

Has He Suffered Enough?

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A phrase frequently heard in recent days, even from many who opposed the pardoning of Richard Nixon, is that "The man has suffered enough. Why punish him further?"

The reasoning, of course, is that being forced to resign in disgrace from the highest office in the land, and perhaps the most important in the world, is a crushing enough experience. To put the ousted president on trial like a common criminal would be, as another phrase has it, like drawing and quartering the body after it has been hanged.

This assumes, however, that any man who attains to the presidency must feel a deep and abiding — and humbling — sense of the awesome responsibilities and powers that office bestows on him.

This sensibility, this humility, has never been evident in Richard M. Nixon.

His involvement in the American presidency in the unsavory Watergate affair in the first place, whether before or after the fact, alone demonstrated his lack of respect for the office, for the law and for the people whose chief tribune he supposedly was. The continued absence of any admission of wrongdoing on his part only fortifies this harsh judgment.

True, in his acceptance of his pardon, Mr. Nixon stated that "I can see clearly now that I was wrong in not acting more decisively and more forthrightly in dealing with Watergate."

But this can mean anything. Does it mean he was wrong in lying to the American people for two years? Or does it mean he was wrong in not destroying the tapes that revealed his complicity in the coverup?

The answer is inexcusable. Had it not been for the Watergate tapes, and the certainty of his impeachment and removal by Congress, Richard M. Nixon would still be president of the United States.

The man has undoubtedly suffered, but not in the way most

people understand by the word, and that is the suffering one knows when his own conscience convicts him.

'I-TOLD-YOU-SO'S' REJOICE!

What this country needs is a national registry of "experts" that would keep score on their predictions for the future.

Such a registry, suggests Columbia University sociologist Amital Etzioni, would screen out those "experts" whose advice proved faulty in the past and would point out those whose predictions have a way of coming true.

For example, he notes that Dr. Philip H. Abelson, editor of Science magazine, warned way back on Feb. 11, 1971, that the reliance of the industrial nations on petroleum had made their technological and social well being "vulnerable to manipulation by some otherwise unimportant Middle Eastern state."

That, says Etzioni, is an example of an expert dismissed at the time as an "alarmist" whose prediction came true.

"The nation thus might benefit greatly," he writes in Human Behavior magazine, "from a national registry for experts where all predictions will be listed...After all, if you can get such a 'poop sheet' on the performance of every horse that runs on a racetrack, why not on people who advise the policy makers?"