

Matter of Fact by Stewart Alsop

NIXON MINUS

Washington—"If Dick Nixon ever becomes President," one knowledgeable Democrat has remarked, "he'd have the shortest honeymoon on record. I'd give him about two weeks, and then it would be the night of the long knives."

Since the President's stroke, the face of the Vice-President peering out in multiple form from every news-stand, has become more familiar than the face of Santa Claus, even at this season. And acres of print, almost every square inch laudatory in tone, have been devoted to the Vice-President's qualifications for the Presidency.

There is no doubt at all there are many impressive pluses in the Nixon ledger. One major plus, Nixon's changed attitude towards his function as a politician, was recently noted in this space. There are plenty of others, including the Vice-President's vitality, energy, and really remarkable mental equipment.

But there are minus signs in the Nixon ledger, too, which ought to be frankly noted and weighed in the balance. For despite the President's decision to go to the Paris NATO meeting, which was supposed to kill speculation about the possibility of his resignation, the speculation has not been killed at all. On the contrary, it has become a chief subject of conversation, even, and perhaps especially, in the most impeccably Republican circles.

SUPPOSE, then, that the President were to resign, and the Vice-President to take over the great office to which he was not elected. In the first place, he would enter office burdened by the deep distrust and dislike of the men who now control the Congress.

To cite only two examples, Senate Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson, who somehow manages to get along with almost everybody, has never gotten along with Nixon. House Speaker Sam Rayburn has said some of the harshest things about Nixon he has ever said about anyone—and the Speaker can be very harsh indeed. By all the signs, moreover, the Congress will be Democratic right through 1960.

The profound dislike and distrust of Nixon among Democrats of almost every persuasion are, of course, the legacy of Nixon's earlier years, when he regarded the destruction of the opposition as a chief function of a politician. Though Nixon has changed, the legacy lingers on.

NO DOUBT the Democratic leaders, who are by and large responsible men, would not wish to risk the destruction of the country in order to destroy Nixon. But the beady-eyed suspi-

cious with which the Democrats already examine every Nixon act for its political motivation would remain, while all concerned maneuvered for the showdown in 1960.

Moreover, much as Nixon has changed, there is still something lacking in him as a national leader. What is lacking is hard to define precisely. But Thomas E. Dewey came close to it when he remarked to a friend: "Dick's got the same trouble I've got—too many people dislike us both."

The public image of Dewey as "the mechanical man," marvelously efficient but lacking in human warmth, probably cost him the 1948 election. The public image of Nixon still has the same flaw. Nixon is too intelligent, too efficient, too politically effective for his own good. He has been facetiously compared to the kind of young woman who is always a picture of perfection—every hair in place, the slip never showing, never at a loss for a word—but who is somehow never led to the altar.

HIS VERY quickness of mind—and it is no accident that Nixon led his classes in college and law school—is a disadvantage. It robs him of that appearance of ponderous sincerity which is a major asset to Sen. William Knowland, and, for that matter, to President Eisenhower, which makes it easy for them to deal earnestly in the established simplicities.

Finally, there is the fact that Nixon is a political animal in his every instinct, a fact he can no more conceal than a dog can conceal its fur. To be sure, our most successful Presidents have been successful politicians. But these days the public has been taught to believe the silly notion that "politician" is a bad word, and that a President must exist in a non-political limbo.

Nixon is calmly aware that he suffers from these drawbacks, for he has a curious capacity for examining Richard M. Nixon as though he were another person. Perhaps that is why he has shown such a remarkable capacity for change. Especially in recent days, formerly violent Nixon on the subject of defense and foreign policy. Perhaps Nixon will change still more. And one thing seems certain. A Nixon Presidency would be a time of action, and no one would doubt for a moment that there was a President, or who he was.

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STRICTLY INCIDENTAL
Hollywood — Actress Dorothy Malone suffered a deep arm cut when she was hit by a swinging door on the set of "Too Much, Too Soon." "It didn't interfere with the scene," she said with some feeling. "That's because I got hit in the face with a tennis ball in the scene."

Roseburg Editor Sees Precedent In Colorado Railroad Decision

BY CHARLES V. STANTON

Editor, Roseburg News-Review
A decision which might serve as a precedent for the Oregon Public Utilities Commissioner, now examining the "Friendly" Southern Pacific's abandonment of passenger service in Southern Oregon, has been announced in Colorado.

The Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad had petitioned to halt passenger service on its Yampa Valley Mail line. This line passes through a tunnel built by public funds raised through bond issues by four counties.

The Public Utilities Commissioner held that the use of the Moffat Tunnel, constructed by taxpayers, carries with it a duty to serve the area with passenger service.

The decision by the Colorado commissioner contains some interesting parallels to the statements repeated frequently here in Southern Oregon.

The commissioner held, for example, that instead of the people of the area deserting the railroad, as had been claimed by the railroad company, the company had in fact deserted the people by failing to give adequate service.

Does anyone in this area argue that the Southern Pacific supplied "adequate service" with its famed "Night-crawler"?

We have contended consistently that adequate facilities for passenger travel would result in increased patronage. The Southern Pacific, desiring to rid itself of the trouble of handling passengers, deliberately killed off patronage by making the service as uncomfortable and inadequate as its best brains could devise.

Rail passenger service in Southern Oregon is not apt ever to be a profitable business. Proper service, however, would, I believe, involve only minor loss, a loss that could easily be compensated from the exceedingly large volume of highly profitable freight business from this area.

The Colorado commissioner touched on this phase of the railroad business in his decision.

It was noted that the company claimed a loss of about \$150,000 a year on its passenger service, but had substantial profits from heavy freight business. The passenger revenue loss, it was pointed out, was used by the railroad company in successful presentations for increases in freight rates, the increased rates thereby becoming a subsidy that should guarantee adequate passenger service.

And the commissioner placed responsibility for adequate service upon the company officials, declaring that those officials supposedly are traffic experts and it is their job to determine the service best fitted to give satisfaction.

The nub of the decision, of course, is centered in the fact

that the tunnel was constructed by public funds, on which bond payments will continue until 1982.

"Taxpayers mortgaged their lands to put the tunnel through," said the commissioner. "For so long as the railroad chooses to benefit from the fruits of their labor it should return value in kind to a full quantum of service, cheerfully rendered."

There is a close parallel between the Colorado case and the situation here in Southern Oregon.

The right of way and tracks in Southern Oregon were paid for from public funds through O & C

grant lands. The railroad company was granted alternate sections of lands for 30 miles on each side of the roadbed, exclusive of lands already homesteaded.

While this donation was not as directly local in character as the Colorado bond issue, the principle involved remains the same.

When Harris Ellsworth was representing this district as congressman he caused suit to be instituted against the Southern Pacific company to force compliance with the O & C act which specifies that through passenger trains shall be operated over the

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route between Portland and San Francisco.

The suit was dropped during the early days of the Second World War to prevent interference with the railroad's handling of war material. The court was never asked to pass upon the company's responsibility to comply with the terms of the act.

The Southern Pacific, of course, can contend it was freed from those terms when the grant lands were reverted in the federal government, and that such reversion nullified the public contribution.

On the other hand, it can be shown that the railroad company profited more than was anticipated in the grant of land, because it sold acreage for a higher sum than the amount specified,

which partly was the reason for reversion. The federal government, after recovering the lands, paid the railroad company the \$2.50 per acre listed in the grant as the sum for which the land was to be sold to settlers. Thus the railroad got all the money coming to it—and more, too.

It seems to me the Colorado decision sets a very definite precedent which the Oregon Public Utilities commissioner would do well to examine.

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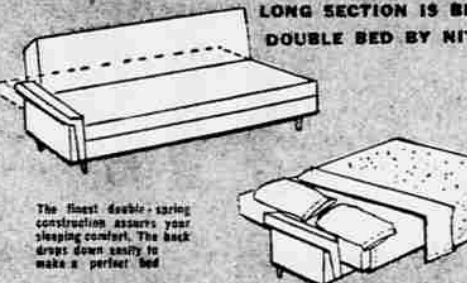
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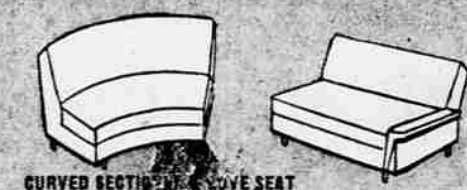
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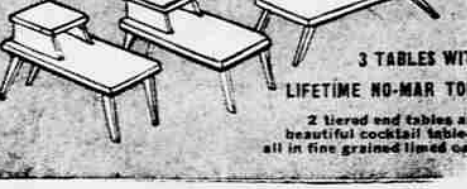
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