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Senator Humphrey: 'Nixon's Antithesis'

To the Editor:

William Safire's March 11 column, "Drugstore Liberal," reciting a litany of "charges" intended to cast doubt on Senator Hubert Humphrey's integrity, was a disservice to Mr. Safire, to The Times, to its readers and most of all to Mr. Humphrey. Mr. Safire's punchline, that a 1976 Humphrey candidacy and election would tacitly ratify the pardon of Richard Nixon, was a political grotesquery.

Two of the "charges" involve violations of campaign-finance laws by former Humphrey aides. Mr. Safire neglects to mention, however, that testimony and documentation make clear that the violations took place wholly without Mr. Humphrey's knowledge or approval.

A third "charge" is that Senator Humphrey personally took \$100,000 during his 1968 Presidential campaign from Howard Hughes, through Hughes' agent, Robert Maheu. Mr. Safire fails to report that Mr. Maheu's story has been challenged in court by Mr. Hughes, from whom the contribution allegedly came. I believe Mr. Humphrey's denial of this episode, because I never knew him to become personally involved in handling of any political funds.

A fourth "charge," the most outrageous of all, is that Mr. Humphrey asked J. Edgar Hoover for a team of F.B.I. wiretappers and buggers to spy for him at the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago. Mr. Humphrey held Mr. Hoover, wiretapping and bugging in total contempt. My own surmise would be that Mr. Hoover fabricated Mr. Humphrey's "request" for F.B.I. wiretappers and buggers in

order to bamboozle Ramsey Clark into authorizing them.

In listing the final two "charges"—that Mr. Humphrey "nearly succeeded" in obtaining a \$200,000 tax deduction by giving his Vice-Presidential papers to the Minnesota Historical Society and that he tried to keep state gifts which lawfully belonged to the United States Government—Mr. Safire omits publicly known information which shows no willful evasion or deleterious motive by Mr. Humphrey in either case.

These "charges," in sum, are hardly sufficient to place a shadow on the integrity of a man whose public record for thirty years—whether or not one agrees with his substantive views—has consistently been one of decency and openness. Mr. Humphrey is constitutionally incapable of the small-time chiseling Mr. Safire enumerates.

Mr. Humphrey will gain his party's nomination in 1976 only if the present candidates fail. But should the Presidency somehow be placed in his hands, it would be far from a vindication of Richard Nixon. Hubert Humphrey is Richard Nixon's antithesis.

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Washington, March 11, 1976

The writer served from 1964 to 1968 as Mr. Humphrey's assistant.

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