

## THE NATION

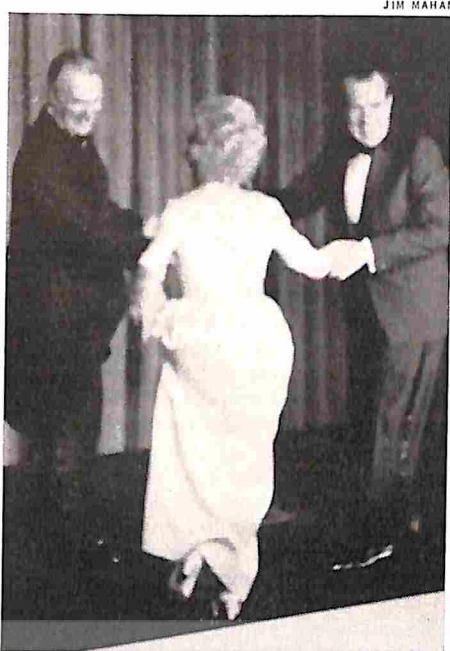
### AMERICAN NOTES

#### The Palace Guard

As Britain's Prime Minister Harold Wilson arrived at the south portico of the White House last week, he may have had a fleeting fancy that he had come to a banana republic or a Balkan kingdom. On hand to greet him were a squad of White House guards caparisoned in Graustarkian dress uniforms festooned with gold braid and nipped at the waist with black leather gunbelts. The black vinyl hats trimmed in gold suggested, by turns, a Ruritanian palace guard, a Belgian customs inspector, and Prince Danilo in *The Merry Widow*.

The President was impressed during his European tour last year by the shakos and braids of the ceremonial guards he encountered. Nixon—who himself wears somber grays and blues—had his staff order some kitschily elaborate threads for 150 of his White House police from a Washington military tailor. What did the President think of the uniform? "He likes it," reported Press Secretary Ron Ziegler. Some guests may have wondered whether the White House would soon revert to its old name. For a time, in the 19th century, the executive mansion was known as the President's Palace.

The Nixonian court jester may well be Red Skelton. Last week, in the first of a series of "Evenings at the White House," Skelton gave the VIP-studded audience the kind of entertainment that has made him a sort of cultural hero to Nixon's generation. After all the belly laughs were over ("I played golf



SKELTON & THE NIXONS

Return of the court jester.

today and shot a 72; tomorrow I'm going to play the second hole"), Skelton displayed an old trouper's feel for his audience by dramatically reciting the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag amid a reverential hush.

#### Idealism's Price

All week Washington and the nation were preoccupied with Richard Nixon's budget and economic message, with the pain of inflation and the fear of recession. Through all the talk about billions and trillions, and about the size and direction of future growth, rang echoes of the President's State of the Union message of the week before. "In the next ten years," Nixon said in one remarkable passage, "we shall increase our wealth by 50%. The profound question is: Does this mean we will be 50% richer in a real sense, 50% better off, 50% happier?"

It is startling for any American President, let alone a Republican of Nixon's background and character, to raise such a doubt about traditionally defined economic growth. The idea of almost infinite expansion has always been a part of the national faith. Now, even in the White House, there is a disposition to heed the Thoreauvian advice: "Simplify!"

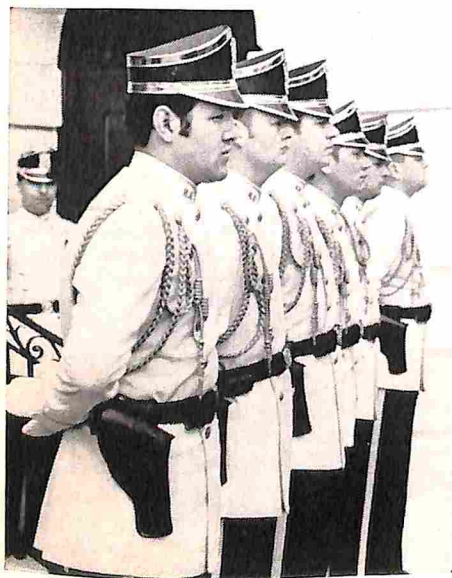
But who is to simplify what, and how? At the very moment when the U.S. is beginning to question its old materialist certainties, it is also facing urgent new demands for a better society

—which can hardly begin to be financed without enormous continued material growth. Nothing is quite so expensive as idealism; that paradox may well shape the politics of the 1970s.

#### Machinocide

For two years, Robert Goines had been feeding nickels and dimes to the soft-drink vending machine in his Indianapolis service station. Often enough, the machine simply swallowed the coins without disgorging a bottle of pop. In all, Goines calculates he lost more than \$25 down the slot.

By last Dec. 29, Goines had had enough, as he told an Indianapolis court last week. He had to give refunds to two customers who lost their money to the device, then it took Goines' own 15¢. "I shook that machine," Goines testified. "Then I walked over to the desk drawer, got my .22-cal. revolver, and I went over and shot the machine dead! After I fired the shot, I looked at that machine and I said, 'That's the last time you're going to cheat anybody.'" The municipal judge was not amused; he fined Goines \$160 and gave him ten days in jail for disorderly conduct, drawing a gun and firing it within city limits. Goines had obviously touched a responsive chord, however, among everyone who has ever been bamboozled by machinery. As Goines prepared an appeal, a group of Indianapolis lawyers volunteered to help with his case, and one sympathizer even offered to serve part of his jail term for him. But even from the grave, the machine enjoyed a kind of victory over its human foe.



WHITE HOUSE POLICE  
*Ruritania revisited.*



CHEVALIER IN "THE MERRY WIDOW"  
*Shades of Danilo.*

FIFTY CENTS

FEBRUARY 9, 1970

The American Indian:  
The Goodbye to Tonto



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