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Nixon and Bacon:

A Study in Contrasts

To the Editor:

William Safire's column of July 22 implying a comparison of Richard Nixon's current plight and probable historical stature to those of Francis Bacon in his fall from the Lord Chancellorship could not be more misleading. The contrasts are far more instructive than the similarities.

In a comparison of accomplishments of historical significance, Mr. Nixon's record not only pales but fades away: His six crises and remedial diplomacy fall to Bacon's acknowledged philosophical, literary, political and historiographical achievements.

A comparison of the charges shows that Bacon's was indeed a sin of the times—the acceptance of gifts by judges had been a commonplace that, when exposed, unfairly but rightly brought about Bacon's downfall. However, no one would seriously suggest that obstruction of justice, subornation of perjury, tax fraud, contempt of Congress, misuse of the tax system to punish political opponents and interference with the judicial process have been commonplaces in the American Presidency, or that they are merely sins of the times.

Finally, one must compare the differing responses of the two to the charges. Bacon had the courage to admit to his offense; Mr. Nixon has covered up, equivocated, lied to the American people and reverted to transparent attempts at public relations trickery.

Mr. Nixon's place in history seems assured.

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Cambridge, Mass., July 3, 1974