

Letters

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Nixon Interviews: Reactions to Session One

To the Editor:

Richard Nixon's performance Wednesday evening reminds me that Checkers is alive and well and living in San Clemente.

After three years I had hoped his unedifying legacy would lie buried and forgotten in the luxurious San Clemente mausoleum. I wouldn't begrudge the man a quiet retirement even though he has persisted in admitting no guilt in the Watergate matter.

But he won't submit to a decent burial. He resurrects himself as publicly as possible. Free of legal consequences, he exposes the stinking corpse for profit-seeking vultures to pick over. The most voracious of them all is the self-cannibalizing Mr. Nixon himself.

RUTH CRAIG
Pelham, N.Y., May 5, 1977

To the Editor:

Nearly three years ago, Richard M. Nixon resigned from the office of President while still insisting that he was not guilty of involvement in the Watergate cover-up. Tonight he was still not able to face the truth, try as David Frost might to get him to do so. I believe that Mr. Nixon was not lying to us, but rather that he was telling us a truth which he had contrived so that he could hang on to the last shred of self-respect he has. And, after watching him for half an hour, I am perfectly happy to let him do so.

It is cruel to ask a human being to let down his/her face in front of the world, especially in a world which is increasingly threatened with pollution, overpopulation, starvation and a technology so advanced that it could wipe us out tomorrow if someone were to push the wrong button. Why, then, did not David Frost tonight demand that the people who have in their hands the power to do something about these problems answer to their failure to do so, answer to the fact that they are acting so as to make these threats increasingly worse? Perhaps it is because we feel a need to absolve ourselves of any responsibility for the world and to pass the buck on to a man who can do us no further harm (and Watergate, I might add, was one of his least harmful feats).

It is time for us to put the past in its proper perspective and deal with the present.

DORIS B. BURFORD
New York, May 4, 1977

To the Editor:

If Nixon hoped to gain anything besides money from the David Frost interview on Watergate, it probably was pity. Well, he has mine.

I feel compelled to pity any man who is so lacking in personal pride that he will go voluntarily on television, retell the same old lies (but this time with a tough interviewer who can answer them) and so re-expose himself to the contempt and scorn of the country, just for the sake of money. Nixon said he would never grovel. What he did last night was far more demeaning — to himself and to the nation.

Nixon has reached a new low. Not content with disgracing the Presidency

while in office, he continues to besmirch it in his shameful enforced retirement. Seemingly, there is no limit to his gall, but there ought to be an end to our endurance. Isn't it time we said to him, as Cromwell said to the Rump Parliament, "In the name of God, go"?

CHARLES W. V. MEARES
New York, May 5, 1977



To the Editor:

I am sure that most Americans would be embarrassed to see Mr. Nixon getting down and groveling on the floor. No! Never!

Instead, Mr. Nixon could soothe his troubled Quaker heart by donating the entire proceeds of his performances to some worthy charity.

Great tax deduction possibilities, too. He wouldn't have to give a penny of the proceeds to the Government.

CHARLES E. MARTIN
New York, May 5, 1977

To the Editor:

Mr. Nixon's television appearances usher in a historical process that should lend perspective to Watergate and culminate in a many-sided evaluation of his Administration.

Meanwhile the miasma of a near-pathological Nixon-hatred is still with us. Nicholas von Hoffman (no Nixon fan) describes it thus in "Penthouse" for March: "Since the dawn of the mass-media age, no other American President has gotten the treatment Nixon did. . . . The media has reviled and degraded Nixon with everything from accusations of cheating on his income tax, to sexual impotence, to broad hints that he's gay." Such malevolence is the real Watergate scandal.

Hardly less nauseating than this witch hunt is the pretense that it was all a Galahad-like quest for purity and truth. Here are bottomless depths of hypocrisy inhabited by creatures compared with whom Pecksniff, Tartuffe and Uriah Heep are paragons of integrity.

In The Times of April 25, William Safire, citing Victor Lasky's blockbuster of a book, "It Didn't Start With Watergate," observes that "the crimes, lies, and abuses of power" antedating

the Nixon era by several years "beat anything that happened before, or since." And what were the paladins of the investigative press doing while these abominations were going on? You guessed it. They were covering up for their pet politicians.

In any calculus of moral values, it will not do to deny Mr. Nixon every form of "tu-quoque" easement while winking at the vicious double standard of his enemies. What justice is there in selective punishment? What high morality is upheld by a journalistic lynch mob singling out a hated victim for destruction?

The final grotesquery is that we do not know to this day whether Mr. Nixon was (1) guilty of anything more than running into some legalistic mumbo-jumbo and (2) the target of a conspiratorial cabal. Perhaps the historical process now in motion will answer these questions, just as the Dreyfus case was cleared up in France.

T. DUMONT
New York, May 4, 1977

To the Editor:

I read all about the "Watergate Affair" and I listened to Mr. Nixon yesterday on television. And after all the research—I still don't know why there was a break-in, what they were looking for in the Democratic headquarters and what happened to the 18-minute gap on the tape.

There is still a cover-up. How long will it continue?

FELICE HERZL
Bronx, May 5, 1977

To the Editor:

Listening to the first David Frost Nixon interview, it seems to many of us that a far sadder thing for this nation is played out now by Mr. Nixon than during all the unseemly and crippling period of Watergate. The ex-President had over two and one-half years to reflect and consider all aspects of his behavior during that period, and now, when he had perhaps a final opportunity to do an immeasurably valuable service for the country, he has chosen instead to whine, to obfuscate, to attempt in self-serving argument to blur unassailable records of fact. What an immense opportunity for this man to have risen above himself, to have acknowledged how any of us can deliberately do great wrong, to have given us all, and our children, a historical lesson in humility and to facing up to our human flaws, whatever our position in life.

CLINTON L. TOMS
Suffern, N.Y., May 4, 1977

To the Editor:

After an hour and one half of listening to the David Frost interview of former President Nixon, I believe Nixon himself summed the entire Watergate matter up in a nutshell when, at the very end of the interview, he admitted he did not handle the affair very well. What he meant, of course, is that he should have burned the (expletive deleted) tapes.

HERBERT LEVINE
Flushing, N.Y., May 4, 1977