

Editorial Comment

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Changing Views

THE BEAUTY of American society may be that it is prepared to accept the most outrageous paradoxes, as it did last week on hearing that former President Nixon believes the country is in bad shape but that former Black Panther Eldridge Cleaver finds that "the American political system is the freest and most democratic in the world."

Well, who would have thought it possible back in the 1960s, when President Nixon was telling us that our values were unparalleled and Cleaver was preaching revolution in the streets?

A lot has happened to both men since their original positions were taken, much has happened during the time it took for these views to change, and the country, we would like to believe, can accommodate such reversals of form.

President Nixon, in isolation at San Clemente, said that the U.S. is a "compromised country," that it is "cynical and disbelieving," and that many of the nation's institutions, which he celebrated during his

more active political life, are suffering from decay.

Cleaver, after spending seven years abroad as a fugitive from California courts, now finds that there is "a creative period of democracy in the United States" and that changes in the country "must be conducted through our established institutions, and people with grievances must find political methods for obtaining redress."

THERE WAS POIGNANCY in the remarks of both men, each of whom, for considerably different reasons, had been rejected by the nation. President Nixon began his interview by asking, "How is the world in general, and what do they think of me lately?" Cleaver said, "Exile is a process of de-politicization and destruction. It's like taking a fish out of water. What does a fish do? He flops around."

Yet both men are saying, ultimately, that they are committed to the country. Nixon said "We must rekindle our spiritual growth to knit our people together. . ." Cleaver said "I believe that every American, regardless of his politics, has a duty to re-examine some of his beliefs."

In a strange and ironic way, both men are seeking the acceptance of a nation they once lost faith in and which ultimately turned its back on them. Simply seen, they want to come home.