

INAUGURATION

ONE BIG JOKE

So, this president walks into a fast-food place, you know, and he...

By RONALD G. SHAFER

MANY POLITICAL humorists are looking forward to the new Clinton administration with one common emotion: fear.

"As a fairly left-leaning American cartoonist, it's taken the reason for life away," says Mike Peters, syndicated cartoonist for the Dayton Daily News. "The Reagan-Bush people made life fabulous for me for 12 years. It was like being a kid in a candy store. I've already got my suicide-prevention numbers next to my telephone."

With all the new faces in Washington, "nobody would recognize any name that a humorist put in their column," laments columnist Art Buchwald. What's more, President Clinton is appointing many women and minorities, "who you can't make fun of under any conditions," Mr. Buchwald adds. "I don't know what to do, because I usually give a new president a honeymoon of six months. But I may become desperate and cut that down."

New Noses

These professional wits are just kidding, of course. "We've got this wonderful new cast of characters with different hair, different noses, different accents" and new issues, says Jim Borgman, political cartoonist for the Cincinnati Enquirer.

The change starts at the top, with Bill Clinton. Just one look at the Arkansas jogger, for example, and nobody has to ask, "Where's the beef?" Says Jay Leno of NBC-TV's "Tonight Show": "Do you think it ever occurred to Clinton that if he didn't eat every meal at McDonald's, maybe he wouldn't have to jog every day?"

Four years ago, "everybody was saying Reagan was gone, how could Bush [and Dan Quayle] be as funny?" recalls John Simmons of the Gross National Product comedy troupe. The fact that the Clinton people are so serious will be fodder for fun, he says. "These people are just another administration. Clinton will be real hysterical over the years."

GNP plans to open a new show to replace its four-year run of "Bushcapades: An Administration on Thin Ice." It's called "Clintoons: The First Hundred Daze." And the group's Scandal Tours of infamous Washington sites already has added a new tour guide—"Gennifer Flowers"—to its tour bus (plus a hands-on guide portraying Sen. Bob Packwood).