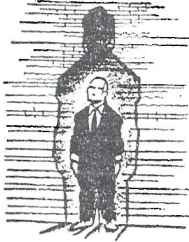


Abe Mellinkoff**Perfectly Clear**

WHEN THE LAST RETURNS came tumbling in to make it perfectly clear 15 years ago that he had lost the governorship of California, a bone-weary and humbled Richard Nixon told the assembled reporters: "You won't have Nixon to kick around any more." He was wrong.

Reporters and just about everybody else can now start all over again for his appearance on the David Frost show invited criticism. The 90 minutes did not win him any friends or influence kindly any people. If it didn't accomplish those normal aims of political talk, then why do it?



By coincidence, it was former East Bay Congressman Jerome Waldie and himself also a defeated candidate for our governorship who told it best. As the family watched the broadcast, his 18-year-old son asked: "Dad, why is Nixon doing this to himself?" And Waldie replied: "For a million dollars."

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THAT CERTAINLY WAS reason enough for Nixon even if the painful stress and torn emotion displayed on the tube were genuine and not synthetic as his long hardened critics firmly believe. However, Republicans seemed the most upset by the performance.

That's understandable because they are the ones who felt betrayed by Watergate. Democrats, after fighting Nixon and almost always losing to him from his first congressional race from Southern California in 1947 through his Presidential re-election in 1972, expected the worst and so were not disappointed.

Although Nixon ruled out any possibility that he ever would run again, many Republicans are not quite sure. They don't quite believe it. For after all, he rose from the ashes of defeat twice before. They feel Watergate is to blame for their national defeat last year and the poor showing in both congressional and state races.

Even if Watergate cannot bear the sole responsibility, it is cause enough to make the party blanch at the prospect of Nixon on any Republican ticket ever again. His splurge on television, and the miles of newspaper copy that preceded and followed it, made vivid again the revulsion at Watergate. And that's not good news for GOP candidates.

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NIXON HAS ALWAYS had a quick mind and conscience to match but only a sluggish sense of humor. So, I'm sure he sees nothing even remotely amusing in the deep mark his Presidency is leaving on the present Democratic administration. And I refer not to the continuing openings toward China.

President Carter's plan for instant registration of voters was stymied in a House committee the other day after somebody leaked that a secret Justice Department memo would reveal it was an "open invitation to fraud." When a reporter suggested "possible cover up," however, the memo was suddenly made public.

I surely hope that sometime "down the road," President Carter never has to "stonewall," or "cover up" or even plead "executive privilege" to preserve a vital "national defense" secret. He won't be able to because Nixon has stripped honest meaning from all of that.