

Charles McCabe

SFChronicle MAY 2, 1977

Himself

The Dick and Dave Show

I CAN HARDLY WAIT. Commencing Wednesday, the leading liar of our time, and one of the leading practicing toadies of our time, get on the tube to tell us the truth about everything.

The Dick and Dave show. The man whose telephone at San Clemente is still answered "President Nixon's office" will give his version of the events that drove him out of the White House to interviewer David Frost, in four historic installments.

It is highly unlikely that these two has-beens will have much to offer in their 90-minute sessions that has not already been served up to us, in one form or another. The whole misbegotten venture is more a test of the credulity of the American public than of the credibility of Richard Nixon.



The first exercise is to be devoted to Watergate. What Mr. Nixon thinks of Watergate is already a matter of public knowledge. A 164-page manuscript describing the content of Nixon's forthcoming memoirs, and designed to sell same to publishers, was leaked to the *New York Times* by one of the publishers a couple of months ago.

In this outline the former President says the whole Watergate thing was a rotten Democratic plot that caused him great personal injustice. That tapes were erased, and an extended White House exercise in mendacity carried out, is not part of the Nixon view of the matter.

★ ★ ★

DAVID FROST, flogging the shows for local television rebroadcast, recently said: "There are so many other areas (than Watergate) and he's got so much to reveal, so much he knows and so much he's saying, that I don't think there will be any problems at all. It would be nice to think we've got a 'Roots' of documentary TV."

With all deference to Mr. Nixon's talent for guile, and to the known abilities of Mr. Frost as showman, I submit that Frost's evaluation of the upcoming series will go down as one of the hyperboles of the year. It is highly unlikely that the networks will not come up with stuff more viewable than this pair is likely to produce.

★ ★ ★

THERE WILL BE, to be sure, an early interest. We will all want to see how the old scoundrel looks, and whether he is still up to the ancient tricks that bamboozled us all for so long a time. It is hard to see the American public going for three other segments of how Daring Dick saved the same American public from one catastrophe after another during his years in office.

Yet it is unwise to underestimate the credulity of the American p. The snake oil salesman could bounce back, as he has done so many times in the past. He may even produce a couple of animals on the show, and use his wife's clothes in his defense, as he did in an earlier historic incarnation. The thing about Nixon is that he may do *anything*.

The man's concern with image has always been slightly obscene. With shadow weighed against substance, he has almost always chosen shadow. Like most performers, he has over the years invented himself. He will never be able to free himself from this invention.

★ ★ ★

THIS IS THE last gasp of the man from Whittier. In this there is a certain pathos, to be sure. One cannot be wholly unmoved when a man who has scaled the summits of power comes back begging to once again be accepted as a public figure, and an applicant for public office.

Dick Nixon, come Wednesday, will be on the campaign trail again. It would be unwise to underestimate his canniness or his ability successfully to run a carnival. Still and all, it is my judgment that when Mr. Nixon has finished with his four 90-minute segments of self-serving he will be more firmly imbedded in limbo than even in those recent melancholy months of exile at San Clemente.