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Editor's report
SF Examiner **AUG 29 1976**

Carter's strategy

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SAN SIMEON—The most noteworthy feature of Jimmy Carter's campaign-launching visit to the West Coast last week was the way he revealed the basic workings of his strategy. The Ford camp should know, as a result, just about how the man from Plains, Georgia, will shape his spears and point his arrows.



W. R. Hearst Jr.

Careful observation of Carter in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Seattle, before he went on to trespass on President Ford's farmland in the Midwest, shows that he is running against Nixon as well as Ford. The Republicans may cry "foul" all they wish, but it is clear that Carter plans to attack the full eight years of GOP leadership, believing it is fair to identify Ford with the administration of the man who appointed him vice president and whom he later pardoned.

Carter, in addition, chose the West Coast as the

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place to launch what promises to be a continuing attack against President Ford's "negative government," hitting hard at the 54 vetoes handed down by the President. I think there is another side to his vetoes which the public may be overlooking, as I shall explain in a moment.

As The Hearst Newspapers' Washington political reporter, Marianne Means, pointed out, the coming presidential campaign will be "fought out on the basis of promises versus performance"—the promises of Jimmy Carter pitted against the record of the incumbent.

For obvious reasons, Carter wants to look at the full eight-year record of the Republicans, which, even disregarding the shocking Nixon-Agnew tragedies, is not altogether admirable. Ford, for equally obvious reasons, would like to confine such references to his successful and rewarding two years in office. It is in this area—reference to the records—that the campaign will be waged.

Ford and his advisers are well aware that the voters are primarily concerned with their pocket-books—jobs, prices, taxes, the cost of government—and the President has a highly respectable economic record. The trouble is, most people don't understand economics, so it is hard to sell. The other problem is that while President Ford's economic achievements have been excellent, Nixon's were not, and if candidate Carter can keep the focus on the past eight years rather than the last two years, Ford's own performance record seems diminished.

The U.S. rate of inflation is now 4.6 per cent, about the lowest in the entire industrial world. It is down from 12.3 per cent when Ford took office two years ago. As any leader of the Western world can testify, that is a titanic accomplishment.

The unemployment rate is now 7.5 per cent, reduced from 8.9 per cent a year ago. Moreover, what these bare-bones figures don't show—and what the Ford people don't seem to be able to get across to the public—is that the 86.5 million persons now employed in the United States, three million more than a year ago, give us the highest total of employment in the history of the nation. This was achieved at a time when the labor force grew in four short years from 86.5 million to 94.1.

We must remember that the baby boom of the 1950's is now catching up with us in the job market. Let's not forget, either, that experts in the Immigration Service calculate that at least two million illegal aliens have entered this country in the last two years and are

being absorbed into the labor market or winding up on the welfare rolls.

The difficult assignment facing the Ford faction will be to convince the public that the economy is now sounder than it has been in years. The remarkable slash in the inflation rate in the last two years finds consumers still grumbling, at least as far as I can see, and the fact remains, as Jimmy Carter is sure to point out, that when the Democrats turned over the White House to the Republicans eight years ago, the rate of inflation was only 2 per cent and the unemployment rate was only 3.6 per cent. Nixon's harm to his party was not confined to Watergate, and his successor in office has been struggling against great odds.

It is excessive government spending that has the greatest impact on inflation, and it was because an irresponsible and politically-motivated Democratic Congress sent so many spending bills to the White House that President Ford was obliged to exercise so many vetoes. A check of the 54 vetoes by Ford shows that he saved taxpayers a total of \$13.1 billion. But on July 22 Congress overrode President Ford's veto of a public works jobs bill which will cost taxpayers about \$4 billion, thus reducing Ford's "savings-by-veto" to \$9.186 billion. It is only fair to keep this in mind, as Carter lambastes the vetoes and President Ford's "negative" government.

The feeling persists that when Jimmy Carter startled the Legionnaires in Seattle by stating that he would issue a blanket pardon to all those who violated the selective service law during the Vietnam war, he painted himself into a corner. As of that moment, he made it impossible for himself ever again to refer to President Ford's pardon of Richard Nixon, and that is all to the good. After all, Ford's pardon was for the sake of restoring normality to a nation that was in moral and spiritual disarray.

In creating new distinctions between the words "amnesty" and "pardon," saying he did not favor "blanket amnesty," Carter sent many Americans—this one among them—to their dictionaries. It appears he got mixed up, if my Webster's is to be believed. It says that amnesty, which comes from "amnesia," is the sovereign power of granting oblivion or a general pardon for a past offense. The only distinction is that a pardon deals with the extinction of the offense itself, while amnesty only removes the penalties of the offense.

Clearly this is, as my literary friends would say, a distinction without a difference, or in a word weaseling. I had another great friend who referred to such contrived distinctions in definitions as "trying to pick fly specks from pepper with boxing gloves on."

Carter says he wants to pardon thousands who deliberately broke the laws of the land. That would, says Webster's, eliminate the offense itself. It would be an offense and an affront to the law-abiding who, whether they favored the cause or not, served their country.

For the sake of those who did serve, and especially those who gave their lives, it would be much fairer to grant pardons to draft dodgers and AWOL servicemen after they had returned and put in time in the armed services or in public works, at serviceman's pay, equal to the period required to serve out their hitches.

For legal definition, see
Chronology, 8 Sep 74, pl. 6A