

A Look at Truth By Sen. Ervin

Retired U.S. Senator Sam J. Ervin Jr. echoed another great American, Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, when he told a large audience at the University of San Francisco last night:

"The best test of truth is the power of the thought to get itself accepted in the competition of the market."

In remarks prepared for delivery, the senator made no reference to President Nixon or the Senate Watergate committee he headed.

But in a question and answer session, following a speech in which he was given three standing ovations by the audience of near 3500 persons, Ervin said Mr. Nixon "tried to assassinate the rights of Americans."

Asked whether President Ford should have pardoned Mr. Nixon, Ervin said in his slow, molasses drawl:

"I thought he made a mistake. Mr. Ford acted prematurely. He should of just let justice take its course.

"We all stand equal before

the law. It was a mistake to send the underlings to prison and let the chief go unwhipped. "Only the Almighty," Ervin said, "has the power to pardon sins, but Mr. Nixon denies he even committed any sins."

Now in retirement at age 78, the North Carolina Democrat-turned-history professor treated his student audience to an analysis of the centuries-long struggle for freedom of speech and the press, which culminated in the Bill of Rights.

Ervin, who was a Supreme Court judge in his home state before going to Washington, said:

"Our country really has nothing to fear from the exercise of the (First) Amendment's freedoms as long as it leaves truth free to combat error. I share this faith completely.

"It is impossible to overmagnify the value of the First Amendment to society, government and individuals. The freedoms it pro-

tect and compel society to respect the fundamental rights of individuals, enable government to rule wisely, permit individuals to become everything they are capable of becoming, and make our other freedoms living realities rather than empty verbal dreams."

He began by telling the audience, "I cherish the privilege of speaking to you." He discussed the legal though control which existed in England in the 17th Century and the evolution of personal freedoms, culminating with the Bill of Rights in the American Constitution.