

# A President's Farewell: Not With a Bang

A Commentary

By Nicholas von Hoffman

Nixon will be out of office by Labor Day, but possibly even by July 4th. That's a firecracker for you, except that when he goes it won't be through an explosion but secret meetings and limousine rides through Washington's streets just glimpsed at by TV cameras. The end will be heralded by the whirrs of and clicks of a thousand Nikons and the jostling of men before microphones reading statements composed in fatigue, anger and error. The depositions of Presidents and kings cannot by their nature go smoothly. They are illuminated by the

## Blue Dot of the Flash Cube.

The end will come quicker than most suspect. We're not going to have weeks and weeks of impeachment hearings before the Judiciary Committee and then weeks and weeks of debate in the full House and then the trial itself. Such repetition is bad theater, unless, of course, someone can guarantee Nixon will come to the Senate

and submit to a cross examination. A lot of people are dreaming of that, and while it would be fun, it would be neither justice nor wisdom.

People have been promised their political Super Bowl, this great and rare show which we know is great because it is rare. You will see comets more often than you will see Presidents impeached. The first time in a cen-

tury—not since Andrew Johnson, brought to you as a public service by American Airlines, Gulf Oil and all the other corporations whose illegal contributions made him what he is.

It doesn't work that way. Rodino, the staff and the more intelligent members of the House Judiciary Committee will move forward to accuse the man for specific acts of his doing, but Nixon is going into the history books as the President who absentmindedly didn't mind having his people drop the Bill of Rights from the Constitution but who was chased from office for public profanity. You commit treason but they get you for littering.

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# But a Whimper

COMMENTARY, From D1

There's a reason for it. Presidents aren't hounded out of office merely for breaking the law; we have to be angry at them. It so happens it's Nixon's immoralities, not his illegalities, that have turned him into an infuriating deleted epithet for so many of us.

Not now, but later, we may look back on this episode and be humbled. Certainly it should shed light on how the Chinese Reds manage their political processes, their mysterious Cultural Revolutions, in which the highest public officials can be driven out merely by being shouted at. We are doing the same thing. And although it puts ugly expressions on our faces also, it reaffirms the sanctity of the office, the power of morals and our own essential innocence.

He who has never uttered a deleted unintelligible, let him cast the first impeachment. But this is a mob action. Things have gotten so far out of hand that Sen. Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania, a man who has kept silent and collected Chinese art through three decades of public outrage, has been moved to use such expressions as "shabby" and "immoral." The suddenly awakened anger of somnolent men of elastic tolerance is a form of kicking one's self for having elected Nixon in the first place.

By offering us first Hubert Humphrey and then George McGovern as losing opposition to the life-long loser, the Democrats, too, share in the blame. That is why the President will be clubbed to death by a mob of bipartisan Americans binging on the juice of self-righteousness.

Get the four-letter words out of the Oval Office and back on the men's room door. We may be getting rid of Nixon but not of White House breakfasts. It takes no gift of prophecy to see that with the coming of Jerry Ford there begins an age of yet more stifling civic piety than that which is being overthrown. Lord cleanse, if not their hearts, at least their mouths.

It might be more sensible if the Democrats saved Nixon from his own party until they had extracted an agreement that Ford would only serve until a special election could be held, but one of the emotional devices we must employ to carry this act is that we are so carried off by noble emotion such calculus is foreign to us. So flumpf your pillow and get ready for the TV show. Three weeks of Judiciary Committee hearings, with every word and witness targeted on him, will be ever so much more damaging than what Sam Ervin did last summer, and then will come the end. It will come so fast, it will come even as Ziegler is insisting the Senate will have to crowbar its way into the White House and carry him out in his chair.

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