

HERB CAEN



The Rambling Wreck

GOOD MORNING, and did you feel better after reading yesterday that a bill to restore the death penalty in California passed the State Assembly by the two-thirds majority necessary to override Gov. Brown's veto? If so, congratulations. It appears you are a member of the state, so don't be silent. Speak up. Go to the streets, buy a round of drinks, and take a giant step —

most of the time, the streets, buy a round of drinks, and take a giant step —

volunteered, and taken a giant step —

jokes before the trap had been sprung. Prisons are dangled broken-necked at eye level. The most consistent could not face up to the brutal reality. is

came away from the prison feeling degraded.

The road to civilization has many twists and turns. At the moment, California has backed itself into an old dead end. And not one of us is a whit safer than we were day before yesterday.

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I DON'T KNOW about murderers, but reputedly there is no honor among thieves, and demonstrably little love lost between conspirators. As though the Nixon-Frost comedy hour weren't shameful enough, we are now treated to John Ehrlichman whining in New West that when he heard the "interview," he felt "used and betrayed." Not to mention the inaccuracies! For instance, says Honest John, "when the tapes are finally heard by the public, people are going to be surprised at how obvious some of the errors are . . . For example, I am designated as calling for a 'modified limited hangout.' It is clearly not my voice saying those words."

Well, great balls of balderdash, not to mention the picking of nits. Ehrlichman is talking about a tape of March 22, 1973, whose accuracy is attested to by the initials of Alexander Butterfield and John Dean, who may be expected to recognize Ehrlichman's voice. However, we are indebted to Honest John for bringing this up — and to George Coleman for supplying the transcript — because the conversation alluded to is one of the oddest in all the Watergate discussions:

President: "You think, you think we want to, want to go this route now? And the — let it hang out, so to speak?" **Dean:** "Well, it's, it isn't really that —." **Haldeman:** "It's a limited hang out." **Dean:** "It's a limited hang out." **Ehrlichman:** "It's a modified limited hang-out." **President:** "Well, it's only the question of the thing hanging out publicly or privately."

There you have it, the leaders of the free world as of June, 1973, in deep and penetrating conclave. If you had just arrived from outer space, you would have been forgiven for thinking the President was wondering whether to be a flasher or to retreat to the closet. In a modified way.

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LIFE AND LOVE go on: At the wedding of politico David Harris and Lacey Fosburgh of Times at Swedenborgian last Sat., the groom was in a three-piece suit, was the son by his ex-wife, whose present, was a