

INTRODUCTION: POLITICS MAKES STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

Many years ago in Washington I invented a Valentine's Day game that I called "Politics Makes Strange Bedfellows." A bowl filled with 50 names—male, female, living, dead, real, fictional—circles the table as the players draw names from it. The objective is to stop when you believe you have constructed the most outrageous or unique couple. Winning is always by consensus. The Marquis de Sade paired with Mother Teresa might be a contender, but would probably be rejected as too obvious. My friends were into subtlety and nuance.

Had we played our game on Valentine's Day 1969, Richard Milhous Nixon and Daniel Patrick Moynihan surely would have been debated with passion and dismissed as too improbable. Of all the odd couples in American public life, were they not the oddest?

Pat Moynihan famously told us that we are entitled to our own opinions, but not to our own facts. Yet writers must choose from a gallery of facts and arrange them in an order that best explains what they are trying to do. Take the subtitle of this study: it announces that I will be writing about a specific man, in a specific

place, at a specific time, that is, Daniel Patrick Moynihan in the Nixon White House.

My first challenge is not to stray. Nixon and Moynihan, figures of historical dimension, must be contained in 1969–70, the two years that they are together in the White House. For instance, Watergate at that time is no more than a building complex in Foggy Bottom, of significance only in the real estate columns. Nixon, Moynihan, and the rest of us in this story do not know the future. If you do, please suspend memory to let our story reflect its own reality. This is what the writer is going to do—in the present tense—unless there is a reason for doing otherwise.

My second challenge is to stay focused. Nixon is always waiting in the wings to take command of a story. In 1994, 20 years after Nixon's resignation as president of the United States, I arranged a luncheon for filmmaker Oliver Stone. Stone wanted to introduce Anthony Hopkins, the British actor who would portray Nixon in Stone's upcoming movie, to four people who knew the president: press secretary Ron Ziegler, law partner Len Garment, political aide John Sears, and myself. At some point I whispered to Hopkins, "Listen, Tony, each one of us is describing a totally different person!" But Nixon's story must be resisted because this is Pat's story.

I will also work hard to stay out of the story as much as possible. The story is from my point of view, but it is not my story.