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'Ends Justify the Means' In Nixon's Own Career



Washington—President Nixon tried to back out of the Watergate by firing on his own troops. Politics, he said smoothly, in claiming his own innocence of the crimes committed in his name during the last campaign, is a dirty business.

The speech so incensed Sen. Lowell Weiker, the Connecticut crusader on the Ervin Committee, that he refused to comment on it.

THE REASON Republican Weiker sought committee assignment was to refute the general impression, so cunningly magnified by the President, that Watergate is something everybody does.

Nobody on Capitol Hill was surprised to see Nixon turning on his own and indicting all politicians. When James McCord began to sing, the law of the White House became "every man for himself."

By arguing that what went on at the Watergate—he slid over the cover-up—was in keeping with the prevailing moral standards in politics, the President callously added cynicism to the disgrace Republicans must carry with them when they go to the voters.

Independent Senate Republicans had a brief hour of respite last Monday when the Halde-man-Ehrlichman yoke was lifted from their shoulders. But their satisfaction in the sacri-

fice of the Teutonic pair, who have bullied and oppressed them for the past five years, was short-lived. Within hours, the President was proclaiming from the Oval Room that politicians, while "good people" in general, are all scoundrels in the crunch.

The President's own career has been a study in the end justifying the means. He condemned it piously as "a false doctrine," but he could not summon up any moral indignation against those zealots who broke into Democratic headquarters. He suggested parenthetically that their cause was just.

Most members of his party forbore to speak their sore distress at this new betrayal. Middle America might feel sorry for a cornered President, surrounded by liars, some of whom, apparently are his best friends. Middle America cannot face impeachment. The executive mansion is sinking in a sea of muck and slime, but Middle America is not ready to evict the master it recently re-installed.

Richard Nixon did not perhaps intend to take the party down with him—or his profession. It was more likely a conditioned reflex. But by saying, in effect, as he floundered in the foul waters, "we are all in this together," he made sure that nobody would consider politics an honorable calling for some time to come. There is no evidence that he ever did.