

Is Carter's thousand watt smile for real?

By DAN ANDREA

The U.S. presidential election is only a few days away. Go ahead and yawn. You have every right to. This campaign has been one of the dullest, dirtiest, disorganized and mistake prone contests in recent years. Neither candidate has generated much interest, as is reflected in the unusually high number of undecided voters. I wouldn't blame the electorate at all if they decided to stay in bed on November 2, for there is no real choice. The strongest nation in the world, two hundred million strong, and all they can come up with is a former congressman of questionable intellect, and a peanut farmer from the deep south. Both the public and the press tend to get caught up in the superficialities of the campaign. Is Jimmy Carter's thousand watt smile for real? Is Gerald Ford really a klutz? They should be digging deeper to discover the real man. On second thought, maybe they had better not. Ignorance, in this case, may be

bliss. Take for example good, old honest Jerry Ford. Yes, the same Jerry Ford who served on the controversial Warren Commission investigating the Kennedy assassination. The man even wrote a book defending the questionable commission findings. Yup, the same Jerry Ford, who in 1971, played into the hands of John Ehrlichman and Bob Haldeman and led the unsuccessful drive to impeach Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas. The grounds for impeachment — Douglas was too liberal. You guessed it. The same Jerry Ford who, when being confirmed by the Senate for the vice presidency in 1973, stated that he would not pardon Richard Nixon. And finally, the same guy, who on assuming the presidency, said he would only serve the remainder of the Nixon term.

Just a second Jimmy. Don't smile too quickly. You may be intelligent, but are you really the peanut farmer businessman, scientist and nuclear physicist you so ardently profess to

be? Well, two out of four isn't bad. Carter received an engineering degree from Georgia Tech before going to Annapolis Naval Academy. Then he went to Union College in Schenectady, New York for one semester in nuclear engineering. Hence he calls himself a nuclear physicist. Way to stretch the truth James. I've taken half courses in psychology, political science, economics and history.

Thus I'm a psychologist, political scientist, economist and historian. Not bad, eh? And Jimmy, weren't you good friends at one time with Lester Maddox, your Lieutenant Governor in Georgia. Maddox, the outspoken conservative who makes Archie Bunker look like a pinko? Actually, Carter and Maddox had a big fight, a parting of the ways, and now Maddox is the Independent Party's candidate for the presidency (the same party that George Wallace led in 1968). He may not get many votes, but if you believe even one half of what he says about Carter and his record as Governor of Georgia, you wouldn't touch Jimmy with a ten foot pole.

Even if you are willing to overlook their dubious pasts, which candidate are you to believe on the issues? Both Carter and Ford have flip flopped, evaded and distorted. Carter has changed positions so many times, you need a score card to keep track. Ford isn't much better. Carter promises everything except to improve the quality of sex. He promises to reduce unemployment and inflation, revamp the tax structure, balance the budget, restore integrity to government, to give moral

leadership, improve the defence structure, and to eliminate government wastage while at the same time introducing numerous government programs. And originally he promised to do it all in his first term! He hasn't said that lately. Wonder why.

If the story of the election campaign could be sung to a tune, it would be to Dionne Warwick's hit, 'Promises, Promises'. Yet this is no different than any previous election campaign. Why should we be fooled now? Remember 1964? Probably not. Anyway, in the presidential election of 1964, Lyndon Johnson campaigned on the theme of 'peace for America'. He repeatedly stated that no American boy's blood would ever fall in Southeast Asia. That was 50,000 deaths ago. It seems that during the day he was campaigning for peace, but at night was planning with Pentagon officials on a bombing strategy for North Vietnam. The Pentagon Papers, disclosed five years ago by Daniel Ellsberg, indicate that the United States deliberately got involved in the war, primarily for economic reasons. Barry Goldwater, the Republican candidate for president in 1964, campaigned for massive military intervention in Vietnam, and was soundly criticized by Johnson for this approach. Apparently Goldwater knew that Johnson was playing Dr. Jeckyll and Mr. Hyde with the American people, but for national security reasons refused to disclose Johnson's deception.

And who can forget 1968? Richard Nixon vs. Hubert Humphrey. The "new" Nixon campaigned on a platform of reducing inflation and unemployment, opening up the government to the people, restoring trust in the White House, reducing crime in the streets, getting out of Vietnam, balancing the budget, reorganizing government . . . sound familiar? On the Sunday before election day in 1968, Nixon appeared on a TV show where he promised that every Sunday there would be an open line talk show to the White House, so the people could ask questions and feel involved in the political system. The people believed Nixon. He seemed sincere. Politicians will do anything to get votes. Of course, under Tricky Dicky, inflation rose about 400 per cent (from 3 to 12 per cent), unemployment increased, the budget deficit ballooned, government grew and became more unmanageable, trust in the White House (well, I won't even get in to that), and crime flourished — although some would contend that he brought it off the streets and in to the White House.

The people uttering the promises

may change from year to year, but the script remains essentially the same. The name of the game is power, and both men want it. Once in office they forget their promises like a bad hangover, and continue to kick the electorate in the face. Our problems seem to proliferate whether we have a "liberal" president or a "conservative" one. The fact remains that no man, once in power still stand up for his principles. Even those out of power will blatantly compromise for political gain. Remember this past summer when ultra conservative Ronnie Reagan chose ultra liberal Richard Schweiker as his potential running mate? Nixon represents someone who switched positions as quickly as the wind changes direction. He promised that he would never institute wage and price controls. He brought them in. He promised never to enter Cambodia. He did. He promised to balance the budget. He didn't. The list goes on.

So, here are the American people faced with a dilemma. Is Jimmy Carter just another Richard Nixon? Perhaps below that Kennedyesque smile lurks a cold, ambitious, ruthless man. They have known him less than a year, yet on the basis of stereotyped, plastic rhetoric and forced smiles, they may allow him to lead the country, and thus the free world. Just watch his eyes sometime when he is "off guard". They pierce, shift and dart, always looking one step ahead. If Carter is complex, then Jerry Ford is simple. He is not an intellect, or for that matter a leader. Maybe his saving grace is that he is too dumb to be devious.

Will the voters decide to take a chance on the smile, or will they opt to stay bored with Ford? I just don't know. Does it really matter? Can you blame the electorate if they plug their noses, and run off to the nearest bar on election day?

We in Canada may shake our heads at the lack of leadership across the border, but let us not become too smug, for does the same situation exist here? Think about it.

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