Rowland Evans And Robert Novak

Prediction

producer and lengthen the boycott. sour relations with the world's top oil an early end of the oil boycott, followthreatens to backlash on Mr. Nixon King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, ng heavy White House pressure on President Nixon's dramatic hint of now

very different." President speaks, that's something speaks, that's one thing; when the one Arab diplomat: "When Kissinger diction on Jan. 30 echoed Secretary of State Henry Kissinger on Jan. 22, when he forecast lifting of the boycott before March 4. But in the words of True, the President's optimistic pre-

The background of the President's cheering hint in his State of the Union address, "I can announce tonight that I ously pressing his luck to find good news for the voters — with highly a President desperately and danger-Arab oil states, is a revealing study of damaging results. have been assured" of a meeting of the

Saudi Arabia. Akins made at least two Akins, Arab-wise U.S. ambassador to The key figure backstage was James

> most begged Faisal to throw his considerable weight in the Arab world bedrawal from the Suez Canal, urgent visits to the king's palace in Ri-yadh. The first followed similar strong urgings by President Anwar Sadat of Egypt. With Israel beginning its withnind a move to end the boycott. Sadat al-

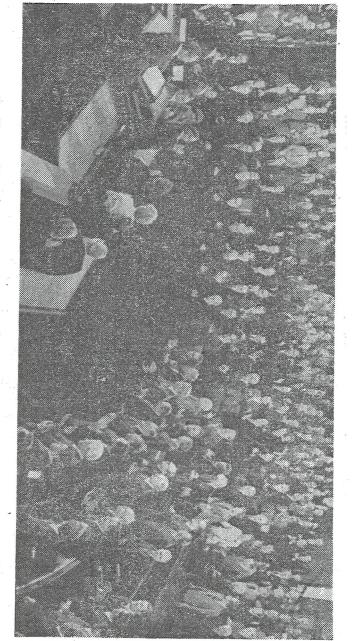
in effect, "we'll work something out, but don't call us; we'll call you."

The bind's ----Akins, Saudi Arabia would meeting of the Arab oil states, he told proposal would carry. The phrase he king added, he could not be certain the propose an end of the boycott. But, the Faisal was encouraging. At the next formally

will undermine efforts to end the boy-The king's message: don't put public pressure on Saudi Arabia, because that

ton. Mr. Nixon, sensing political mileage, demanded clearance to use that hopeful message in his State of the Union speech, thought at the White survival. House to be vital to the President's Akins dutifully informed Washing-

But State Department Arab experts



Mr. Nixon's hint about the boycott ending "torpedoed all the quiet diplomacy."

cast would embarrass the strongly pro-U.S. Faisal with such militant anti-U.S. protested. So Akins was ordered to ob-Arab states as Syria and Libya. They tain the king's private assurance. well knew that any presidential fore-

were consequently flabbergasted when they heard Mr. Nixon's actual words. sult, the overwhelming State Depart-President would be hurtful. As a reany public pronouncement from the however, he made clear to Akins that to such pressure, Faisal reluctantly gave his consent. At the same time, would boomerang. imminent termination of the boycott ment consensus was that any hint of Though angered at being subjected Some diplomats

stead, Egypt or some lesser oil state That torpedoed all the quiet diplomacy. As of this writing, the Saudis such as Abu Dhabi will have to carry zation of Arab Petroleum Exporting the fight with members of the Organi Mr. Nixon insisted on going public. Inmeeting in Tripoli precisely because probably will not sponsor the proposal for ending the boycott at the Feb. 14

> In fact, the boycott now may last un-til Israel and Syria agree on troop dis-engagement. That could be weeks or months away.

original intent of the oil boycott. When all occupied Arab territory. to continue until all Israeli troops left edented display of Arab unity, it was voted by OAPEC Oct. 17 in an unprec-Sam's man, must be viewed against the it would expose the king to militant The ineptitude of Mr. Nixon's decision to put Faisal on the spot, knowing Arab charges that he is really Uncle

agreed to take the lead in ending the boycott even before completion of the irst stage of Israeli pullback. Yet Saudi Arabia had privately

problems. he needs to handle his own political sake of short-term political gain. The way to end the oil boycott is to stop and give King Faisal the elbow room talking about it from the White House needlessly stockpiled adversity for the in-shallah, however, Instead of accepting Faisal's plea for the President