Watergate

AUG 2 4 1973

Poster

AUG 2 4 1973

When Push Comes to Shove?

weak, uncertain, inconsistent reclusive man is holding down the job.

He may be under a nervous disorder, but he's going to give the country one. Alternating between morbid isolation in his various White Houses and these odd leans into the public eye made yet more disconcerting by unexplained reports of assassination plots. The peculiar comings, goings and hibernations of the President, however, are as nothing compared to the Agnew situation.

Is his crinkly-eyed and qualified endorsement of his vice president another dangle, dangle slowly, slowly number? As we are unaccustomed to seeing our President engage in one-sided shoving matches with their staffs, so we are not yet used to our Vice Presidents attacking their Attorneys General for "smearing" them. Viewed from the public's side of the television tube, it looks like the administration is blowing itself up, which might be a good idea if we could be sure they won't take America with them.

We have Spiro T. Eggplant reading statements to the press declaring he is innocent and has nothing to hide, but he never gives us any facts or particulars about whether he is suspected of being guilty of. He does go on at length, however, saying how much better, more honest he is than Nixon because he says [illegible] and not more stridently than he is. We have Melvin Laird calling up members of Congress and cautioning them not to make public comments on the case, e... let fairness. We have the Attorney General and his chief assistant, who's supposed to be running the show, making remarks which tell us nothing. "We're coming along." The air is full of charges that our Vice President is in fact the cheapest kind of crook, and all we get is Mum's the word, shush, shhh, stay tuned, let the grand jury do its work in peace, as though Agnew were an anonymous junkie being questioned for snitching a stereo.

This is beyond all believing. What's going to happen next? Does Elliot Richardson indict him and let him stay in office through months of a messy trial? Or does he not indict him and then just let the matter drop? Well, much ado about nothing, forget it, forget Watergate and get back to work, inflation fighters.

For me, to talk about it would be totally inappropriate and I make no comment . . . quoth President Truthful in his shaken and shakey press conference voice, when he should have said that, indictment or not, all the evidence on Agnew would be sent to the House Judiciary Committee. It is there that impeachment proceedings must originate, and an operative, leading President would remind us that while it's the courts' duty to determine guilt or innocence, it is the Congress' to determine fitness to continue in office.

So it's us we're left dangling with the most important questions about the government's integrity unanswered. But, on the other hand, think of what El Flippo might have said.

(c) 1973, The Washington Post, King Feature Syndicate

Original filed Nixon