

Downgrading the U.N.

The above title appeared over an editorial on this page last week, commenting on President Nixon's removal of George Bush as United States Ambassador to the United Nations in order to make him Chairman of the Republican National Committee. We repeat it with sorrow, as a headline comment on Mr. Nixon's nomination of John A. Scali to replace Mr. Bush at Turtle Bay.

Mr. Scali was known as a shrewd, aggressive foreign affairs reporter for The Associated Press and the American Broadcasting Company. As an unofficial liaison between State Department and Soviet Embassy in Washington, he played a useful role in the defusing of the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. But his only official diplomatic experience has come as a White House consultant for twenty months, during which he made arrangements for the television coverage of Mr. Nixon's spectacular trip to China and accompanied the President to the Soviet Union.

There is little in Mr. Scali's experience to suggest he is qualified to fill a position once held with distinction by Adlai E. Stevenson, Arthur J. Goldberg and Warren R. Austin. Presidents Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson were all guilty of overbuilding and overselling the U.N. ambassadorship as a Cabinet-level job virtually on a par with that of Secretary of State. Stripped of the hyperbole, however, it remains by a wide margin the most important of United States ambassadorial posts.

Whatever Mr. Nixon's intent, the naming of Mr. Scali compounds the downgrading of the United Nations that began with word that Mr. Bush would leave the ambassadorship to come to the aid of the Grand Old Party.