

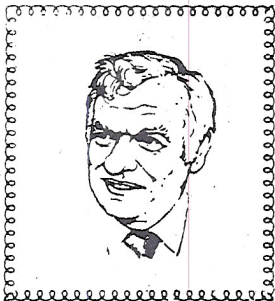
Charles McCabe Himself

Nixonism Really Dead?

IF YOU WANT to know what is really going on in this confounded planet, you could do worse than get yourself to the corner of Grant avenue and Vallejo street. This is the site of Ben Friedman's Postermat.

The Friedman posters are, in my view, a better index to public opinion in this country than all the Gallup and Harris polls put together. What Friedman sells is what people have on their mind.

What people emphatically do *not* have on their mind these days is politics. The Nixon brand of democratic rule has just made people gag. After Richard Nixon resigned, a new mood came upon the poster-buying public.



Posters of political content, which used to sell like Coke in Atlanta, went begging. The famous Nixon "wanted" poster, with the faces of the indicted White House gang crossed out, has been sent back to the warehouse.

And the owner has truckloads of the Salvador Dali "Last Supper" on his hands. This pictured John Dean as Judas, with H. R. Haldeman, John Ehrlichman, etc., standing as apostles beside Nixon. Interest in it has gone with the wind.

About the only political poster the tourists go for now is one of Ronald Reagan in cowboy clothes, gun drawn, and the caption, "Thanks for the vote, Sucker." And he doesn't sell more than a handful of these.

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IFIND all this most interesting. It may mean, in fact, that Nixonism no longer poisons the mainstream of our life, that plainly evil men are no longer accepted as arbiters of our destiny, that political morality is not any longer a mere matter of whether some bits of skullduggery will play in Peoria or not.

President Ford is of course a Nixon man, and Nixon policies are being pursued unrelentingly in domestic matters. Mr. Ford is the kind of politician who, once bought, will stay bought. But he is not the kind of man you associate with Swiss bank accounts, and Bahamian jiggery-pokery in personal finances. For one thing, he hasn't the imagination to be a real crook — the kind that Nixon, so heartfelt, told those editors he wasn't.

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THE REMNANTS of the Nixon crew are still among us, shambling in indignity. They are a rotten lot, writing books about how innocent they are, or about how they found God, and whining endlessly on the tube and in the feature pages about it all.

In this new America you are found guilty by a court of various crimes and misdemeanors, and then you use the media to exonerate yourself — with the full and shameful cooperation of the media. A cheap operator like Charles Colson, who should be thrown out of any self-respecting television station, is lionized as if he had discovered a new planet, or owned the horse who won the Derby. Ehrlichman is as with it as trendy Jerry Brown. Haldeman was trying to blackmail a pardon for himself, to the bitter end.

In fact, the only one of the lot who has acted with anything like personal dignity in the whole Watergate mess is stoic old John Mitchell. He has neither found God nor written a *roman a clef* with himself as a hero of unbounded integrity surrounded by as rotten a band of villains as ever cried "Omerta!" Mitchell's career lies in ruins; but he has taken his lumps like a man.

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THE ARCH-VILLAIN, the old Man of Respect himself, has yet to be heard from. When Nixon and his new toady, David Frost, bring us the Nixon version of his villainy, you can be sure it will be a corker. It will have God, Flag and Country — and *ad nauseam*. He may even have the consummate gall to forgive his enemies, or say so anyhow.

We have come to know our lost leader well. We know that, however high our expectations will be of his tastelessness, he will exceed those hopes. We know that no matter what we foresee of hypocrisy, he will leave our foresight far behind. He is our evil *doppelganger* and he will not go away. Or will he?