

FEB 8 1974

## Liberals' Nightmare

To the Editor:

Concerning the current controversy surrounding the President and the Watergate affair, there is perhaps a more significant question than the bias or objectivity of certain elements of the press. After all, if picking up some newspapers or turning on the tube isn't sufficiently convincing, a trip to the public library should be. Why, though, would liberals undertake a movement to discredit the Nixon Administration by any means available? I think at least a clue is provided by international political events of the past five years.

The so-called new liberalism (philosophically rather old) came into its own in the 1960's, the decade which was to destroy once and for all illiberal skepticism in the twentieth century. But the decade that began with John Kennedy's inauguration ended with Richard Nixon's. Public disaffection with leftist ideologies had engendered a strong group identity with conservatism for the first time in forty years. And such a transformation was not peculiar to America.

The victory of Georges Pompidou in France and Edward Heath's startling upset in Great Britain suggested to some observers a political trend in the Western community. The results of the recent elections in Denmark and Israel can only have served to strengthen this view.

Thus, it may have been with a sense of desperation that liberals seized upon the calamity of Watergate. Recently there has even been a suggestion that the scandal and public agony be prolonged so that conservatism might be smeared by association in the minds of the presumably imperceptive electorate. It seems that liberals' greatest fear is not that Richard Nixon will ruin this country but that he will govern it effectively.

JAMES RUSSELL

Pawtucket, R. I., Jan. 24, 1974