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The Two Mr. Nixons

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At a time in 1972 when he later claimed to be preoccupied by "crucially important" foreign and domestic problems, Watergate tape transcripts show President Nixon to be deeply absorbed in the nuts and bolts of his re-election campaign.

He worried about helicopter prop wash spoiling the coiffures of his wife and daughters at the Miami GOP convention. He weighed the political advantages of posing for photos with Southern Democratic congressional candidates.

And he cautioned his advisers against trying to stage "non-political" cultural events because of the supposed influence of Jewish left-wingers in the arts.

The painstaking personal concern with political minutiae reflected by the edited conversations released Monday contrasts with the portrait of an above-the-battle President that Mr. Nixon sought to present to the country.

In his first full-scale television address on Watergate, on April 30, 1973, Mr. Nixon said that in the past he had always personally directed his election campaigns.

But the 1972 campaign was different, Mr. Nixon contended, because of impending major decisions of state confronting him at home and, especially, abroad, where he was striving to bring "peace to America and peace to the world."

"That is why I decided," he said, "that the presidency should come first and politics second . . . I sought to delegate campaign operations, and to remove the day-to-day campaign decisions from the President's office."

But on June 23, 1972, talk-

ing with his former chief of staff, H. R. Haldeman, Mr. Nixon found time to discuss the grooming problems faced by the First Lady and his daughters during the Miami Beach convention which would take place two months later.

"Pat raised the point last night that probably she and the girls ought to stay in a

hotel on Miami Beach," he said. "First she says the moment they get the helicopter and get off and so forth, it destroys their hair and so forth.

"And of course, that is true — even though you turn them off and turn them on."

Mrs. Nixon and her daughters wound up staying at Key Biscayne with the President and traveling by helicopter to the convention.

In his conversation with Haldeman, Mr. Nixon brought up the question of which congressional candidates he should be photographed with.

"The problem that I have with it is that I do not want to have pictures with candidates that are running with

Democrats — or against Democrats that may either be (unintelligible) or might be for us . . .

" . . . The way to have the pictures with the candidate — this would be a very clever thing, is to call both Democrats — the good Southern Democrats and those flew like (unintelligible) who did have a picture with me, see, and then call them up and say look (unintelligible) . . . If you would like to come down to the office, you know, you can have a picture taken that you are welcome to use.

" . . . I think that getting to the candidates out there that are very busy and so forth may help us a bit . . ."

" . . . I think when I ran in '46," Mr. Nixon recalled "I would have gotten on my hands and knees for a picture with Harold Stassen

(then a leading Republican politician) . . ."

The President had firm views about what Haldeman referred to as "nonpolitical" campaign events.

"Now the worse (sic) thing (unintelligible)," Mr. Nixon said, "is to go to anything that was to do with the arts . . . the arts you know — they're Jews, they're left-wing — in other words, stay away."

During Mr. Nixon's years as President, the White House adviser most directly concerned with the arts has been Leonard Garment, a former law partner of Mr. Nixon, who is Jewish.

Though in his April 30 speech Mr. Nixon said he had "severely limited" his personal appearances in the campaign, during his conversation with Haldeman, he planned an active role for himself.

"I think of the campaign . . ." he told Haldeman. "I think sometimes when we're here in Washington, you know, supposedly doing the business of the government, that I can call people around the country — people that will come out for us — and so forth — like (unintelligible) for example, Democrats come out for us."

But when the discussion turned to international economics, the President gave short shrift to the troubled world currency market.

"Did you get the report that the British floated the pound?" Haldeman asked.

"No, I don't think so," Mr. Nixon replied.

"Flanigan's (White House aide Peter Flanigan) got a report on it here," Haldeman offered.

"I don't care about it," Mr. Nixon said. "nothing we can do about it."

Haldeman then mentioned that Arthur M. Burns, Federal Reserve Board chairman, expected a five per cent devaluation of the

pound against the dollar.

"Yeah," said Mr. Nixon. "O.K. Fine."

Haldeman added: "Burns is concerned about speculation about the lira."

"Well I don't give a (expletive deleted) about the lira," Mr. Nixon said. Haldeman changed the subject.