

Terrence O'Flaherty Views TV

The Whole (Expletive) Truth

THROUGH IT ALL I just could not imagine how any politician could be so (expletive) dumb as to think this (inaudible) recital of facts would make him look anything but awfully (expletive) guilty of (inaudible). Meanwhile, let's get down on our (inaudible) and thank (expletive) for the National Public Radio network. (Expletive)! Those readers worked well and hard.



President Nixon

that I was sick with anger and disgust.

And at no time did I hear an expression of concern for the welfare of the nation or its people. It was instead an epic poem of political selfishness dedicated to the saving of one man's face and the necks of his elite guard.

The marathon broadcast left very little for a critic to interpret. What you read here is not one man's opinion of another man or even a personal interpretation of testimony given by witnesses at a committee hearing. It was self-condemnation as total and complete as one in a detective drama just before the final commercial.

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PRESIDENT NIXON promised many months ago that the truth eventually would come through

to the public. And, by golly, it DID last weekend. It was one promise regarding Watergate that he has kept. The truth came right through all the flimsy camouflage of the endless deletions for "inaudibility" as well as substitution of "expletive" for Nixonian profanity and vulgarity. And it came through particularly strong when it was obvious that the deletions were made for other purposes.

There is an added peril in such deletions: Sometimes the truth might be less offensive than the imagination.

Almost every moment there was evidence of another hedge, another attempt to keep the press, some government agency or the nation itself from getting the full truth. Time and again it is the President's calculating attitude that keeps coming through.

The cumulative effect was a stunning indictment of Richard Nixon's political morality. In this, the weekend's dramatic readings recalled countless examples in courtroom dramas where one straw was piled upon another until the inevitable collapse leaving the viewer with an inescapable conclusion.

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A GENERATION weaned on dramas of political shallowness could easily recognize in the transcripts a confession of guilt and coverup — not of anything so flimsy as Watergate — but of the greater offense of political immorality in an elected official who should have told the bums to get the (expletive) out. When he failed to do so, he joined 'em.

There is a temptation to liken the "Untouchable" characters in this 30-hour drama to some of the hoods we have seen on the television action series, but this analogy will not hold up. No racketeers would be stupid enough to record their meetings.

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IN THE OLD DAYS, every movie and television show had to have some sort of "moral" like the ones in Mother Goose. If that applied to the transcripts I heard last weekend, the moral would be this:

Tell the truth and tell it right away — no matter how embarrassing it may be — or you will have to lie about it forever and ever and ever.

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NOTE: THE NPR readings were purposefully non-dramatic. Today and tomorrow KPFA (94.1 on the FM radio dial) will broadcast a dramatic version with an all star Hollywood cast 8 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.).