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President vs. Nation

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Richard Nixon has built his political career through a ready willingness to use any and every person, idea and institution that might advance his own interest. He has drawn to himself, used and discarded men like Mitchell, Stans, Richardson, Ehrlichman, Dean and Kalmbach. When the times were suitable, he used ideas like anti-Communism, antiwelfare, peace with honor, détente and national security as means of furthering and cloaking his own purposes and ambitions.

Now, in predictable fashion, Nixon is using the office of the Presidency itself as a shield for his failures and abuses in the White House. His continued presence there has become a dread burden upon the nation and his party. Yet Nixon's pride and fear impel him to hang on—to "tough it out"—no matter what the cost to the country. And the cover-up he uses for his obstinacy is that he is defending the executive office: "I want the Presidency to survive."

Will the American people be fooled (again) by Nixon's tactic of identifying his person with the Presidency? How can the present or future of Nixon affect the status and prospects of our constitutional office? We are a Government, not of men, but of laws and institutions. Agnew, for example, cast a corrupt shadow while Vice President, but the office survived both his presence and his departure. The same holds true for Nixon. His leaving the White House will bring an immense relief to the nation; and the Presidency, cleansed by his departure, will live on.

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