

Capitol Punishment

Q: *What's Bugging You, God?* A: *Watergate*

By Art Buchwald

Last weekend President Richard Nixon went to Camp David alone, without family or aides. Press secretary Ron Ziegler denies it, but it has been reliably reported that the President went up the top of the mountain to speak with God.

"God, God, why are you doing this to me?"

"Doing what, Richard?"

"The Watergate, the cover-up, the grand jury hearings, the Senate investigations. Why me, God?"

"Don't blame me, Richard. I gave you my blessing to win the election, but I didn't tell you to steal it."

"God, I've done everything you told me to do. I ended the war, I defeated poverty, I cleaned the air and the water, I defeated crime in the streets. Surely I deserve a break."

"Richard, I tried to warn you that you had sinful people working for you."

"When, God?"

"Just after the Committee to Re-Elect the President was formed. When I saw the people you had selected to head up the committee, I was shocked. We've got a long file on them up here."

"Why didn't you tell me, God?"

"I tried to, but Erlichman and Haldeman wouldn't let me talk to you on the phone. They said they'd give you the message I called."

"They never told me, God."

"It figures. Then I sent you a telegram saying it was urgent that you contact me."

"The only telegrams I read during that period were those in support of my bombing North Vietnam."

"Finally, Richard, I made one last effort. I showed up at a prayer meeting one Sunday at the White House and after the sermon I came up to you and said there were men among you who would betray you. Do you know what you did, Richard? You introduced me to Pat and then you gave me a ballpoint pen."

"I didn't know it was you, God. So many people show up at these prayer meetings? Is that why you're punishing me—because I snubbed you?"

"I'm not punishing you, Richard. But even I can do just so much. If it were merely a simple case of bugging at the Watergate, I could probably fix it. But your administration is involved in the obstruction of justice, the bribing of witnesses, the forging of papers, wire-tapping, perjury and using the mails to defraud."

"Good God, nobody's perfect!"

"I guess that's what the grand jury is saying."

"Look, I've got less than four years in which to go down as the greatest president in the history of the United States. Give me a break."

"You've got to clean house, Richard. Get rid of everyone who has any connection with the scandal. You must make it perfectly clear you were hoodwinked by everyone on your staff. You must show the American people that when it comes to the presidency, no one is too big to be sacrificed on the altar of expediency."

"God, are you asking for a human sacrifice?"

"It would show your good faith, Richard."

"All right, I'll do it. Will you take Jeb Magruder, Richard Kleindienst and John Dean III?"

"What kind of sacrifice is that?"

"John Mitchell?"

"Keep going."

"Haldeman and Erlichman?"

"That's more like it."

"And then, God, if I sacrifice them will you keep me out of it?"

"Richard, I can't work miracles."