

# Flame of faith flickers in White

By Saul Pett  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The morale of the President, it is said repeatedly, remains strong. The mood of some of the men who work for him is something else.

"What will I tell my children?" asks one of Richard Nixon's disenchanted assistants. "I never heard of anybody bragging that his grandfather worked for Warren Harding."

"Every day I come in here is a question of conscience," said another man who is on the President's staff, just below senior level. "My wife has been asking and I have begun asking myself, 'Well, is he or isn't he really dishonest?'"

Strong stuff, especially when heard within shouting distance of Richard Nixon. It is never shouted. Nor can it be said how widespread this feeling is in his staff. Most persons consulted for this report appeared steadfast. Some, definitely not, especially since publication of the presidential conversations.

The house of the President seems so busy on

defense that the larger question of who finally will win the Super Bowl is lost in the fact that the other side hasn't scored in the last 10 minutes.

It is now said by a variety of White House sources that the President anticipated the initial shock wave of reaction to the profanity and tone of his transcripts.

But he also expected that the second wave, on reflection, would bring a "more sophisticated reaction," especially in Congress, that people would see the transcripts clearly showed he was a man desperately in search of the facts about Watergate and, once assembled, would get them out.

The reaction has not yet come, despite strenuous White House efforts to guide the country on the path to perspective. Those efforts included a press conference featuring the President's daughter, a series of homilies on morality by a Jesuit priest, and a short lecture by one of the President's political strategists on what Republicans owe Richard Nixon.

"The men around the President," says one of his critical assistants, "still suffer from a bunker mentality. They live in unreality. They still think the

Tues., May 21, 1974 ☆ S.F. Examiner—Page 9

## House corridors

43rd Panzer Division will break through and save Berlin."

Whatever the mentality, the desired public reaction to the transcripts has not come and that, according to loyalists and waverers alike, has disappointed and frustrated the President.

Congressmen who cruised with him on the presidential yacht on the Potomac this week found him remarkably relaxed but determined despite the prospect of a long hot summer.

On the question of his support in the House, where he faces possible impeachment, one member said the "ice is kind of thin."

"We'll thicken it," said Richard Nixon.

Elsewhere in Washington, a former member of his cabinet reported that the President's anti-impeachment strength there has shrunk from a majority of 100 votes to 30 or 20. "I still think he'll make it," said this man, "but the trend is down."

A member of Richard Nixon's staff looked out the window at the White House grounds.

"I keep asking myself, how did it all happen? he

asked. "The President is such a tragic figure. He could've done so much that would have made a difference for 100 years. But he blew it. I don't know how or why, but he blew it."

"He can be brilliant and compassionate and decent in his own way. But then there's the other side, the introvert, the cynic, the tight personality who keeps saying he is the coolest man in the room. How did it all happen?"

The man who said these things still has in his office a handsomely engraved note from the President dated Jan. 20, 1973. It said:

"Every moment of history is a fleeting time, precious and unique. The presidential term which begins today consists of 1461 days — no more and no less.

"... If we strive together, if we make the most of this challenge and the opportunity that these days offer us, they can stand out as great days for America and great moments in the history of mankind.

"Richard Nixon."

There are now 975 days left to Jan. 20, 1977. No more, maybe less.