



'Why Keep Picking On My President'

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IT WAS ONE of those television talk shows in which questions are fielded both by telephone and from a live audience in the studio. A young housewife stood up in the back row. This was her question: "Why do you newspaper guys keep picking on my President?"

Her blue eyes were glistening with the first hint of tears, but her voice rang with loyalty and conviction. With a gulp, she said her husband might kill her for speaking out in public, but Mr. Nixon was the first President she had ever had a chance to vote for, and she thought he was doing a fine job especially in foreign affairs. Why didn't we write about the good things he was doing, and stop harping on the Watergate thing? She didn't care what he might have done — everybody else in politics did the same things. She was for him, right or wrong.

About half the studio audience burst into applause. Because it was more of a speech than a question.

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IT IS IMPORTANT to any understanding of the current political scene to keep this young woman in mind. Her name is Legion. The Gallup Poll and the Harris Survey doubtless are correct, statistically speaking, in their finding that only 27 to 30 per cent of the people still have great confidence in the President. My guess is that the mute figures fail to articulate the passionate, stubborn, unwavering devotion of the President's admirers.

My mail in recent weeks tends to reinforce that impression.

A gentleman in Bay Village, Ohio, describes himself as 87 years old, married for 62 years, concerned for his great-grandchildren. "Don't you think the public has been brain-washed enough? I blame the Democrats for everything."

A woman in Glenview, Ill., writes for her husband as well: "In our opinion, President Nixon's conduct in the so-called scandals is beyond reproach, and his record in five years of government of this nation on principles, on decency and on constitutionality is the finest in America's noble history. Any clear-thinking person will recognize 'Watergate' for what it is, to wit, a liberal media vendetta against Mr. Nixon, whom they have always hated, because he has done much to frustrate their mania for one-worldism and a Socialistic America."

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THOSE ARE fair random samples of pro-Nixon sentiment that seems rarely to be acknowledged. To be sure, my anti-Nixon mail also increases in volume and in passion, but these voices are abundantly recognized.

My point is this: Something in the neighborhood of 20 million voters still love the President. They make up a sobering political force. And unless members of the House of Representatives proceed with the most scrupulous care in their slow progress toward impeachment, the 20 million will be heard from in ways that will astonish. The polls don't tell all the story.