

Letters to the E

Nixon Administration: 'The Basic Defect'

To the Editor:

Mr. Ford's timing of his Atlantic City speech to the farmers, in which he posited the theory that Extremist Devils were hounding the President out of office, came just a few hours ahead of the tape experts' disclosure that the Nixon-Haldeman recording had been deliberately erased.

This one incident serves as a microcosm of the basic defect of the Nixon Administration: The appalling ineptness and gross inability to manage anything well.

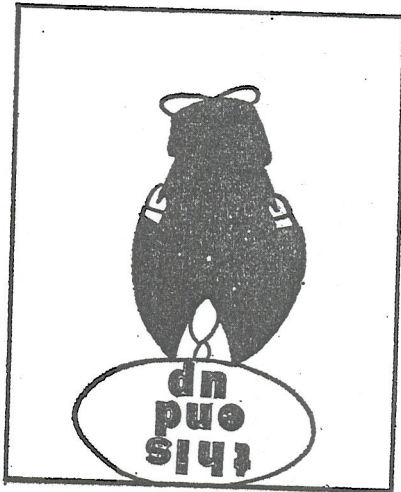
Quite aside from the question of guilt or innocence, the single dominant note repeatedly sounded by the President and his people is that of bungling and incompetence.

It's hard to imagine any other group of managers, living under the siege conditions that afflict the White House and knowing that the experts were to report to the court, that would on that very day in question wreck the credibility of their brand-new Mr. Clean by allowing him to mouth not only drivel but drivel that would put the man in a hopeless situation with respect to whatever the experts might report. Here was a case of judgment being thrown to the winds.

It is this lack of judgment, of elementary standards of professional managership, that transcends the issue of impeachment for wrongdoing. Over and over, the Nixon people cry, "Let's get on to the more important job of running the country." Ah, there's the rub—the real rub. Mr. Nixon and his associates, in their handling of Watergate, have vividly demonstrated to the country that they are incapable of doing just that. They cannot manage. They cannot lead. They cannot get the smallest administrative matter

performed with a degree of professionalism.

Yet we are asked to believe that men who cannot coordinate the timing of a speech can somehow solve the petroleum drought—if it is a drought. We are asked to have continued confidence in General Haig, one of the President's closest advisers, who shares with us his notion that old Lucifer may have visited the White



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House basement with a degausser in hand. The general's ideas of military strategy—the job he is supposed to have been good at—ought to be worth listening to. It's certain he'd have nothing in common with von Clausewitz.

How tragic it is that we are hung up on the technicalities of impeachment when the real and vastly more serious issue is the Nixon Administration's manifest inability to manage.

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