The Vice President Has Become Mr. Whitewash

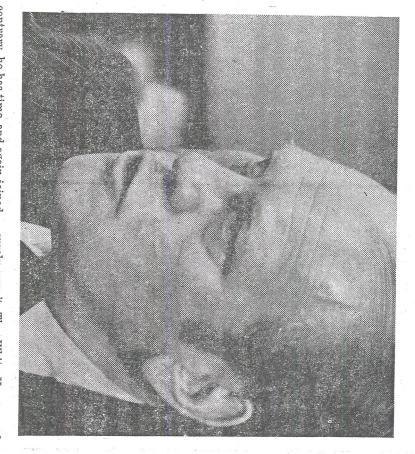
stead of becoming Mr. Clean, the Vice quiry, Vice President Gerald Ford was nearest the end of the impeachment in-President has become Mr. Whitewash. still slavishly defending Mr. Nixon's hearings began many months ago. Inthusiastically as he did at the time the debasement of the government as en-As the House Judiciary Committee

our government." Has he met that choose to do. His answer was restora-tion of "public credibility and faith in was asked, if he could do just one thing try. Not long ago, the Vice President for the American people, what he would sonal loyalties ahead of loyalty to counbut the scout code does not put peram the first Eagle Scout Vice President of the United States." Loyalty is, and should be, a concern of all scouts, One of Ford's proudest boasts is, "I

Mr. Nice Guy, for that comes natutheir climax. pendence, he yielded again just as the after several faint intimations of indehis first test on Watergate, and then, rally to him; but, like many other Vice the President. He knuckled under in Presidents, he seldom has stood up to mpeachment hearings were nearing Ford is, and probably always will be,

ning big in 1924. quick comeback, with Coolidge win-Harding suddenly died, Coolidge became the chief executive and, as the tigated the malefactors of his own sworn in as the first Vice President apparty. As a result, the GOP made a Mr. Clean of 1923, vigorously inves-Warren Harding administration. When of the Teapot Dome scandal of the lican Calvin Coolidge did in the wake many Republicans had high hopes that pointed under the 25th Amendment, he would do for the party what Repub-Back in December, when Ford was

Mr. Ford, however, has shown no inclination to emulate Coolidge. On the



Ford's predecessor, Vice President to be his own man. claim, for if the GOP hopes to win in may be that he is sincere in saying he be conceded that it is not easy for any that task. In fairness to Ford, it must far at least, Ford has shown no zeal for public can count on to clean house. So 1976 it must have a nominee whom the ernment would seem to reinforce that Watergate scandal under the rug. Mr. Nixon in trying to shove the contrary, he has time and again joined Nixon's massive subversion of the Certainly his dogged defense of Mr. has no ambition to become President. Spiro Agnew, gov-

surely wasn't. The White House used ministration apologist. Moreover, it him as both a hatchet man and an adlost no time casting Ford in the same

on's resignation was coming from some or most of the agitation for Mr. Nixgroups." He didn't mention that much ADA and other "powerful pressure treme partisans," such as the AFL-CIO The President's men quickly sent him out to defend Mr. Nixon on Water-"ordeal of Watergate" on "a few exhim. That was his initial Farm Bureau talk when he blamed the continuous gate and even wrote the speech for

> newspapers and still is. of the nation's leading Republican

tion in the government. express their outrage over the corrupwith the Vice President, has tried to Republicans, who have not hesitated to well Weicker, James Buckley, Edward Brooke, even Hugh Scott, and other pare his voice with that of Sens. Lovoice, especially on Watergate. Comning and invariably emerges from the Mr. Nixon whistles Ford comes runshow a little independence, but when encourage his occasional efforts White House echoing his master's A friendly press, still honeymooning

still hasn't made a dent on the Vice dent has been like an avalanche, but it mentary evidence against the Presisists. Recently, the outpouring of document need not be confined to narrow stitution Before Watergate, nobody President. criminal grounds, as Mr. Nixon now inmore pointedly asserted that impeach-Ford is a lawyer. He knows the Con-

and predicted the House as a whole shows he is innocent of any wrongdotee wasn't treating the President fairly ing that the House Judiciary Commita long seance with Mr. Nixon insinuata week or two ago, Ford emerged from After being called to San Clemente

Inat is the kind of talk that might on the entire government. force the highest standards of conduct leadership in the White House and enwould be expected to restore moral who, if he succeeds to the presidency President's defense lawyer, but it is depressing to hear it from the man be expected of James D. St. Clair, the

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Columnist Joseph Alsop is on vacation.