

'Perversion' in Language

To the Editor:

The Nixon Administration's recent handling of the Watergate scandal represents a new height in perversion of the language.

Following President Nixon's April 17 reversal on Watergate, Mr. Ziegler declared that all previous White House statements on the case were "inoperative."

For years the American people have lived with semantic lies such as "free-fire zone" and "protective reaction," phrases used to hide the truth about our war effort in Southeast Asia. And now we are asked to believe that the President's past statements are "inoperative." Never mind whether they were true or false. Now we are asked to forget their very existence.

In his essay "Politics and the English Language," George Orwell wrote that "it is clear that the decline of a language must ultimately have political and economic causes." If this is so, then a brief look at the words used by our leaders prompts the conclusion that this culture is in greater trouble than we would like to believe.

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