

# Where Are Our Statesmen?

It is ironic that, at a time when the reputation of professional politicians is as low as it has ever been, few American voters can think of anyone outside of politics who might provide future leadership for this country.

On a recent round of voter-interviewing, my Washington Post colleagues and I asked a crosssection of voters if there was anyone not now in politics they'd like to see running for President in 1976. We came back empty-handed.

Fortune magazine this month has a sensible article, reminding its readers that all decisions aren't made in Washington and all of the nation's affairs are not necessarily being bungled; as badly as many decisions have been at the opposite ends of Pennsylvania Avenue.

But if the implicit message is that the capital would benefit from a good infusion of what was called, 20 years ago, "corporate statesmanship," the concept seems strangely out of date. Who are the business statesmen? Or for that matter, the labor statesmen, the legal statesmen or the educational statesmen?

What has happened to deplete the visible leadership of the private sector at the very moment when the public

*"This President has elevated the advertising and public relations business into new heights of public recognition."*

sector seems most in need of a transfusion of integrity, ability and candor?

I don't know the answer, but I suspect that part of it leads right back to the White House. One of the most important of a President's powers is his power to recognize—the selection of the individuals and groups he chooses to deal with and rely on, and thus to elevate to a level of public recognition that confers on them the quality of "statesmanship."

This power is particularly important to a President like Richard Nixon, who came to office with the avowed goal of diminishing public reliance on the national government and turning the

burden of leadership in many areas back to private individuals, associations and organizations, or to the local and state governments.

In view of this, it is somewhat startling to review the record on the figures in the private sector who have achieved far greater public notice as a result of their association with President Nixon.

The first Nixon administration contained at least two businessmen of distinction, David Kennedy, the bank president turned treasury secretary and international economics troubleshooter, and that unheralded hero, electronics manufacturer David Packard, who was an exceptionally able deputy secretary of defense.

But their contributions—and those of other businessmen—were hardly sufficient to offset the damage to the reputation of business leadership caused by those most clearly identified with Mr. Nixon—investment banker Maurice Stans, International Telephone and Telegraph's Harold Geneen, and presidential pals Robert Abplanalp and "Bebe" Rebozo.

From the leaders of labor, the President chose to select as his allies, and thus to elevate, the heads of the Teamsters union and the New York building and constructions council.

The former is known to the public as the union whose previous presidents Dave Beck and Jimmy Hoffa, both went to jail. If the latter was known at all before Peter Brennan became secretary of labor, it was because its members demonstrated their patriotism by clobbering anti-war students on the streets of Fun City.

What he has done for the reputation of business and labor, Mr. Nixon has done—in spades—for his own profession of the law. Attorneys William P. Rogers and Elliot L. Richardson both managed to serve Mr. Nixon for five years and leave with their reputations intact—Rogers with a modicum of deliberation, Richardson rather more abruptly. But overall the administration has been a disaster for lawyers' reputations—from Mitchell and Kalmbach and Ehrlichman and Gray and Mardian and Carswell . . . and . . . but the point is obvious.

Of all the professions, perhaps only academia has escaped being blighted by the patronage of this administration. The pair of professors Mr. Nixon recruited when he came to office, George Shultz and Henry Kissinger, have proved to be the most durable and the most competent of his appointments.

But since no voters we found are talking of them—or any of their colleagues in the universities—as future Presidents, this boon to the professors does not seem to be a large one.

In fairness, however, it should be noted that this President has elevated one area of the private sector into new heights of public service and public recognition: the advertising and public relations business.

Until he came along dispensing his favors, no one knew you could convert an ad agency man into a White House chief of staff, a press secretary and presidential adviser or the head of the domestic council.

That—and the wasted reputations of business, labor and the law—are part of the Nixon legacy.