

Bob Considine

Making Nixon An Underdog

For all the bitterness and innuendo aimed at President Nixon in recent days and weeks, one doubts that any American wants to see him suffer more wounds than have already been inflicted. He is the President of the United States, the only one we've got.

In ridiculing and probably libeling him, the anti-Nixonians here and abroad may inadvertently be building up a groundswell of affection for him. Americans for generations have supported underdogs at a given point. And they have almost always rallied when criticism of their underdog burgeoned overseas.

It's a U.S. reaction made up many facets. Mr. Nixon's worst goof may turn out to be that he trusted his friends, hardly a Federal offense. There is a good chance that at some point along the winding Via Doloroso, responsible Simons other than John Connally will help ease the burden of his Cross.

There is an even better chance that a lot of people will look beyond the clumsy conspirators he had around him and decide that he can't be all THAT bad when you consider what he did in China and Russia to ease the threat of Armageddon, how he shut down the war and brought home the POWs, and what a good family man he has always been.

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ONE GUESSES THAT the most encouraging word that came to the embattled chief executive last week emerged from an unpredictable source. Constant critic Sen. William Proxmire, the Wisconsin Democrat, rose in the Senate to say, "President Nixon is being tried, sentenced and executed by rumor and allegation. As the Senator who succeeded Joe McCarthy in the U.S. Senate, I find this kind of persecution and condemnation without trial McCarthyism at its worst."

Sen. Proxmire listed some of his previous blasts at the President, ranging from what he called the "reprehensible nature" of his early campaigns for Congress to his "ruthless orders" for U.S. bombing of North Vietnam and Cambodia. But, he added, and it must have been a most comforting "but" for the President, "none of this justifies the McCarthyistic destruction of President Nixon that is now going on with increasing vehemence daily in the press."

When John W. Dean, the ousted White House counsel, testifies this coming week before Sen. Sam Ervin's committee — it will be televised — a certain proportion of the millions of viewers will take what he says about Mr. Nixon with a grain of salt. After all, the President fired him. The public will expect Dean's vindictiveness.

The President, like the rest of us, never knows where his friends might come from, in the crunch.

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EVERYBODY WHO TAKES to the air in a commercial plane these days has had the spooky experience of electronically frisked. As Boston's Logan International Airport last Sunday a piercingly sharp metal-detection device at the "gate." The only quiet of