

Bob Considine**Chou En-lai ailing**

Chou En-lai appears to be dying. He was unable to receive the congressional delegation, headed by Sens. William Fulbright and Hubert Humphrey, which is making a two-week tour of the People's Republic of China. Only a grave illness would have kept the co-author of the Great Detente from sitting down with such a group. Chou, pronounced Joe, is 76. Mao Tse-tung will be 84 in December. His position for years has been that of a demi-god. Chou, over the same period, has been the chief executive officer.

Chou and the Nixons got along fine during their historic 1972 meetings in Peking, Hangchow and Shanghai. But they shook him up occasionally.

The day he took them for a boatride in beautiful budding Hangchow, Marco Polo's favorite city, he made a point of showing them an aviary. Nixon gave the birds short shrift. But Pat and Chou paused at each caged pair of feathered friends. Chou said something endearing in Mandarin to one of the pairs.

"I talk to my birds like that, too," Pat said. Chou looked a little startled. He had been briefed extensively on the Nixons, but nobody had told him Pat spoke Chinese.

At another cage, two love-birds (loriculus) went into a love scene that rooted the premier and the first lady in their tracks. Pat broke the strained silence with a comment that startled Chou. Pat said, with a smile, "Lovey-dovey."

Chou blushed. Puce.

He recovered but was somewhat jarred a few minutes later when he and Pat rejoined the President outside the bird house. Nixon was staring admiringly at a distant snow-topped mountain.

"Say, that would make a good picture," the President enthused. Chou seemed to be at a loss for words.

On the final night in Shanghai, Chou and

the President were leaving the big, applauding banquet ball when the President happened to spot mine among a sea of faces. He took his trim host by the arm, led him through the crowd and introduced me.

"We were talking about Khrushchev during dinner," Dick said. "Talking about that trouble I had with him."

"We had a little trouble with him, too," Chou said with a tight smile. It had to be the crowning understatement of the summit meeting, considering the fact Khrushchev made many warlike growls at China. One billion human beings would have been involved if that had broken out.

But Nixon had his own problems with Khrushchev foremost in mind. "You were there in Moscow with me on the day of the kitchen debate," he said to me. "Tell the premier who won that debate."

For a frightening second or two, I had a crazy temptation to say, "Khrushchev." Just for the hell of it. But I said, "You did, Mr. President."

Nixon wheeled on Chou and finger-stabbed him on his chest three times. Each time he said, triumphantly, "I told you . . . I told you . . . I told you."

Crime wave item:

The FBI's 400-agent investigation of Vice President-designate Nelson Rockefeller's life and hard times has struck significant pay dirt. A search of Rockefeller's record as a Dartmouth undergrad — he was a Phi Beta Kappa man — has revealed that his worst grades were in public speaking and political science.

Rocky therefore may become the first vice president ever impeached before taking office.