

About New York

The President as Topic A

By FRED FERRETTI

The two men were lying prone on the grass in Prospect Park, playing chess under the wide umbrella of one of the big trees shading the blacktop path that climbs to the Litchfield Mansion.

None of the 20 or so people looking down at the match spoke as the black man with the white pieces and the white man with the black pieces maneuvered against each other, and it stayed quiet until the white pieces were two moves away from extinction and Steve walked up with his portable.

The antenna was up and the ear plug dangling as the radio said, "... and Vice President Ford is meeting with Republican leaders to explore ..."

"What's happening?" one onlooker asked Steve.

"Nixon says he's not going to quit," Steve said. "Sandman says he's voting impeachment. That's the whole Judiciary Committee, I think."

"What about the censure thing?" asked another man eating a Fudgicle.

"Censure? Forget it. He's gonna resign. He'll wait until the last minute, then he'll resign. You think he'll take a chance on losing that sixty grand pension? He'll resign and we'll still be paying," said Steve.

Then the white pieces lost and the black man gave the white a dollar from his cigar box. "Want to play another game?" the black man asked. "I got a buck invested in you."

New York is a city of many enclaves, of differing isms and of varying moods. In past months, the city, depending upon which part of it you happened to be in, was for Mr. Nixon, against Mr. Nixon, leaning for or against him, or waiting to see what happened. Then on Monday, Mr. Nixon admitted he had tried to halt the Watergate investigation, and yesterday, in several bits of the city, there was little sentiment to be found for the President.

In Prospect Park there was a consensus of chess players and standees alike that Mr. Nixon will probably resign and "collect his pension with honor," according to a young man in a T-shirt that inexplicably said, "Vote for J. Russo for Sheriff. He Loves Me."

Over on Fifth Avenue and 51st Street at the Women's National Republican Club, a woman said she couldn't really say how the club felt about the President, because

"our president, Mrs. John Finger, isn't around."

"But we are very quiet here," the woman said.

In City Hall Park, Beth and Mike, sitting on a bench, confided that for the last week they have been pricing French champagne, intending to buy a bottle and drink it when Mr. Nixon resigns. "We agreed on a Taitinger, a blanc, even though we might have to go for twenty bucks," Mike said.

In front of the Public Library on Fifth Avenue, a young man offered pasersby pamphlets advertising a religious convocation on Sept. 18 of the Rev. Sun Myung Moon, the Korean apostle of a new Christianity. The young man was reminded that the followers of Sun Myung Moon had been quite noticeable during recent Washington prayer vigils for Mr. Nixon, and asked what the mood of the sect's followers was at this point.

"We are not against impeachment," he said. "Only against impeachment where Mr. Nixon is made an example, a scapegoat. I am for impeachment when it proceeds from a belief of the American people that it is they who are responsible for Mr. Nixon and those terrible things that occurred during his term, and that they are

"I watch my father sitting in front of the television set and pointing his finger at the President, and I know he is not a better man than Mr. Nixon."

Park Avenue South and 31st Street, Conservative party headquarters was busy, but not with considerations of the President. Its guru, Kieran O'Doherty, was in the Hamptons, a woman said, "and we're so busy with petitions we haven't had time for the President."

In Bryant Park, a ring of people surrounded a WOR-TV reporter, waiting their turns to be part of last night's news. "What is your opinion of Mr. Nixon?" the reporter asked, and "What is your opinion of the morality of the man in the White House?"

The answers ranged from "So he got caught. What's the big deal?" to "They're all thieves, but he's the top thief," to "It's about time."

And in many parts of New York yesterday it seemed to be business as usual, except for the radio bulletins, the reporters asking questions, the huge headlines proclaiming Mr. Nixon's latest and most serious troubles.

John Corry is on vacation.

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