

Four More Years! Expletive Deleted?

A Commentary

By Nicholas von Hoffman

Now the clergymen are beginning to bail out. A sure augury the end is coming. Nixon still has that Jesuit whom he keeps around to tell him that he is a moral leader, but Billy Graham is checking out. The Jeremiah of the golf links is trying to shoot par with Jerry Ford these days. He has been doing it on national television too, but he was gracious enough to leave off the Lord's business of deciding what iron to shoot out of the rough with to call upon us once again to join, not his country club, but his congregation.

Yet, though our ordained President-sniffer has now taken his revival meeting over to Jerry Ford, Nixon remains. He is like a dead mouse on the kitchen floor of a family too squeamish to pick it up by the tail and drop him in the trash.

Maybe we can get rid of him by pulling a Russian trick. Instead of saying this is no time for this wounded political animal to drag himself off to Cairo, we should encourage him to go. Then as he lands and walks down the stairs to embrace Anwar Sadat, we'll revoke his passport and Air Force One will take off without him.

Or, it's possible he might vanish in a snowstorm of subpoenas. Otherwise, some day not far off, those of us who love ancient ritual may see Carl Albert and Peter Rodino enter the Senate and repeat the formula pronounced but once before in all our history: "By order of the House of Representatives we appear at the bar of the Senate, and in the name of the House of Representatives, and of all the people of the United States, we do impeach Richard Nixon, President of the United States, of high crimes and misdemeanors . . . and . . . we do demand that the Senate take order for the appearance of the said Richard Nixon to answer to impeachment."

The ensuing proclamation of the Senate's Sergeant At Arms should make for good theater also: "Hear ye! Hear ye! Hear ye! All persons are commanded to keep silence on pain of imprisonment, while the House of Representatives is exhibiting to the Senate of the United States articles of impeachment against Richard Nixon, President . . ."

Tingly history the way MGM used to shoot it, but it does have an aspect of picking up the mouse and twirling it by the tail. For those who'd like to dispatch our moral leader without making little children shriek,

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quicker means exist.

The National Lawyers Guild has recently filed suit to have the '72 election set aside. Should the nine Supremes take leave of their senses and do it the way would be open for a new election as a few people like John Pastore of Rhode Island have been urging on us since last November. Otherwise, when the mouse finally goes in the compactor America will celebrate the bicentennial of the Republic with her first President not chosen by the votes of her citizens.

There's no hope for it. The National Lawyers Guild may argue a thief should not be allowed to enjoy the fruits of his crime, but our tradition is that if you successfully steal an election, you get to keep it. By most

accounts, John Kennedy stole the 1960 election. We celebrated our 100th anniversary as a nation with Rutherford B. Hayes stealing the election from Samuel Tilden in 1876.

It might be argued that Nixon's case is special because he committed so many crimes. The Lawyer's Guild brief needs 200 legal-sized typed pages merely to list all the allegations. They include everything from breaking into the Socialist Workers Party headquarters in Detroit to the accusation that Ray Crock, the chairman of the board of Golden Arches, gave the Nixon people more than a quarter of a million dollars in return for which the minimum wage bill was vetoed and McDonald's was allowed to up its price for cheeseburgers from 59 to 63 cents.

However, if Nixon were deposed by a court on these grounds it might open up the floodgates to a wave of lawfulness that would sicken and disgust public officials everywhere. It could cause serious alienation and apathy among them, even causing them to lose faith in the system.

The better solution would be to entreat the Rev. Dr. Graham to absolve Richard of the sin of his deleted epithets. Let us ask him to conduct a requiem for a dead mouse under the soaring golden parabolas of McDonald's, and then, wrapped in discarded subpoenas, let us lower the little critter into the cart and while we stand, eyes downcast, Chuck Colson will lead the nation in the singing of that familiar old Eastern Airlines hymn, "You Gotta Believe."