

What Happened, Mr. President?



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LOOKING OVER the President's State of the Union Address and his \$304 billion budget, one question immediately leaps to mind:

What happened to the Richard Nixon who told us in November 1972 that the federal government was too big; too expensive; needed thinning out and had failed at problem-solving during the 1960s because it simply threw money at problems?

Where has the Richard Nixon gone who bragged to Washington Evening Star reporter Garnett Horner that his '72 campaign was "the first campaign of a candidate who didn't go out with a whole bag of goodies" to get votes?

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INSTEAD, the President spoke of government reform to nurture in the American people "a new spirit of independence" and "self-reliance."

"What we need now, rather than more government, is better government," he declared resolutely. "I realize that is a cliché, but rather than more is better, many times the better is not the fatter, but leaner."

But when one looks at this year's State of the Union message and federal budget, they are clearly Fat City.

The President literally exults over the amount of money his administration has thrown at problems. He repeatedly equates increased federal funding with progress when, if anything, the record shows an inverse correlation: the more of the former, the less of the latter.

I am unable to find any real accomplishments other than those things Mr.

Nixon feels are accomplishments, things like being the first President to spend X amount of dollars on Y program.

In his State of the Union message, the President notes that since he came into office in 1969:

Consumer safety programs have received almost a four-fold increase in federal dough and federal aid to education has risen 76 per cent, from \$4.3 billion to \$7.6 billion.

Civil rights activities and economic development for minorities has more than tripled; Indians are getting twice what they were and the amount being spent on community development is double that ever spent by the government in this area during the "entire history of the nation."

And on and on ad nauseam.

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THE PRESIDENT'S entire emphasis is on input — how much we have spent on various programs. He tells us absolutely nothing about output — what it is the spending of these billions has accomplished.

The outlook for the future is not any brighter than the past.

In his November 1972 interview with reporter Horner, President Nixon expressed his strong feeling that what the American people wanted is a new feeling of responsibility and self-discipline rather than a return to the mind-set of the 1960s that it was government's job to solve all the problems.

I think the President was right. It's just too bad he hasn't done what he said he would.