

Ms. Volner and Mr. Mardian

THE WOMAN'S LIBERATION movement, which is prospering elsewhere, has taken some terrible lumps in Judge John J. Sirica's courtroom.

Violations of equal rights and acceptable attitudes were rampant as Jill Volner, an assistant special prosecutor, cross-examined Robert C. Mardian, a former assistant attorney general, who is also one of the two lesser defendants in the Watergate conspiracy trial.

Mardian was beastly to Ms. Volner, a young and comely blonde. She was unnerved. She had demonstrated a deadly competence in her cross-examination of Howard Hunt's former lawyer, William O. Bittman, but under Mardian's crushing contempt, she faltered, lost her place and had to catch her breath.

Mardian seemed to be of the view that he was making friends by his repeated putdowns of an "uppity" woman.



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MARDIAN'S PRINCIPAL ANXIETY seemed to be to let the courtroom know that he is one of the boys. He gave many examples of locker-room talk and bar-room manners. He spoke of Dita Beard, the I.T.T. memo-writer who was such a scourge to his former boss, the former Attorney General, Richard Kleindienst. Kleindienst, Mardian reported, had said of Dita, "let's put that boozy broad on the stand."

It never happened of course, the White House intervened. Mardian reported, without self-consciousness, that he read a memo that was on Charles Colson's desk, when Colson was out of the room. It related to plans to get Dita out of Washington and Hunt into a telephone booth to change his clothes.

Colson came back, and with that gentleness so characteristic of the Nixon administration, snatched the memo out of Mardian's hands and told him it was none of his business.

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ACTUALLY, IT WAS Mardian's business, since he was managing Kleindienst's defense against Ms. Beard. But Mardian is not the squeamish type. Even in the hard-line Nixon circle he was regarded as a right-wing fanatic, and Tom Charles Huston, author of the plan that would have bugged us all, once complained that Mardian "does not know the difference between a kid with a beard and a kid with a bomb."

But like those others whom Richard Nixon recruited to bring equal justice to our citizenry in his first term, Mardian was indulgent towards criminals who were working for the re-election of Richard Nixon.

After Gordon Liddy had unloaded the full budget of "White House horrors" on him two days after the break-in, Mardian, the indiscriminate bringer of conspiracy charges, the mass-jailer of dissidents, looked the other way. It would have been "highly unethical" of him to turn Liddy over to the authorities, he told Ms. Volner indignantly, an unthinkable abuse of the attorney-client privilege.

Ms. Volner got little out of Mardian beyond greasy answers, insults and a breath-taking display of bad manners. It is hard to see what Mardian got out of his appearance on the stand, either.