



# Only a Few Want Nixon Put in Jail

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A MOOD of forgiveness is running strong here, but it stops with a lively minority that will sternly resent any move to give Richard Nixon the grace of legal ablutation.

In an afternoon of random talks with a middle-class mix, mostly of former Nixon backers, it seemed that roughly two out of three citizens feel the ex-President has suffered enough. But the others come down hard in asserting that Mr. Nixon deserves no more or less justice than the average man.

This stonyhearted minority is not a force which the politicians can ignore because it reflects popular laments that the system is no longer equitable and that politicians are essentially crooks who look after each other. An angry roar of cynicism will be the price of any move, by President Ford or Congress, to shelter Mr. Nixon from prosecution.

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THE FINAL report of the House Judiciary Committee will not be closely read in places like Stuart. But in its assertion that Mr. Nixon directed the cover-up and violated his constitutional oath, it will inevitably increase the difficulty of arguing that the chief conspirator should go free while the junior conspirators go to jail.

The Watergate affair cannot be left where it stands. It seem unlikely that Con-

gress or the President will give any further direction to events. As William Ruckelshaus points out, the notion of leaving the whole burden on the special prosecutor, Leon Jaworski, is extremely unfair. He has no mandate except to prosecute, so he will dangerously exceed his role if he declines to accept a grand jury indictment of the ex-President.

"He injures the good who spares the bad," according to an old Roman maxim, and it is certainly clear that the great cause of making America more honest will not be advanced by leaving Mr. Nixon on the cushion of his generous allowances while his ex-associates lose their rights and reputations for responding to his wishes.

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THE ONLY real alternative is to proceed with the prosecution in an expectation that the travails will induce Mr. Nixon to do what he should have done much earlier, namely to acknowledge his lies, assume the culpability for the cover-up and lift the burden off his subordinates. If he will not take the responsibility, it should be pinned to him through the legal process in justice to those who will otherwise get the criminal punishment.

Only a very few want Mr. Nixon to go to jail. But he has to expiate his errors by taking the blame and showing contrition. He has to create a mood in which even the stonyhearted will be inclined to back pardons for all hands.