

# Terrence O'Flaherty Views TV

## The Bartered Bride

**E**ARLY next year the San Clemente Little Theater, better known as The Watergate Players, will return to television in a multi-million-dollar, four-part series co-starring Richard Nixon, the squire of Southern California's coastal sandbox, and his interviewer David Frost, BBC's bundle from Britain. The mini-series is planned as a sequel to the video hit of the 1973-74 season, "I Am Not A Crook."



Richard Nixon

The first three playlets are scheduled to be telecast in February and March from 7:30 to 9 p.m. The fourth show will be aired later due to a slight inconvenience involving the disposition of court appeals by three convicted Watergate Players, John Mitchell, Robert Haldeman and John Ehrlichman, who will not appear with their former co-star but who have already shown unusual interest in his performance.

Although the precise manner in which the series will be sold is still undecided, it appears likely that Nixon will be marketed in the same manner as Lawrence Welk — without the music, of course, but Nixon IS expected to sing.

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**I**F THE Welk system is followed, the series will be made available to stations at no cost with 50 per cent of the commercial spots retained by the syndication firm for sale to national advertisers. The remaining commercial time may be sold locally by the individual stations. This is known in television business circles as "a straight barter deal."

KPIX will carry the series in San Francisco. Its parent company, the Westinghouse Group W network, was one of the first to scramble for the rights to the bizarre sight of a deposed President explaining his unseating. By the end of last week, Frost claimed enough stations had bought the series to insure that it can be seen by 40 per cent of the population. His aim is 90 per cent of the U.S. plus 60 foreign countries. If anyone is still interested, that is.

Through his original deal with Nixon, Frost claims to have sole control of content and editing with no questions divulged in advance. In typical Frost phraseology, he noted that total control was very important for the "excitement of the whole project."

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**T**HE FORMAT is a one-to-one interview plus film inserts of people voicing opinions of Nixon, pro and con, with comments by the star. The interviews in the series will be taped during a 12-day period in San Clemente in November and December, according to present plans.

Before his temporary retirement from television, Nixon's performing technique consisted of playing little games with his audience — pretending here, posing there, and evading everywhere — but always with the hollow ring of an insecure amateur. It will be interesting to see if the prolonged exposure to salt air has seasoned him into a pro or relegated him to the role of a sad clown on a deserted stage.

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