

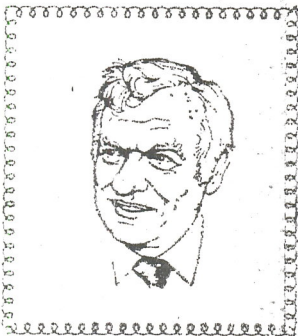
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Charles McCabe

Himself

An Honest Nixon

IF YOU WISH to know what just might be bugging me this morning, I offer you the possibility that this country might one day be under the government of what might be called an honest Nixon.

By this I mean the kind of man who would not feel compelled to get up before an audience of editors, as Mr. R. M. Nixon once did, to announce that he was not a crook; but who would nevertheless share and espouse the views that were held by the man who won the 1972 election, that he would win such an election at some future time, and then use the mandate given to turn the country on a new and dangerous turn to the right. Into a police state, in short.



This seems to me a possible way for the country to move in either 1976 or 1980. The forces which brought about the second Nixon election are far from spent. They can with clever orchestration and plenty of money, both of which our putative honest Nixon would surely command, surface powerfully again.

Especially important would be the issue of law and order, which is the gateway to the Fascist state. Crime and cries of doom are still strong medicine these days. And, as the Nixon Administration has shown, a criminal can be almost anyone some assistant in the White House decides on.

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OUR HONEST NIXON, after showing us all his income tax returns and his other bona fides, might give us a message something on this order:

"My fellow Americans, it is time we reunite this country, and reassert its greatness in the world. This can only be done, I suggest, if we are led by men of absolute incorruptibility and integrity.

"There are men who do not believe this country is something to slice up into pieces of various sizes and sell off to strong commercial and industrial interests, merely to keep in power. There are men who think of government in terms of responsible use of power rather than of pillage.

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ABOVE ALL, there are men who wish our citizens to live in a world free of fear, in flats and houses where less than three locks are required and on streets where they may walk with confidence from one place to another without fear for their lives or their limbs.

"I and my government would get rid of those who threaten the values which have made America great — long-haired lunatics who pop away at those values from a welfare-supported position; those who corrupt our Christian society with pornography and smut; those who feed drugs to wayward children who in turn burglarize the rest of us, limousine liberals who take from the system without giving to it.

"All these we will prosecute vigorously; and, if the need should be, extirpate them for good and all."

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THIS WOULD BE a powerful appeal, coming from a man of patent authority and assumed integrity. Such strong men of course have always existed, but they have not been taken seriously because we seriously had a tradition of personal freedom.

The honest Nixon would most likely be a Republican; and at this moment would most likely be Mr. Ronald Reagan, if his income tax returns look good, and if it can be shown he did not personally benefit from public office in the naked old Nixon way.

But the honest Nixon could also be a Democrat, quickly created by the media, and as yet unknown. Or he could be a man who would say he is above party, bringing a Billy Graham approach to vote-getting.

In any case the result would be a police state; but an honest one. What scares me this morning is that so many people I know aren't in the least scared by this prospect.