

Nation in turmoil

Nixon's new staff inexperienced

Editor's note: This is second in a three-part story about politics in the 70s.

Much has been said about Nixon putting his 1972 campaign into the hands of loyal but immature aides. Supposedly it was their zeal and inexperience that caused Watergate and all the other hare-brained concoctions of the Committee to Re-elect the President.

That might soothe some politicians, but they know there always are a lot of rash and untested people in campaigns. More plausible is the simple explanation that power corrupts. The Nixon people had it and they abused it. When they got caught, they made it worse with an attempted coverup.

From a technical standpoint, Nixon ran a masterful 1972 campaign. Nixon sat tight on the presidency and let McGovern beat himself with such gaffes as the Eagleton vice-presidential choice and the \$1,000 welfare payment.

Nixon's overwhelming victory made him independent of the Republican Party. He controlled the national GOP, but never tried to rejuvenate a party that was rotting at the bottom while it bloomed at the top.

In 1972, Nixon carried 49 states, but the GOP lost three Senate seats and two governorships and gained only 12 House seats. That left the party with barely a third of the nation's major political offices.

Nixon went down with Watergate, but the Republican Party bobbed to the surface. One of Gerald Ford's first political acts was to install a woman in the GOP chairmanship. Regarded as tokenism by some, it happened that Mary Louise Smith of Iowa was a natural in the kind of organizational work the GOP needed in its extremity.

Robert S. Strauss, a Texan many Democrats thought was just another creature of the LBJ-John Connally school of politics, was the party's big surprise.

Taking over the Democratic National Committee after 1972, Strauss sought to restore unity to a party torn by suspicion and saddled by debt.

Strauss turned out to be a genius juggler. When he seemed to be favoring conservative regulars, he did something for liberal reformers to restore at the image of balance.

In everything he said, Strauss reaffirmed the party's commitment to the reforms of 1972, but he always added that the whole idea was to win elections — a pragmatic damper on intraparty throat-cutting.

As a result of Strauss' exertions, the party was able to coalesce in mid-1976 when Jimmy Carter came from obscurity to win its presidential nomination.

Carter won the nomination because his plans, his people and his personality fit the times. He made much of being an "outsider" but it was his sincerity and confidence that sold best when many candidates relied on "view with alarm" themes delivered to the accompaniment of oratorical thunder.

The 1976 election was close, but really not very exciting. This was because neither Carter nor Ford were exciting candidates and the reliance of both on pre-tested campaign tactics. There was little innovation in either tactics or substance, and the result was an almost even split of both votes and states.

Carter won by raising from the grave the FDR Coalition, with emphasis on the South. Ford made it close by taking some eastern "bedroom" states — Jersey and Connecticut — winning the industrial midwest and all but sweeping the west.

Carter talked about managing government more efficiently and with more attention to the wishes and rights of the people. Ford said he already was doing that and blamed bad situations on the Democrats controlling Congress.

In the end, the voters decided to hire a new manager. If they were looking for a charismatic leader, they had no one to vote for. If they were seeking new approaches to the great global issues of war and peace and the tough problems of energy and inflation, there was little to choose between.

Carter came to office in what historians doubtless will classify as a transitional time.

The imperial presidency had been given a dirty name by Richard Nixon and Congress had grabbed a number of old and new powers for itself, but a working relationship between White House and Capitol Hill had not been achieved.

(Carter was to be constantly criticized for not knowing how to work with Congress, but as his term wore on it became clear congressional leaders didn't know how to deal with Congress either.)

The values of the "Me Generation" had seeped into Congress and the bureaucracy. In the face of stubborn unemployment and ominous inflation across the country, Congress gave itself and its staffs hefty pay increases.

Appeals to the public, business and labor for restraint in using gasoline, raising prices and demanding wage increases initially were met with sullen rejoinders of "what is the other guy giving up?"



Hightower's a conference hit

By DAVID BRODER

WASHINGTON — When the steering committee of the Conference on Alternative State and Local Policies was debating the location of its fifth annual meeting, it decided it should be held in an eastern city.

The conference is a loose-knit collection of elected officials, union organizers, community and public-interest group workers, bound together in part by past ties to the civil rights and anti-war movements of the 1960s.

Their first four conferences were held in Madison, Wis., Denver, Austin and St. Paul, so they thought this year they should come to an eastern city, where they could hold their debates among the people they were trying to reach.

Instead, for reasons that were never quite clear, they ended up meeting last weekend on the campus of Bryn Mawr College, an elite women's school in a fancy Main Line suburb 12 miles from downtown Philadelphia.

That missed direction was somehow characteristic of the position of these New Left activists, who are approaching the 1980 election in more than their customary disarray.

There are, as always, more organizations being created by the frenetic energy and the fragmented ideology of the Left than there are members to support them.

Out west in California, where the climate seems to draw many interested in restructuring American society, the most obvious schism centers on the personality and policies of 1980 presidential hopeful Gov. Edmund G. (Jerry) Brown, Jr. (D).

Brown has successfully courted Tom Hayden, the onetime Chicago Seven defendant who is as close to a focal figure as the New Left has, and his wife, actress Jane Fonda. But others in the Left are less tolerant of Brown's embrace of Proposition 13 and sponsorship of a federal balanced-budget amendment than are Hayden and Fonda.

The result was something unthinkable. Hayden was hissed by his own longtime friends at this conference, when he gave Brown a favorable mention in his speech.

There is broad distaste for President Carter among the New-Left organizers. There is disquiet about Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.), a mixture of fear and apprehension that he may not run and fear that, if he does, he will immediately, as socialist author Michael Harrington said,

"head straight for the center, like all politicians do."

With a few people eyeing a third-party option and others ready to write off 1980 as a lost year for politics of the Left at the presidential level, there was a sense of aimlessness that was unusual for a group that is accustomed to having a cause for which to fight.

But for all their problems, it is probably a mistake to dismiss these folks as irrelevant. Their local grassroots organizations are growing in numbers, and the energy-fueled inflation is giving them their best talking point against big business in many years.

District of Columbia Mayor Marion Barry, one of the many alumni of the group who has succeeded in local politics, brought them back to earth with a reminder that, however unfashionable, it might not hurt the New Left to rededicate itself to such plebian goals as full employment, fair income distribution and adequate housing and health care.

After three days of droning discourse, there was palpable joy when Jim Hightower, a young Texas journalist-politician, reminded them that political points can be made with humor as easily as with dialectic.

Hightower is planning a longshot campaign for a seat on the Texas Railroad Commission, the powerful state body which regulates the oil and gas industry and which has traditionally been a captive of the industry it is regulating.

When solar collectors were installed on the roof of the commission's new building in Austin "to impress us environmental freaks," Hightower said, "it was like putting earrings on a hog — you can't hide the ugliness."

He urged his pals to climb down from their ideological perches and dirty their hands with politics, arguing that ever since the 1972 McGovern for President campaign, "the progressive movement has been afraid of the people — afraid of rejection."

Instead of cowering, he said, they should adopt the slogan of an Austin cartage company, Hightower said: "If we can get it loose, we can move it."

With a few more Hightowers and a lot less New Society groups, they might even do it. But not in 1980.

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Letters to the Editor

A&M not for everyone

Editor: Until recently I was a probationary transfer student at A&M (out of school five years). A grave personal loss made me

miss my required GPA, and I now cannot reregister. Were it an illness of injury, the story would be different indeed.

However, I am far more upset by the conduct of a highly placed professor from whom I sought advice. I received instead rudeness, contempt and sarcasm. He even refused to shake hands upon introduction — something I learned to do in grade school.

If this kind of arrogance is the norm, then I am ashamed to admit I was once an Aggie. It is a good thing Highway 6 runs both ways.

—William Fulton

Some cops OK

Editor:

I want to personally thank Lt. Jack Bruce for his consideration and patience with me last Wednesday afternoon. I hope I have not offended anyone but I needed to let off some steam. I appreciate Lt. Bruce's understanding and help and was glad to see that the University Police Department does indeed have a few good men. Thank you.

—M.R., '80

Readers' Forum

Guest viewpoints, in addition to Letters to the Editor, are welcome. All pieces submitted to Readers' Forum should be:

- Typed triple space
- Limited to 60 characters per line
- Limited to 100 lines

CAMPUS

Street to be blocked for stadium work

The east-bound lane of Joe Routh Street will be closed from Bailey Street to Houston Street during the period of August 19-24. This temporary blockage is required by the renovation work being done on Kyle Field, according to the Campus Police. The west-bound lane of Joe Routh will be temporarily marked for two-lane traffic from Bailey to Houston. Parking, including service vehicles, will be prohibited on this segment. Persons with valid random street parking permits will be authorized to park in either PA 48 or PA 62 during this time.

STATE

Houston to draw up 9-5 districts

Houston Mayor Jim McConn will try to start hearings Thursday on drawing boundaries for the nine new single-member City Council districts voters approved in a weekend charter election prompted by Justice Department pressure. "I realize that it is short notice," McConn said. "Whether it is possible or not I don't know." Eleven percent of Houston voters Saturday decided 47,706 to 26,385 to expand City Council from eight members, all chosen city-wide, to 14 members — nine elected by district and five at-large. The mayor will remain on the council. The Justice Department had demanded that the city change council makeup to overcome the dilution of black and Mexican-American voting power federal experts said would result from 1977 and 1978 annexations of mostly white areas. McConn said he planned early hearings on boundaries to try to avoid delay of the Nov. 6 local election. The law requires 30-day public notice of an election. McConn said he hoped boundaries can win federal approval by Oct. 6.

NATION

Stadium roof collapse kills five

The roof of a stadium under construction in Rosemont, Ill., collapsed in an earth-shaking roar Monday, killing at least five workers and injuring more than a dozen others inside. About 15 workers were trapped when the half-completed Rosemont Horizon Stadium, 25 miles northwest of the Chicago Loop, collapsed about 8:30 a.m. but were freed about 45 minutes later. A Rosemont police spokesman had reported eight dead but a spokesman for the Cook County Medical Examiner's office said his office could account for only five dead. "I couldn't say if that (the five confirmed) is the final count, but that's all the bodies that have been recovered so far," said Roy Dames, an administrative assistant. A temporary morgue was set up at the Rockford Paper Mills Inc. plant near the stadium site. At least 15 persons were reported injured and taken to three area hospitals, two reported in critical condition.

Six Haitians drown near Florida

Six Haitian refugees, including four small children, drowned Monday morning after they were forced at gunpoint to jump from a boat and swim to shore, police in West Palm Beach, Fla., said. Nine refugees made the half-mile swim to shore and three others were missing, said Palm Beach County Sheriff Richard Wille. "They were coming into the country on a small boat about 6 a.m.," Wille said. "When they got near shore, the person bringing them in forced them overboard at gunpoint." Wille said a suspect found in a nearby waterway in a 34-foot cabin cruiser was being questioned. However, no one had been arrested. There was no immediate identification of any of those aboard. But, Wille said the four children who drowned were between the ages of 4 and 12.

Pope might visit Harlem on NY visit

Church officials are considering plans to have Pope John Paul II visit Harlem and hold masses in Shea and Yankee stadiums on his trip to New York in October, a spokesman said in New York Monday. The pontiff is scheduled to arrive Oct. 2 for a 24-hour visit in which his only definite plan so far is an address to the United Nations General Assembly. Tentative plans call for the pontiff to arrive the morning of Oct. 2 at Kennedy International Airport, on a flight from Ireland via Boston. The pope mingled with neighborhood residents during his visits to Mexico and the Dominican Republic last January and to Poland in June. Also on the agenda for the pope's United States visit are stops in Chicago, Baltimore and Washington, with possible visits to Philadelphia, Boston and Detroit.

WORLD

Floods kill three in Mexico City

Torrential rains killed three people and flooded more than 200 houses over the weekend in the western Mexico City suburb of Naucalpan, authorities said. Two rivers overflowed, flooding some areas with as much as 6½ feet of water following the downpours and hailstorms on Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Red Cross spokesmen said two people drowned and one person was electrocuted as a result of the rains. Six houses were destroyed and 200 others were flooded.

THE BATTALION

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Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words and are subject to being cut to that length or less if longer. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit such letters and does not guarantee to publish any letter. Each letter must be signed, show the address of the writer and list a telephone number for verification.

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