

## Playing Politics with Chopsticks

**I** THINK the whole country is taking a most parochial view of the latest trip abroad by California's best known native son — even if this time we didn't foot the bill. After all, he is not the first American to take a charter flight across the Pacific. And to consider his trip to talk with the absolute rulers of one-fifth of the world's population as a campaign issue in a pipsqueak state like New Hampshire is surely an affront to reality.

Along with everybody else, I was pleased that this noted tourist, who only a few months ago could barely muster the strength to leave his home in San Clemente and ride in a golf cart at a nearby country club, is now healthy enough to take such a long trip. And operate chopsticks at 30,000 feet. Personally, I was more interested in why he was invited than why he accepted.

Professor Harry Harding, an expert in the field at Stanford University, has ready explanations.

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**I**T'S LIKE THIS. The present Chinese system places great importance on anniversaries. They just don't have one Fourth of July. They have lots of them and don't necessarily celebrate each even annually. They pull them out as they think they need them.

"So, believing it might be timely to call attention again to the somewhat recent understanding between the two countries, somebody over there noted February 21 was the fourth anniversary of the visit that led to relations

between us. Out went the invitation.

"No one in Peking, I'm sure, gave one thought to New Hampshire, even if the guest did. No intention to embarrass President Ford, none at all, on their part.

After all, he is a known quality to the Chinese leadership and might even be considered the least of all evils among our possible Presidents next year.

"The Chinese are pretty good at understanding human personalities. They knew their guest. They surely felt his need for an ego boost after a rough year.

"But they don't understand his lack of influence over here. As a matter of fact, instead of helping their cause, the trip might actually backfire for them."

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**I**T ALREADY HAS, for the visitor. Senator Barry Goldwater, who even unarmed shoots from the hip, advised him on national television, "If he wants to do this country a favor, he might stay over there." And with some overkill, said that talking to the Chinese leaders was a violation of the Logan Act, which provides that foreign affairs should be conducted by the President. Of course, every presidential candidate goes abroad to yak it up. Good for the image.

I can't believe, however, that we have a new candidate on our hands because of this trip. He is determined to be sure but he's not off his rocker. I agree with the Commonwealth Club speaker, who reported the other day that "He would draw more votes running over there than he would over here."