

# Terrence O'Flaherty



## Hell--Anytime

ON MONDAY NIGHT at 6 p.m. viewers in the Salinas-Monterey area who tuned to Channel 8 to see "To Tell the Truth" had something in common with the Sacramento folks who tuned in Channel 10 to see "The Price Is Right." Instead, they both saw the President of the United States who appeared to tell the truth because the price was right.



President Nixon

The inept and embarrassing performance drew interesting reactions from the CBS newsmen who appeared directly afterward. "Tonight we watched a shaken President," began Roger Mudd . . . Eric Sevareid observed "it was not only serious but very said . . ."

Daniel Schorr suggested that at such a moment of high presidential emotion — with family pictures nearby — after he had appealed for national unity and invoked the need for avoiding nuclear war, "it is very hard to come down to the substance of the Watergate case, yet that I perceive to be our job..."

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DAN RATHER, CBS White House correspondent, pointed out what he called "the one inexplicable discrepancy in the speech:

"The President says he was 'appalled' when he first learned of the Watergate affair in the newspapers of June 17 last year. If the President was indeed appalled, why did he authorize his press secretary, Ron Ziegler, shortly afterward to call it 'a third rate burglary?' And why — even as late as the fall of last year — did he attack the Washington Post which was the one journalistic enterprise more than any other to keep this important issue alive?

"The President claimed that some people say the Watergate affair indicates a bankruptcy of the American system. If anyone is saying that I haven't noticed it. What they are saying is that it may be a bankruptcy of the Nixon Administration. And that is quite a different charge.

"Also, the President said that we must protect the integrity of the White House.' I don't hear anyone bringing into question the integrity of the American presidency which has been well established over the last 200 years. What we ARE talking about is the integrity of the Nixon Administration," said Rather.

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SUCH POST-SPEECH analysis by those and other TV newsmen on other networks and stations is a clear vindication of a practice of enlightenment, which is deplored by the White House. While the President dodged every major question the public has been asking, the television newsmen did not.

Mr. Nixon has asked the ladies and gentlemen of the press to "give me hell any time you think I'm wrong." To comply with such a request seems the only gracious thing to do.

This insistence on what was inescapable anyway, seemed to characterize the President's entire performance Monday night — like solemnly granting freedom to a man who has already escaped bondage. After trying to discourage investigative reporting, criticism and dissent against his administration — without success — he now calls for God's help and "a vigorous, free press."

WELL, BY GOLLY, we already HAVE a free press, Mr. President. The Watergate scandal proved it—against great odds. But it's nice to know that the Chief Executive approves of it at last and it will be interesting to see if a similar freedom will be extended to the nation's public television service when the President's "trusted aides" in that area assemble in the near future to do his bidding.