. When Nixon says that he was too busy running his foreign policy to know what his own staff was doing he is making something of the same point.

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NADER, ON THE OTHER HAND, has a studied program and approach on everything from taxes to monopoly. He can tell you exactly — not in the generalities they usually feed us — what he would do and how he would go about it. He knows what he thinks is needed and he knows how to communicate his ideas to our people. He's been doing it for ten years now without a public relations man or an advertising agency. Can you imagine what a different and better place this would be with Ralph Nader picking the members of the Federal regulatory agencies for eight years.

Nobody born with a belly button is perfect. Ralph Nader can be an abrasive unpolitic man; a stubborn character who sometimes disdains the most innocent, ethical and necessary of the political arts. He is the proud prototypical anti-baby kisser, but we're ready to accept that vice.

We'll take that as the price you have to pay for a President who has two suits to his name, wears a brush cut and a 1957 narrow tie, but who will stay put in the White House, get up at 6 o'clock in the morning and work, and work 'til midnight.

With Nader in the White House we as a nation will not again have to bear the shame of hearing our President plead with us to believe he is not a crook. Ralph Nader is the one man whom we would buy a used car from but he won't sell us one.

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