

# Irresponsible Games

The White House continues to devise game plans which are an affront to the intelligence of the American people. The latest examples are the White House-inspired statements by Vice President Ford and Senator Hugh Scott to the effect that they have seen the President and have come away confident that, if only the public knew what they know, Mr. Nixon would be in the clear.

The revelations by Messrs. Ford and Scott had in common the fact that they revealed nothing. The Vice President said that Mr. Nixon had volunteered to show him the exculpatory evidence but that he had "not had the time to see it." Senator Scott said he had come into possession of hitherto unpublished information which, though he was not at liberty to disclose it, seemed "to exculpate the President." The Senator explained that this silence was imposed on him by Mr. Nixon's advisers whom he depicted as so confident about the President's case that they felt he "no longer needs to make some of these replies."

The issues at stake ought by now to be recognized as too serious to the nation to condone such verbal games. The picture of Presidential advisers too bashful to step forward with evidence in support of Mr. Nixon's cause is in the same category of fantasy as Alexander Haig's courtroom musings about a "sinister force" that might have been responsible for the 18-minute gap in the White House tape.

Does anyone still believe that Mr. Nixon and his friends would, at this stage of the investigation, voluntarily withhold from the public any information favorable to the President? The only plausible explanation for the cryptic story put out by Senator Scott therefore is that he has joined the long list of those who have allowed themselves to be used by the White House to confuse the public and prolong the governmental crisis which has been perpetuated by the chronic inability of the White House to deal with facts and realities.

The continued readiness of some Nixon loyalists to sacrifice their own credibility to these games of obfuscation is puzzling when viewed against the number of reputations and careers that litter the political landscape. The list of victims begins with the easily misled Cuban emigrés who were recruited for the Watergate break-in. It extends all the way to Miss Rose Mary Woods, the loyal secretary who originally was brought into Judge John J. Sirica's court under circumstances so ambiguous that she was not clear whether the lawyers who accompanied her represented her or Mr. Nixon.

The list of victims includes some of the President's lawyers whose professional reputations may well have been tarnished by the part they played, perhaps unwittingly, in bringing to the court subpoenaed evidence that had been tampered with while it was under their client's self-confessed "sole custody."

The list of victims also includes those delegations of Congressmen who, at an earlier stage of the game plan, attended confidential sessions in the White House only to come away with unsubstantiated hints of the villainy of such men as Archibald Cox and Elliot Richardson.

The list of victims includes the politically naive who, like L. Patrick Gray 3d, were sacrificed while "twisting slowly, slowly in the wind." Vice President Ford seems determined to join the list as well. He has compounded his recent blunder of playing the ventriloquist's puppet to the White House by reiterating the silly charge that the efforts to impeach the President are the work of a small group of anti-Nixon partisans.

The evidence of Mr. Nixon's responsibility in the unprecedented accumulation of political abuses and scandals has become too massive to be answered with White House-inspired statements by gullible loyalists. The hour is too late to present to the American people anything but facts about the President's innocence or guilt.