



## 'Forget Mr. Nixon For the Moment'

**James Kilpatrick**

**T**HE HOUSE of Representatives is moving inexorably toward the destruction of Richard Nixon, and some of Mr. Nixon's most ardent supporters are moving, in the same tidal wave, toward the destruction of their own best interests.

Forget Mr. Nixon for the moment. What are these convulsions doing to the Republican party? And what lies ahead for conservative causes?

The 1972 election saw 47.2 million votes cast for the Republican Nixon, 29.2 million for the Democrat McGovern. If these 76.4 million voters constitute a reasonable political universe, we can make some rough extrapolations from the popularity polls. These polls show that about 26 or 27 per cent of the people still stand by the President. Conclusion: Some 20 million voters — call them Nixon's Legion — remain bitterly opposed to the President's impeachment and removal from office.

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**T**HE FIGURES are rough, but they probably are roughly accurate. A legion of 20 million fired-up voters is a potent political force; and anyone who supposed the President's defenders are not fired up should browse through the mail now flooding Republican offices. The legion sees impeachment as a conspiracy between double-standard Democrats and a double-standard press. These voters have blood in their eyes.

The question arises: How will Nixon's legion expend its political force? These voters probably have it within their pow-

er, if they choose to exercise that power, to make or break a score of Republican or conservative congressmen this fall. By withholding campaign contributions, or by staying home in November, the legion can effectively deny reelection to members of the House who vote in favor of impeachment.

It would not be an easy road, under the best of circumstances, for Republicans in marginal districts this fall. Rightly or wrongly, a President and his party tend to be blamed for economic ills, and such blame rubs off on a party's candidates. Historically, the party in presidential power loses close seats in off-year elections. If one adds to these factors the anger of Nixon's Legion, the problems of a pro-impeachment Republican become evident.

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**P**REJUDICE runs deeper than reason. If it were possible for members of the legion to suspend their pro-Nixon prejudice, and to listen to the cool voice of reason, perhaps they could be persuaded of the political disaster they are courting. Their passionate support of the President can do little for Mr. Nixon now; but if this passion is turned in retribution, the result could be a liberal landslide.

The President's defenders cannot let their anger destroy their common sense. Simmer down, I would say. Sober up! Look ahead! If Mr. Nixon goes down the drain, let him go. But if we have one ounce of political maturity, let us save what is left.