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Nixon Defends Envoy

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President Nixon said yesterday that Arthur K. Watson, United States ambassador to France, has shown "great competence" and "total sobriety" in conducting sensitive talks with his Chinese counterpart in Paris.

The President's news conference comments were in response to a question that referred to a charge, made by columnist Jack Anderson, that Watson had become "gloriously drunk" aboard a trans-Atlantic airliner while flying to Washington March 9.

Saying Watson's qualifications had been challenged, a reporter asked if Mr. Nixon still had confidence in Watson's ability as a negotiator.

The negotiations are going very well, the President replied, and "Mr. Watson is conducting them with great competence and, I understand, total sobriety."

The President then observed that members of the House and Senate have raised "questions about the personal conduct of an ambassador when he travels to his post."

"I would say that people in glass houses should not throw stones," he concluded.

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