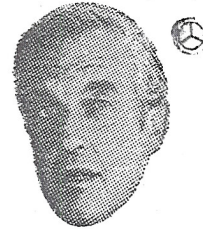


The Perfect Candidate



Arthur Hoppe

AS EARLY as the spring of 1974, that Democratic mastermind, Pyg-nius (pig) Maylion had determined which way the political winds were blowing. And he was thus able to create one of the two greatest Presidential candidates in American history.

"After Nixon, we can win with anybody," Maylion told The Democratic Candidate Picking Board. "Only we don't have anybody."

"What about Teddy?" demanded the Chairman. "He's bright, articulate, energetic, politically astute and loaded with charisma. What hasn't he got?"

"A prayer," said Maylion. "The public's fed up with clever slick-talking, do-something politicians. Gentlemen, meet the next President of the United States, Hec Woolsey!"

"Hi, friends," said Hec, a rumpled, balding, pudgy, ugly, middle-aged man. "I sounds like a right good job, so, what the hell, I'll take it."

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DISCOVERING Hec had been difficult. Finally a computer turned him up — a Midwestern accountant who had over-paid his income taxes seven years running. His record consisted solely of a straight C average in school, one parking ticket, and a third place in the Ashtabula Lawn Bowling League.

When Maylion approached him, Hec was hesitant. "Shucks," he said. "I don't read the papers or books or stuff and I don't know beans about politics."

"Great!" said Maylion. "But we'll have to groom you for the job. First, we'll need a hair transplant."

"I got enough hair already," protested Hec.

"Right, you're going to be the donor,"

said Maylion. "Then we'll call a plastic surgeon . . ."

"I need a face lift?"

"No, a face sag. Next, we'll get rid of those caps on your teeth and as soon as you've put on ten pounds, we'll get you some new clothes."

"I always did hanker for those wide lapels," said Hec, wistfully.

"Wide lapels!" cried Maylion. "What do you think killed McGovern?"

Once groomed, Hec was given his instructions: never mention anything interesting, admit ignorance whenever possible, and throw in a "damn" or "hell" to prove honesty. ("Look at Harry Truman," Maylion explained.)

Hec announced in May, two years early. "If a man's running, he ought damn well say so," he said honestly.

His appearance on Face the Press was a sensation. Asked his programs for the AEC, SEC and EEC, he replied, "The who?" Anyway, he said, "I don't have no programs. I'm just going to sit around the White House, 'cause I'm scaired of flying, and try like hell to do the right thing."

Hec won the nomination by acclamation. "We have the ideal candidate for these strife-torn times," said Maylion triumphantly. "honest, decent, dull and dim-witted. He's a shoo-in!"

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UNFORTUNATELY, the GOP nominated Gerald Ford, who won in a landslide and governed the nation honestly, decently, dully and pleasantly for four happy years.

Maylion felt, however, that his strategy had been vindicated. "The only problem was that the voters," he said, "could tell the real thing when they saw it."