

Capitol Punishment.

For Richard or for Poorer

By Art Buchwald

It's been a grim week in the White House. After his landslide election, instead of getting even with the Democrats, President Nixon surprised everyone by announcing that he was purging the Republicans who helped him get elected. Everyone with a high administration job has been asked to hand in his resignation.

Who goes and who stays is still very much up in the air and it's very hard for one to do his job when the black cloud of unemployment hangs over his head.

One source in the White House told exactly what kind of week it's been:

Pat Nixon came into the President's office.

"Look what someone just gave me," she said angrily.

"What is it, Pat?" the President asked.

"It's a resignation form to fill out. Are you asking me to resign?"

"It's just a formality," President Nixon said. "I've asked everyone in the White House to resign so I can get rid of the people I don't want."

"But that's unfair," Pat protested. "I worked very hard for you during the campaign."

"Of course you did, Pat, and I told Haldeman and Ehrlichman to take that into consideration. I said, 'When we go over the list of the people we're dropping, keep in mind that Pat was at my side during the three times I left the White House to campaign.'"

Mrs. Nixon held the resignation form in her hand and said tearfully, "You would think after all these years there would be no question about my staying with you for your second term."

"Now don't get upset, Pat," the President said. "I owe you a lot, but I have to do what's best for America. I can't give special favors to any group nor can I as President favor one person in the White House family over another. I assure you we will

take a close look at your record before we make any definite decision."

"Dick, don't you remember the Checkers speech, the stoning in South America, your defeats in 1960 and 1962? I was the only one who didn't turn her back on you. Doesn't that count for something?"

"It does, Pat. We've not only got all those facts, but we have your FBI record as well. On the basis of all this I would guess you have a better than 50-50 chance of staying in the White House. But it isn't my decision alone. The purge staff has to look at the big picture. How much money is it costing us? Is the person doing more than his share of the work he is assigned? Was he involved in the Watergate bugging affair? And finally, is the job worth not eliminating altogether?"

"I went with you to China, I went with you to Russia, I went with you to Iran. Surely that must mean a lot to you."

"It does, Pat. The boys were very impressed with those trips and it's a big plus. At the same time, the next four years are going to be the most important in the history of the United States. I can't afford to make any mistakes if I want my rightful place in history. That is why I asked for everyone's resignation. There is too much deadwood in my administration."

"Suppose I refuse to resign?"

"Pat, please don't put me in that position. You've meant a lot to me during all these years, and I would hate our relationship to end on a bitter note. I assure you that when your name comes up in the meeting I'll be fighting for you to stay on, even if we have to change your job designation."

"Thank you, Dick," Pat said, "I appreciate that."

Just then the door flew open and Julie Nixon Eisenhower and Tricia Nixon Cox burst in.

"Daddy!" cried Tricia, "They've asked us to resign!"

"Good grief," the President said exasperatedly. "I can't save everybody."