

Ronald Reagan Is Giving 'Em Heck

By STEVEN V. ROBERTS

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LABOR DAY, 1970. Ronald Wilson Reagan, former sports announcer and movie star, former "bleeding heart" Democrat, now Governor of California, was going campaigning. The press had been waiting for several minutes when he bounced out the bus, waved out the window to a pair of white-haired "young ladies," handed his notes—neatly printed on white cards—to an aide and settled into a front seat. Then the bus pulled slowly away, headed for the Orange County Fairgrounds and the annual picnic of Local 324 of the Retail Clerks International Association, A.F.L.-C.I.O. It passed little stucco bungalows with aging Fords in the driveways, women in Bermuda shorts raking the grass and kids in T-shirts riding bicycles, American flags flapping in a soft breeze and freeways carpeting the sun-charred landscape with wall-to-wall concrete. It passed

STEVEN V. ROBERTS is the Los Angeles bureau chief of The Times.

something called "Movieland of the Air" and the General Steam Corporation, Dover Shores Veterinary Hospital and the Happy Land Pre-School. As it approached the fairgrounds one of the Governor's companions remarked that working people did not like to go to Labor Day picnics any more. Reagan flicked at the subject like a frog at a fly. "You youngsters probably don't remember," he said to the middle-aged labor leaders sitting around him, "but when I was young, golf was a sissy, rich man's game.

So was boating and skiing and horse-back riding. Today they're weekend sports for the working man; he doesn't have to go to Labor Day picnics."

The labor moguls nodded silently as the bus stopped and Reagan climbed down. He was dressed in a rather stiffly casual manner: black, pleated trousers hitched well above his imperceptible stomach, immaculate white suede shoes, a white sports shirt, open to reveal a well-tanned chest slightly mottled with his 59

years. Deep lines fanned out from his eyes, giving the impression of a perpetual half-squint. His jagged smile, revealing an uneven row of bottom teeth, glowed warmly. He was obviously fit, although slightly less bulky than usual, without the padded suit shoulders he favors. After greeting the leaders of the retail clerks, Reagan stepped gingerly into the crowd, a sea of \$2.95 plaid shirts, white-rimmed sun glasses, flowered-print dresses covering bosoms still clearly supported by Maid-

The former movie star pours it on in his own way. And in his bid for a second term as Governor of California, the experts say he could win by a million votes.

enform, drippy cones of crushed ice, Instamatic cameras and silver hair.

"Hi, how are you?" the Governor repeated as he pushed slowly ahead, grabbing hands and signing his name. "Hi, how are you?" A man with a lot of c's and z's on his name tag asked about a proposed abortion law. "If they liberalize it all the way, you bet I won't sign it," came the answer. Someone handed Reagan a flag, then a yellow teddy bear. The gifts were quickly passed back to his covey of youthful aides, most of whom looked

like slightly weathered student-body presidents, all thinning hair and thickening officiousness. (The teddy bear was treated like a time bomb; no one knew what to do with it. When the bus was leaving hours later the aides were still handing the grinning yellow toy to one another, trying to get rid of it.)

As the crowd flowed around Reagan, it was obvious that they were not interested in seeing just another politician, or even another governor. They wanted to see a star. "I remember

your pictures, Ron," called one man. A mother nudged her daughter as she strained for a better look: "He used to be in the movies." A woman with a huge Unruh button, advertising Reagan's opponent, pushed through for an autograph. Why? "For my kids," she said sheepishly. "How come you never get old?" gushed another admirer. "You just get better-looking."

RONALD REAGAN is getting old, but he still looks pretty good to a lot of Californians. As he enters his campaign for a second four-year term in Sacramento, his vibrant self-confidence seems entirely justified. Any incumbent bears the scars of unfulfilled promise and unavoidable boredom, and the White Knight of 1966 is beginning to rust in spots. But the polls continue to give him a consistent margin of about 10 points over Democrat Jess Unruh, former Speaker of the State Legislature. Most experts would be surprised if he wins by less than a million votes, the margin by which he defeated former Governor

Edmund G. Brown in his first try for public office four years ago.

It was altogether fitting that Reagan should open his campaign at Labor Day picnic, the traditional hunting grounds for Democratic votes. The Governor won about 25 or 30 per cent of the labor vote in 1966, and that helped provide his margin of victory in a state that still has a majority of registered Democrats. In California, as in many states, the labor vote remains crucial, the celebrated "Great Silent Majority" torn between its Democratic past and apparently Republican future.

As they sat there in the simmering Orange County heat, the retail clerks were obviously ripe for Reagan's plucking. They are scrambling to pay the taxes on those stucco boxes and the repairs on those '65 automobiles, and welfare is an affront. They are almost as weary of the war as they are of peace marches, but they do not want to see America "lose face." They want a good education for their kids, but they are appalled at narcotics in the high schools, demonstrations in the colleges and sex just about everywhere. They are not poor, at least not the way their parents might have been poor; some do play golf or go boating. But they are certainly not rich, and probably not even very secure. They are not miserable, but they are not very happy, either, and they are confused by the "egg-heads" who tell them the values they were taught to believe in do not hold any more. They are basically decent people, but they have a capacity for hate when the neat patterns of their lives are disrupted. When you look at them you have a feeling you've seen them before: yelling at the kids integrating the high schools of Little Rock or protesting public housing in Queens or throwing rocks at Martin Luther King in Cicero.

After Reagan finally disappeared behind the stage of a large amphitheater, the leader of the retail clerks' union, a pudgy, graying fellow in a two-tone, mustard-colored shirt, led the Pledge of Allegiance "to the flag of our great country." Then he announced expansively: "First we'll have a few speeches, then a puppet show and then the highlight of our day, the drawing for some wonderful door prizes." The first speaker was the only Democratic candidate to brave the wilds of Orange County, State Senator Alfred Alquist, who is running for Lieutenant Governor. Having been relegated to a rank of importance somewhat below that of the puppet show, Alquist could not stir up much enthusiasm. Even his dire warning that "the handwriting is on the wall," that unemployment and inflation were both rising under the

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IN AND OUT: The incumbent (opposite page, at a news conference) has based his re-election campaign on attacks against welfare cheaters, campus unrest and the high cost of government. His opponent, Jess Unruh, the former Speaker of the State Legislature (above, with an aide wearing a Ronald Reagan mask), is counting on inflation and rising unemployment to turn California voters against the Republicans. Says one Democrat: "It's just a question of which fears you play on."

Ronald Reagan is giving 'em heck

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Republicans, did not have much impact. He was like a bumbling comedian trying to fill the time before the burlesque queen was ready.

Finally he finished and Reagan was on. "Hey, Ronnie," yelled the crowd, "Hey, Ronnie, baby." The Governor began by reciting his own union credentials—six terms as president of the Screen Actors Guild—and presenting a scroll to the union for its humanitarian work in local hospitals. It was important, he went on, to recognize "labor's partnership in the free-enterprise system," especially on Labor Day. "It's kind of wonderful, in our troubled times, to stand up and speak about something so traditional. It seems like so often today that the world we know is coming unglued." From that note he shifted easily into his standard jokes, which he delivers with impeccable timing. "I've got a new way to stop smog," he announced, "stop burning down the schools." And then: "The young people want three political parties, one in power, one out of power and one marching on Sacramento." For some reason he left out one of his favorites: "I had a nightmare last night; I dreamed I owned a Laundromat in Berkeley."

The main topic of the speech was welfare, and the main message was clear: you, the taxpayer, are getting stuck. "Welfare," Reagan declared, "is the taxpayer's greatest domestic expense, and it is increasing in cost faster than our revenues can keep pace." One reason is fraud: 16 per cent of the families receiving Aid for Dependent Children cheated last year, at a cost of \$59-million. More important, he said, "I am also convinced there is a sizable percentage of people who have taken advantage of loopholes in the thousands of overlapping Federal regulations to augment their incomes at your expense." Then he recited a few horrible examples: an unmarried girl who got \$400 for an abortion despite her parents' income, a social worker making \$13,700 who received aid under the A.D.C. program, a citizen owning a \$30,000 home who was eligible for free surplus food. These situations, he thundered, are made possible by "self-seeking politicians" who urge organized welfare groups to "make poverty a

profession." And the courts have not helped. When the Supreme Court nullified California's one-year residency requirement for welfare it cost the State \$95-million a year. The phrases spurted out: "able-bodied malingerers . . . special-interest groups . . . massive tax drain. . ."

When it was over, the crowd swarmed around Reagan again. A Chicano youth edged his way forward and yelled: "Why don't you do something to help the people in East Los Angeles [the largest Mexican-American barrio]?" The Governor looked up, but his eyes registered no recognition. He turned quickly to an autograph seeker. "I should never have learned to make anything but an X," he quipped. A lady in bell-bottom jeans rushed up and shouted: "Give 'em hell, Governor."

GOVERNOR REAGAN is giving them hell, or, as he would say, heck. (In public, Reagan blushes when he uses a word as strong as "damn"; in private, he tells off-color stories with great relish.) His whole style is suited to attack, to criticism. But he has been Governor for 3½ years, and that presents problems. He has to find reasons outside his administration for all the trouble. Spiraling welfare costs are thus the work of the "professional poor," the courts, the Federal bureaucracy. Campus unrest is caused by "revolutionaries" determined to "tear down the system" and administrators who "appease" them. But Reagan must still run on his record, and I went to Sacramento one day to talk to him about his tenure.

I saw Reagan in his office, a richly paneled room with old hunting prints and bullet-proof windows. He has a reputation for being a very difficult man to interview, and many capital reporters no longer bother. ("It's just like hearing the same record over and over again," said one, "I don't think he knows how to be candid.") When I checked the notes of my own interview, I found that most of what he said had come practically word-for-word from old speeches.

Ronald Reagan takes an essentially negative approach to government. He has said many times that his major goal is "cutting the cost of government. This should be the top priority of every administration." And this is

probably the most significant impact he has made on California. After he took office, he was faced with such a huge budget deficit that he had to ask for the largest tax increase in state history (an increase that conveniently produced enough surplus to permit a tax rebate in time for the election this year). But ever since, he has been slashing away at the government with great gusto. When I asked what accomplishment he was proudest of, he said: "We're a growing state—got a million more people than we had when I started—and that had been the excuse for years and years for the increase in the size of the state government. Better than 5,000 employes were added to the State payroll every year. Well, we've been here 3½ years and there are fewer employes than when we started."

The major issue in the state is, and has been since Reagan started campaigning against the "mess in Berkeley" in 1966, education. After his election, the Governor set the tone for his administration when he engineered the firing of Clark Kerr, the president of the University of California, and announced that the State should not "subsidize intellectual curiosity." This prompted The Los Angeles Times, which had supported his candidacy, to declare that, "an anti-intellectual political reactionary now governs California and is determined to bring higher-education growth to a grinding halt." To many observers, the last three years have borne out The Times's prediction. As student unrest spread from Berkeley to the university's other eight campuses, Reagan escalated his attacks. He says occasionally that students have some "legitimate" gripes, particularly the size of classes and the inaccessibility of professors. But in general he has denied the validity of student complaints. Young people are "indoctrinated" by left-wing professors, he insists, and "march only to disrupt." In heated moments his rhetoric would make President Nixon's epithet "bums" sound positively charitable. He has called student "brats," "freaks" and "cowardly fascists," and last spring, in discussing order on campus, he said: "If it takes a bloodbath, let's get it over with. No more appeasement." Later he said the remark was

a "figure of speech" and that anyone who took it seriously was "neurotic." Within a few days, four students were shot at Kent State.

DESPITE the opposition of many California liberals, Reagan's stand on campus disruption is extremely popular. One of his chief campaign strategists put it this way: "Campus unrest is an issue between Reagan and the people with nobody in between. They understand what he's saying. Reagan is a polarizing politician, much more than Nixon. With Nixon, there are all shades of gray, but that's not the way Reagan operates—he lays it out there. This campus-unrest issue is really bugging a lot of people. Hell, they didn't go to college, but they want their kids to go, and they're paying for the State system. And it just outrages them to see a building burned down. They have no way of really understanding the legitimate student complaints because they never went to college and they have no understanding of what happens on a college campus. The first reaction on every poll I can show you is, 'Throw the s.o.b.'s out.'"

But education in California is more than a political issue. Many people fear Reagan is destroying the university. He has consistently cut its budget requests by about 20 per cent, and construction funds have been slashed even deeper. Moreover, his attacks on the university have helped create a climate in which the Legislature found it popular to exempt professors from a 5 per cent pay raise granted all other State employes. University President Charles J. Hitch, commenting on his budget for next year, said: "The first thing these cuts mean is that our students will get a short-changed education—not only next year, but as the effects of this action take hold and deplete the university for many years after that." He held out the possibility that some qualified students would have to be turned away—something California vowed would never happen. As Re-

gan has gained control of the Board of Regents, he has exerted more influence over the university. At his urging, the regents last year took away from the nine chancellors the final power to appoint faculty. Last spring they used that power to delay the promotion of two radical professors, and more such cases are expected. Also last spring the Governor led the fight against Angela Davis, the young black Communist who was appointed acting assistant professor of philosophy at U.C.L.A. The regents finally fired Miss Davis, even though the courts had said that she could not be dismissed for her political beliefs. (Several weeks later Miss Davis was linked to the shoot-out in which a judge was killed in a San Rafael courtroom; she fled, but was arrested in a New York motel 10 days ago.) The regents also vowed a crackdown on student newspapers and ordered the chancellors to prepare rules that would prohibit "socio-political advocacy" and "the dissemination of lewd, obscene articles and photographs" by student journalists. Faculty morale is plummeting. Established teachers are leaving, good young ones are hesitant to come. "Crisis" is too mild a word to describe the situation.

The decline of the university is undoubtedly hastened by the tactics of those who feel that throwing a rock through a window is a valid expression of political belief. Reagan and the radicals need and use each other. The violent student minority gives the Governor a chance to vent his moral outrage and avoid the deeper problems bothering students. And Reagan's rhetoric and actions and those of the police reinforce the radicals' contention that California is on the brink of fascism, enabling them to gather wide support on campus. The only ones who lose are those in the middle.

REAGAN knows who his constituents are. He placed top priority this year on a tax-reform bill that would have lowered property taxes

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"As a politician, Reagan is a great psychiatrist"

for the 65 per cent of the population who own homes. The reduction would have been financed mainly by an increased sales tax—a regressive levy that hits the poor hardest. (The bill was blocked by Democratic legislators who insisted — against Reagan's adamant opposition — that a tax increase be used to aid education.) At the same time, Reagan endorsed a bill that increased the take for race track owners and reduced the State's share of track revenues. He also advocated a higher tax on public power companies, saying they have an unfair advantage over private power, and a reduction of the State's business-inventory tax. Business, he told an Anaheim audience, "is already being sand-bagged by the Federal Government." If its taxes are raised too much it would be like "killing the goose that lays the golden egg."

When he opened his campaign, Reagan listed the issues this way: "Taxes and tax relief, the size and cost of government, the continuing effort to cut those costs, the State's role in helping to finance and provide the best education for our children, the progress we've made in getting tougher laws and tougher judges to protect the citizen, his family and property, the work being done to protect the magical environment of California, the programs to build and expand the California economy so there are jobs and job opportunities for our people . . ." Not one word about poverty, slums, disease, discrimination, job training or justice. Listening to Ronald Reagan, it is possible to imagine that blacks or Chicanos or Indians do not really exist in California—except as welfare chiselers or threats to "family and property." He has always maintained that racial integration is a "desirable result," but he opposes open-housing legislation and the busing of school children. Last winter, in talking about the integration of minority groups, he said: "As we bring them up to where they have the economic means to follow the trend to the suburbs and to move and disperse from some of these communities, we are going to find that this problem to a large extent solves itself."

In many ways, this is the

essence of Reagan's appeal. He holds out the hope that all those troublesome problems that make the evening news so unpleasant will solve themselves. "For many years now," he said in his inaugural address, "you and I have been shushed like children and been told there are no simple answers to the complex problems which are beyond our comprehension. Well, the truth is, there are simple answers." In fact, he implies, many of those problems do not even exist. Students are unhappy not because of an insane war or distorted national priorities but because they are "indoctrinated." Taxes go up not because society has a responsibility to the underprivileged, but because people are cheating on welfare. A liberal Republican politician explained it this way:

"What the people really want is for all this turmoil to go away, and they go wild about a man who promises to do everything to dispel that turmoil. What the Great Silent Majority wants most of all is silence. They don't want to get involved, they want things the way they used to be. As a politician, Reagan is a great psychiatrist. He puts the voter on the couch and says soothingly, 'You're great, why don't they appreciate you?' He's like a medicine man with his little bottle of elixir that will make everything go away—those fuzzy-wuzzy blacks staring at you on the 11 o'clock news and those professors who keep saying how smart they are and how dumb you are. He's a boy with his finger in the dike, holding back the future."

BUT Reagan is even more subtle than that. He gives people a reason to feel good about their lives. In a recent speech to the state Chamber of Commerce he said: "We have been picked at, sworn at, rioted against and downgraded until we have a built-in guilt complex, and this has been compounded by the accusations of our sons and daughters who pride themselves on 'telling it like it is.' Well, I have news for them—in a thousand social-science courses they have been informed 'the way it is not' . . . As for our generation, I will

make no apology. No people in all history paid a higher price for freedom. And no people have done so much to advance the dignity of man. . . . We are called materialistic. Maybe so. . . . But our materialism has made our children the biggest, tallest, most handsome and intelligent generation of Americans yet. They will live longer with fewer illnesses, learn more, see more of the world and have more successes in realizing their personal dreams and ambitions than any other people in any other period of our history—because of our 'materialism.'"

Reagan understands the spiritual values of his people—thrift, hard work, caution, security. He also understands that they are patriotic, that they believe their country has a mission and that through that mission they will somehow transcend their limited lives. "Manifest destiny" is one of the most basic ideas in American history, and seldom has it been stated in a purer form than when Ronald Reagan said recently:

"I think on our side is civilization and on the other side

is the law of the jungle . . . We all have to recognize that this country has been handed the responsibility, greater than any nation in all history, to preserve some 6,000 years of civilization against the barbarians."

That statement was not concocted for political effect. It reflects, as much as anything he has ever said, Reagan's view of the world. "You know," one of his aides once told me, "Ronnie really does believe in good and evil." And he believes in his role as a defender of the good. "The trouble with Reagan," said one politician, "is that he can't decide whether he was born in a log cabin or a manger." The Governor's finely honed sense of the apocalyptic comes bursting through in his campaign rhetoric. In talking about welfare abuses to a luncheon at the Elks Club in

Critical reporters are isolated by his staff

Napa, he said: "We should all clearly understand the stakes in this economic and social 'Battle of Armageddon.' What we are fighting for is the survival of our system."

Reagan's obvious sincerity is one of his greatest political assets. One of his campaign organizers said recently: "I'm not really concerned that the campaign will be decided on issues. It will be decided on image. If we can get people to believe that Ron is still trying to put forth a point of view, that he's still trying to get things done, we'll win with no trouble. He's just a straight guy trying to do a job." A week later the California Poll, conducted by Mervin Field, affirmed that view. What the voters liked most about Reagan was not what he said but how he said it. Thirty per cent of those questioned by Field said Rea-

gan's strongest point was among the following: "speaks his mind, honest, sincere, straightforward, decisive." The most important substantive issue, campus unrest, was mentioned by only 19 per cent of the respondents.

THIS image of sincerity comes across with great power, particularly on TV. Thus Reagan's strategy is similar to Nixon's in 1968: reach the voter, as one aide said, through as few "sieves" as possible. That means a large budget for packaged television ads. And it means grabbing free TV time whenever possible (except to debate Unruh). Bill Boyarsky, the Associated Press's former bureau chief in Sacramento and the author of a book on Reagan, has said: "If we pen-and-pencil reporters catch him at the airport alone, we get no story. But if the TV cameras are there, he turns it on, and he talks right to the camera. That's why you see him on TV so much, because he's provocative and he goes places where TV covers things."

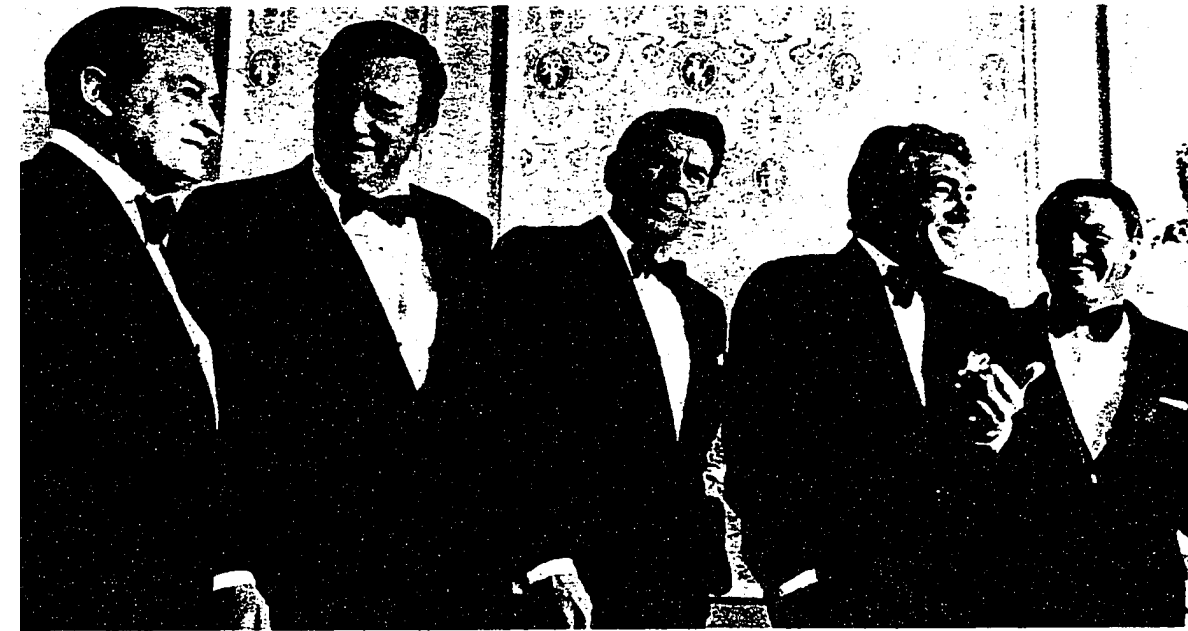
The most damaging thing to a candidate of this sort is

a critical analyst—a "sieve" that filters his message. Reagan likes television because he can communicate directly with the people, but also because TV newsmen seldom have the time or the expertise to interpret what he is saying. Like Vice President Agnew, Reagan has conducted a campaign in California to discredit the writing press, which does have the capacity for criticism. At almost every stop he will say something like, "I don't mean to imply that these reporters don't write the truth, but . . ." Writers who are critical of the Governor often find themselves isolated by the staff. One correspondent recently received a letter from Paul Beck, the Governor's press secretary, who informed him that he would no longer receive any official cooperation in covering the campaign.

Reagan is, of course, a professional TV performer (for several years before his first gubernatorial campaign, he was the host of the television show "Death Valley Days," a job that he concedes was like "subsidized retirement"). But expertise alone does not ex-

plain his success. The main reason he communicates so well with his people is that he genuinely shares so many of their values and outlooks. His official campaign biography has been doctored a bit—his first marriage to actress Jane Wyman, their two children and their divorce have been expunged from the record—but that was hardly necessary. "He is the personification of the American dream," said one assistant. "At a time when everything is in such disarray, people want to know that nice guys don't always finish last."

One of the strongest influences in his life is his wife, Nancy, described in her official biography as "a dedicated wife and mother." The sketch omits the fact that Mrs. Reagan, the daughter of a prominent and conservative neurosurgeon in Chicago, was a movie actress before turning to the joys of domesticity. No matter. Nancy Reagan is as stern a guardian of public morality as her husband, maybe more stern. She believes, for example, that an abortion is "committing murder." When an interviewer



SUPPORTING STARS—Some former show-biz colleagues pose with Governor Reagan at a fund-raising rally in Los Angeles. From left, Bob Hope, John Wayne, Dean Martin and Frank Sinatra. Reagan has had no trouble collecting a campaign kitty that aides estimate at \$1.5-million but others say is larger.

recently asked her about a woman who has no choice about having a baby she replied: "But she does have a choice. It starts with a movement of the head, either yes or no. This cheap, easy thing they say—that I can do whatever I want sexually and not take responsibility—I don't

agree with that at all." Women's Lib? "Ridiculous," said Mrs. Reagan, using one of her husband's favorite words. "They're going to end up being unhappy women."

THE Reagans have simple tastes. Their greatest joy is horseback riding, which they

do as often as possible in the campaign bus I asked Reagan what shows he liked. His reply: "I'm not able to get out riding as often as I used to, so even if a show is lousy, I like it if it has plenty of horses and outdoor scenes. Some of them are made on the Fox ranch, and I can pick out trails I made 15 years ago."

The Reagans' 17-year-old daughter, Patti, who has been away at boarding school, entered Ohio University this fall, but when the kids—Patti and her 12-year-old brother, Skipper—are around, the family likes to go out to the movies or screen one at home. "I call up my friends at the studios to see if a film is all right for the kids," Reagan said, "but so many of them are rated X these days my friends have to say no."

Reagan and his wife are both ardent foes of film frankness. "A kiss is only beautiful to the people doing it," he said, "it's pretty ugly to someone watching it." Two of his recent favorites were "Patton" and "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid." "Patton was so totally honest, nothing con-

trived," it really happened," Reagan explained. Then with a frown he added: "I've never understood the avant garde person who likes the most abstract painting and says 'Use your head,' and then justifies going to the bathroom in the street because it's 'realism.'"

Reagan is also a man of great personal charm. He is smooth and self-possessed, but not too smooth; his speech is flecked with enough slurred words and homey expressions to make him seem human, approachable. Total strangers just naturally call him "Ronnie." It is the "aw, shucks" school of politics, and it works—well, like a charm. For instance, in recalling his days as host of the General Electric TV Theater, Reagan mentions his opposite number at Westinghouse by calling himself "the Betty Furness of G. E." The audiences roar at the line. They don't rip off his cufflinks or muss his hair, they just like him. "Delivery is half of the game," said one of Reagan's confidants. "Agnew is a little too harsh. Barry Goldwater was a little too feisty, he laid down a challenge every time he spoke. Ron comes across as reasonable. In 1966 he said the same things Barry said in 1964, but he said them in a reasonable manner."

In 1966 Reagan called himself a "citizen politician," and in announcing his bid for reelection he said he was "just a citizen temporarily in public service." That may be so, but few observers of California politics doubt that he has become a highly competent politician, managed by the best professionals around.

He was first urged to run for public office by a group of conservative millionaires, including the late Cy Rubel of Union Oil; Holmes Tuttle, a Ford dealer and finance chairman of Reagan's current campaign; Henry Salvatori, who made his money in oil exploration; Leonard Firestone of the rubber company, and Taft Schreiber, vice president of the Music Corporation of America and Reagan's first theatrical agent. It is difficult to judge the continuing influence of these men, dubbed by the press his "kitchen cabinet." They did, for example, band together with about a dozen others to buy a house for Reagan when Nancy decided the Executive Mansion in Sacramento was a "fire-trap." (Reagan pays \$1,200 a month rent.) They can usually talk to the Governor when they want to, but they do not seem to have much power. "All they really get is recognition," said one assistant.

"They go to the Governor's house for dinner once in a while; their wives love that stuff."

AT campaign time, at least, the most important influence on Reagan is Spencer-Roberts, the political-management team that has revolutionized the business of winning elections. Squirreled away in a nondescript office building in downtown Los Angeles, with a Norman Rockwell drawing of Ronald Reagan in the foyer, Stu Spencer maps the basic strategy of the campaign. (Bill Roberts is working full-time on the re-election campaign

without a mind of his own. The Governor himself will occasionally say something like, "I'm in the hands of people who . . ." This is partly true, but it ignores the fact that Reagan's thinking meshes so well with that of his constituents. He does not need a computer to tell him that people are upset about campus violence or pornography; he is, too.

The best example of switching signals because of the tracking surveys was the conservation issue. Last year voters started identifying the environment as a major concern, and Reagan jumped on



Graysmith in The San Francisco Chronicle.

"I've come for you, Ronnie."

of Senator George Murphy.) A rough-talking, short-haired cynic with tattoos on his arm, Spencer will not talk for attribution, but his basic mode of operation is well known. The key is information. Every night a team of telephone operators calls a selected sample of voters and asks them a series of questions. The results of this procedure, called "tracking," are fed into a computer. The computer then prints out, in considerable detail, what the people of California are thinking. At the beginning of the campaign, Spencer could gauge within a week or 10 days the impact his candidate was having. If more money is invested, the lead time can be cut to 24 hours.

The Reagan people insist that the main criterion for selecting a campaign issue is the Governor's feeling about it; what the voters want to hear, as revealed by the tracking, is only secondary. But they admit that there is a remarkable correlation between the Governor's impulses and the results of the surveys. When pressed, they cannot think of a discrepancy. To the Governor's more bitter critics, this means that he is "completely programed," a man

the bandwagon. "But you know," said one adviser, "the polls show a direct correlation between interest in the environment and the smog season. When the air clears up they forget about it. That shows you something about the electorate."

As the campaign accelerates, Reagan is in an excellent political position. He has thrown a blanket of unity over the Republicans that covers — some would say smothers — just about everyone. Even former Senator Thomas Kuchel, whom Reagan helped depose in 1968, recently endorsed him (while refusing to endorse Senator Murphy). As one lady at a fundraising party told me, "He is everything to everyone." A moderate like Kuchel responds to his apparent reasonableness and flexibility, as exemplified by the conservation issue and his willingness, after years of staunch opposition, to endorse the withholding of state income taxes. The Los Angeles Times, a traditionally Republican paper, also endorsed him again, saying: "The great majority of Californians are people of the center—moderate, reasonable people who want pragmatic solutions to real problems. The Governor's con-

duct in office has shown the growing awareness of these realities and a growing flexibility in meeting them." At the same time, the right remains mollified by his adamant stand on such issues as school busing. After his renomination, for instance, he was asked to comment on George Wallace's campaign for Governor of Alabama. He hemmed and hawed and finally muttered: "Well, let's just say I wouldn't have campaigned that way." Hardly a devastating critique.

IN contrast, Jess Unruh has split his party, or rather, he has failed to heal the gaping wounds of the past. As Speaker of the Assembly for many years, "Big Daddy" Unruh was an extremely powerful man who made many lasting enemies. In particular, he fought bitterly with former Governor Pat Brown, and this year some of Brown's friends and money raisers are sitting the election out or openly backing Reagan.

Since his association with Robert Kennedy in 1968, however, Unruh seems to have undergone a conversion—he is, for instance, strongly against the war. But many of the liberals he despised for so long remain highly suspicious. As he moved from the back rooms of Sacramento to the TV screen, Unruh shed about 100 pounds, got his teeth fixed and polished up his delivery, though he remains a rather dull speaker, with little humor or charisma. And like many Democrats this year, he has found money about as scarce as a welfare recipient at a Reagan rally. (Reagan has had no trouble raising a budget that his advisers put at \$1.5-million, a figure some observers feel is too small.)

Unruh has no plans to buy TV time. Instead, he is counting on free coverage, and that has forced him into some blundering attempts at the dramatic. During the first week of the campaign he led a troupe of newsmen to the mansion of Henry Salvatori, Reagan's best-known millionaire friend, to charge that the Governor's tax-reform proposal would have saved Salvatori almost \$5,000. The figures were right, but, unfortunately for Unruh, Salvatori and his wife were home. They rushed outside and denounced him—as the cameras rolled—for invading private property. "We earned our money," shouted Mrs. Salvatori, who has a heart condition.

Unruh's real problem, of course, is Reagan. "Our main frustration," said one Demo-

cratic official, "is getting Reagan to come to grips with an issue so we can draw clear distinctions between our policy and his. Reagan is so vague and so glib that he makes the issue whether he's a good guy or not. It's awfully difficult to present a clear choice to the voters."

Reagan is clearly weak on two issues. The first is education. There are signs that people are beginning to realize that it is their kids who are attending second-rate schools and suffering because the State will not increase its contribution to local school districts. At the last minute, Reagan found some more money for schools in the budget, and he has promised

“At campaign time, the most important influence on Reagan is Spencer-Roberts, the political management team.”

to deal with the problem next year. Meanwhile, Los Angeles schools had to cut a period out of the class day this year because of the financial squeeze.

More important is the economy. California's unemployment, fueled by cutbacks in the aerospace industry, is a full percentage point above the national average. And even Reagan's advisers admit: "Every poll shows that the voters think the Democrats are better at handling the economy." For the time being, the advisers point out, unemployment has affected relatively few people, and they are confident they can ride out the storm. But if things get bad, they say, "We'll just start attacking Nixon, that's all we can do."

On the other side, the Democrats concede that rising unemployment and inflation are their only real hope, even though Reagan is hardly to blame for economic ills. "If there's something close to a depression, Jess has a chance," said one party official. Another Democrat commented: "It's all a question of which fears you play on—the fear of an economic disaster or the fear of the kids and the blacks."

ASSUMING that Reagan does win again, where does he go from there? A recent national column said that he was deliberately staking out a

position to the right of Nixon, using the welfare issue, in the hope that the President would falter by 1972 and be vulnerable to a challenge. In 1976, the reasoning goes, Reagan would be 65, too old to run.

It is doubtful that Reagan would be quite so calculating. But, though he knows as well as anyone that Nixon is an odds-on bet to run again in '72, the dream of national office that flared briefly in 1968 has not died completely. There are plenty of men around Reagan who still wonder, "What if something should happen..." Reagan says he is not one of them. He insists that he loves California and would never leave. But he was willing to run in 1968, and most observers believe he could be prevailed upon to take another grab at the brass ring. Since 1968, of course, there's been another factor: Spiro Agnew. To a significant extent, the Vice President has usurped Reagan's potential national constituency; the Governor seems to get few out-of-state speaking invitations these days. If something should happen to Nixon, it is questionable whether Reagan could beat Agnew for the nomination, assuming Agnew wanted it.

The other possibility is for Reagan to run for the Senate in 1974 against the incumbent, Alan Cranston. The Senate would suit Reagan's preference for speech-making over administration, and by that time his children would be older, freeing him for more travel. But it is no secret that Robert Finch is hungering to take on Cranston and would probably have Nixon's blessing. When he was elected Lieutenant Governor of California in 1966, Finch ran ahead of Reagan, and the outcome of a primary fight is by no means certain.

Meanwhile, Ronald Reagan is still a hero to California's millions, chief executive of the nation's largest state — no small achievement in itself. "This is quite a place to be," he told an interviewer recently, and he undoubtedly meant it. But maybe Reagan's greatest role is neither George Gipp nor Governor of California, but the Lone Ranger, riding in on his white horse, solving the problem in time for the cereal commercial and leaving a silver bullet behind. One can almost hear them, standing in the yard of their stucco bungalow, talking in hushed tones as the stranger rides into the distance.

"Who was that masked man?"

"Don't you know? That was Ronald Reagan." ■