

1973

Watergate: Its Implications, Its Dangers, Its Perpetrators, and Its Role in America's Eternal Bliss

James E. Starnes
Ouachita Baptist University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/honors_theses



Part of the [American Politics Commons](#), and the [Public Administration Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Starnes, James E., "Watergate: Its Implications, Its Dangers, Its Perpetrators, and Its Role in America's Eternal Bliss" (1973). *Honors Theses*. 408.

https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/honors_theses/408

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Carl Goodson Honors Program at Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita. For more information, please contact mortensona@obu.edu.

WATERGATE:
ITS IMPLICATIONS,
ITS DANGERS,
ITS PERPETRATORS,
AND ITS ROLE IN AMERICA'S ETERNAL BLISS

By:

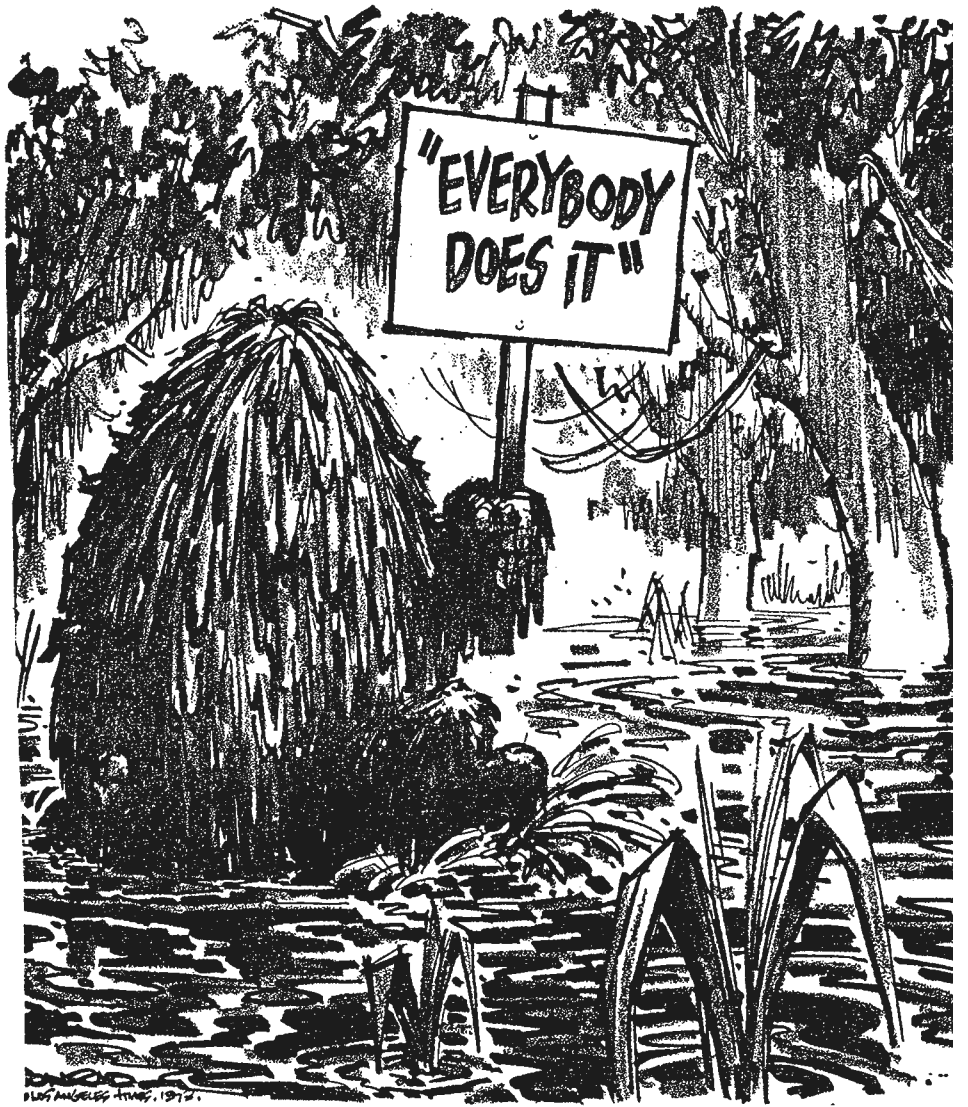
James E. Starnes

Presented to:

Jim Ranchino

In fulfilment of the
requirements for
Honors Special Studies

December 1973



LOS ANGELES TIMES, 1972

INTRODUCTION

Initially, this study began as one dealing with an extremely large segment of the socio-political spectrum—change in the American system (social, political, economic) with emphasis on the political. It became quite clear to me early in my research that the study was much too broad to be of any use, and would at most, only occupy my time. I began sifting through the voluminous collection of works on social change for ideas on how to limit my study, but only become more confused.

During the time I normally set aside for my special studies, I began reading the newspaper. It was there that I found the key to my study of change. I eventually decided to focus my study on Watergate; a term which originally referred to one act of political espionage, but which now has become generic. In connection with a study of Watergate, I attempted to explain its relationship with the American Presidency, the American President (Richard M. Nixon), the real and imagined dangers it presents to our system, the political viewpoints derived from it, and my interpretation of its meaning and perspective in American history.

I was well aware of the dangers of attempting to deal with Watergate. The most blatant flaw of any Watergate study is that it tends to be premature, and the value of any thesis is based, at best, on conjecture. The more subtle danger of this study is one that you, the interpreter, must deal with; i.e. Watergate has so polluted the American mind that it now causes one to conjure unpleasant thoughts. Watergate tends to be distasteful and repulsive. The familiarity of Watergate has indeed bred contempt; but, it was inevitable.

This is not a research paper, though it involved research, and will not follow the structural format of the traditional research paper. That is, I do not intend to footnote each item of information contained herein. However, there is, as you will find, adequate documentation. I have drawn on a wide range of contemporary literature, and have, as much as possible, used information obtained from those directly involved in the Watergate controversy.

The uniqueness of this paper lies not in the information or observations it presents, but rather in my personal interpretation of information and events. The facts are not all in on Watergate, but then again, there is doubt that they ever will be. That is why I intend to look at Watergate now, in this context, and I will portray it as I see it.

The paper will have five sections that, hopefully, are logically and coherently developed.

- I. THE SHORT TERM VISION OF WATERGATE
- II. THE LONG TERM VISION OF WATERGATE
- III. THE IMAGINED VS. THE REAL DANGERS OF WATERGATE TO THE SYSTEM
- IV. KING RICHARD---FANTASY OR REALITY?
- V. THE BLESSEDNESS OF WATERGATE



THE SHORT TERM VISION OF WATERGATE

Football teams and movies often go underrated, and political scandals are certainly no exception. Even now the meaning of Watergate is unclear in some areas of our system (e.g. the long term effect on the Presidency). However, as Watergate became an issue requiring more and more national attention, the interpretations of its significance were abundant. Reagan and Goldwater dismissed it as unimportant and distracting; positions which they reiterated, but eventually modified. The original tendency was to view the Watergate breakin as a focal point for understanding the collection of scandal which became prominent at approximately the same time. The result was a transformation of the entire meaning Watergate. Watergate was no longer just a breakin; it was now being used generically to refer to an entire group of scandal.

Watergate caused the ego-defense mechanisms of the system to go instantly to work. Republican stalwarts like Reagan and Goldwater discounting it as a petty thing, and a President like Nixon attempting to ignore it, did little to keep Watergate from occupying a place of prominence in the American mind.

Nixon attempted to discount the importance of Watergate at every opportunity, and when Japanese Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka came to the White House, made the following toast, "Let others spend their time dealing with murky, small, unimportant, vicious little things. We have spent our time and will spend our time in building a better world." Nixon bats .500 for that statement; Watergate may be murky and vicious, but hardly small and unimportant.

Nixon's vicious attacks on the news media are certainly a prime example of ego-defense. Alexander M. Haig, Jr., now White House Chief of Staff, in reference to the continuing investigation of Watergate, "They're out to destroy us," and emphasized his point by slamming his fist on the desk. According to Don Bacon, the loyalist Nixon staff is afflicted with the Alamo complex. In other words, they are determined to fight to the last man and prevent others from deserting the fort. The only problem with that kind of thinking is that it fails to realize that the really dangerous enemies lie within the fort.

The view that the Nixon administration is being persecuted, however, is not a position held only by those within the staff. The Times of London noted that it had sympathized with President Nixon because "the campaign against... (him) was assuming the character of a persecution." However, unlike the Nixon staff, the Times altered and reversed its position in August of 1973.

The American people, though bombarded unceasingly by news casting a darker and darker shadow on the Nixon administration, still had not grasped a very large view of Watergate as late as June of this year. According to a Gallup poll taken in June, 1973, 46% of the American people dismiss the Watergate affair as "just politics--the kind of things that both parties engage in." That is not a majority, but at least a great percentage of the American people saw Watergate in the short term as just another political scandal.

Another significant short term effect of Watergate has been its effect on public opinion, particularly in respect to Richard

M. Nixon. As late as October, 1973, Nixon was receiving favorable marks for skill in foreign affairs, but devastating criticism for his handling of Watergate. In a Harris poll, released in mid-October, the same people who gave him a 63% favorable mark in handling foreign affairs, also gave him an 83% unfavorable mark in dealing with corruption in government. Below is a record of Harris poll findings specifically dealing with Nixon's over-all rating from the American people on the way he is handling the job of president from January through September of 1973.

Month of 1973	Good Excellent	Only Fair Poor	Not Sure
January	53	45	2
February	60	39	1
March	59	39	2
April	50	49	1
May	47	49	4
June	48	49	3
July	42	54	4
August	32	65	3
September	32	65	3

James Reston of the New York Times saw all of these things causing turmoil in the minds of the American people, and came up with a most astute observation.

"Watergate and all its attendant scandals were merely the latest chapter in this disillusioning American story, and for while the people couldn't believe it and then couldn't ignore it, and were angry about it, but now they are receding again into a kind of protective feeble cynicism."

This is by no means all the impressions created in the short term by Watergate, but it is a fair representation. Repulsion, mental abeyance, anger, and cynicism have led to still another

significant result---confusion. No, perhaps disillusionment would be more descriptive. Again, from Reston,

"How, the people ask, can a man lead his fellow countrymen if he has lost their trust; how can he preside over political institutions he has corrupted; how can he restore the faith of the rising generation and the American system he has talked so much about under the present circumstances."*

Those are interesting questions for which we have no answers to form a syllogism of even mediocre value.

*These quotes were taken from articles by James Reston in the New York Times, November 27 and November 6, 1973, respectively.

THE LONG TERM VISION OF WATERGATE

My discussion of the long term vision of Watergate will not attempt to predict the future or reveal new evidence on the Watergate matter. That almost goes without saying, but I wanted the nature of this short section to be clear. The purpose is to show that the American mind is at work to determine the long term effects of Watergate on the system. The questions they ask can be frightening; either through literal content or by implication.

From a study by the University of Virginia, October, 1973:

"We are convinced: that the high pure aims of the founding fathers have been subverted; that the United States has reached a crisis, basically moral, which severely damages...our economic, our political, and our cultural life..."

That the fundamental cause of this crisis of values is a misconception as to the nature of man...that materialism, which has people functioning out of their lower selves, destroys genuine freedom...(but) that the potentially fatal disease of materialism can be cured..."

It is clear, that according to this study, Watergate has threatened our economic, political, and cultural life because the material values were placed above the spiritual. The conclusion of the study, however, is that America will overcome and defeat this material infestation and once again regain the quality of life worthy of the high principles of our founding fathers. I will refrain from a value judgment on that thesis, and be content with my observation.

Carl Rowan, in an article published last July, sees Watergate in a different and rather ominous light. I hesitate to make such an inference, but Mr. Rowan seems to indicate that the American people have simply lost faith in the entire political system. His

long term vision is left, essentially, unsaid; but the ramifications are clear.

"Millions of Americans have come to believe that every important government decision is made with some measure of trickery or slick dealing or cover-up involved. They think every major move is made with first thought given to the political and public relations advantages that might accrue."

"Across the board, the American people are indicating they don't have anyone or anything they can believe in. Distrust has replaced skepticism, filling the country with a malaise of doubt about its ability to function as a great power."

And then the clincher...

"We have a situation where the people in power don't trust each other. They don't seem to trust anyone else. And few Americans trust them. This is a situation that even a great nation cannot long endure."

Long ago, Walter Lippmann argued the people were ultimately accountable for the conduct of their government, not only at the next election, and that their failure to defend the rights and principles they inherited would weaken both them and the nation. He has unconsciously predicted the future of America if the American people are unresponsive to the demands of Watergate to the system. Lippmann also said:

"Because man is endowed with the faculty of reason he is suffocated and strangled...if he is compelled for too long and too completely to submit to unreason, and irrational arbitrariness, and sheer brute circumstances."

Therefore, Lippmann seems to indicate that whatever the incident that causes disharmony in the system, it is the responsibility of the people in that system to use the channels available to them in order to restore reason to that society, as well as stability.

There is clearly a tendency to become philosophical in attempting to determine the long term effects of Watergate on our system, but the danger signs of the times seem to have warranted a deep investigation.

I believe James Reston has hit the proverbial nail on the head:

"...the issue is no longer the future of the Watergate tapes, or the Middle East, or even of the President...The central question now is, what is best for the nation in the next three years?"

THE IMAGINED VS THE REAL DANGERS OF
WATERGATE FOR THE AMERICAN
PRESIDENCY AND FOR THE
AMERICAN SYSTEM

American journalism is plagued by two-bit philosophers who think they can rise to fame by purporting a lot of wild dangers inherent in certain areas of the social climate; that is, abortion, capital punishment, over-population, et. al. Watergate has not escaped the philosophical meanderings of this group of pseudo-philosophers.

Fortunately, the American system is also the home of men whose ability to measure Watergate against the "historical yardstick" of time has left us with a body of extremely cogent material; the interpretation of which has ominous overtones.

Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., has recently completed work on a book called The Imperial Presidency (Chicago: Houghton-Mifflin, 1973). Schlesinger has been the recipient of the Pulitzer Prize two times, both for works on a particular President. He served as a special assistant to John F. Kennedy when he was in the White House, and continued for a while with Lyndon Johnson. Schlesinger's book was begun five years ago, and noticeably tainted by the Nixon years.

Schlesinger portrays Richard M. Nixon as a genuine revolutionary in relation to his operation of the Presidency. If Schlesinger's following statement, a statement which is typical of a whole body of opinion about Nixon, is to be trusted, the dangers are clear indeed.

"...the theory of the Presidency he embodied and propagated meant that the President of the United States, on his own personal and secret finding of emergency, had the right to nullify the Constitution and the law. No President had every made such a claim before."

I will discuss Schlesinger intermittently throughout this study, but at this point I should make it clear that the real danger Schlesinger perceived was not a result of Watergate itself, but rather the mentality of the Nixon administration from which Watergate arose. (I will discuss the mentality of the Nixon administration further in the next section.) Schlesinger saw Watergate as only a symptom, only a burst pimple on the surface of a deep abscess.

Anthony Lewis of the New York Times sees Watergate as a catalyst of the American people's lack of faith in our institutions of government. Lewis' thesis is that the framers of our constitution realized that trust is fundamental to the functioning of a free government, and they tried to construct a system that could survive mistaken leadership. He sees Watergate as a symbolic entity, denoting and communicating governmental lawlessness to the American people. He goes on to say,

"That Richard Nixon has made it impossible for the country to trust in him is not the worst he has done as President. The more grievous harm has been the damaged trust in our institutions."

Lewis' case is convincing as he gives examples (well documented) on Nixon's subversion of the CIA, the FBI, the Pentagon, and all three branches of government.

George Reedy is author of another provocative work I deemed essential to this study. Reedy has been a Washington correspondent for United Press International and also served as Lyndon Johnson's press secretary while he was in the White House. Reedy's work,

'Twisting Slowly, Slowly in the Wind.'



The Presidency in Flux (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), differs pointedly with Schlesinger's thesis. Reedy contends that our institutions are indeed malfunctioning, but attributes it to the construction of the system and the nature of man. Richard M. Nixon was only a tool of history. The blame for institutional malfunctioning does not fall on Watergate, Nixon, or any basic constitutional flaw---it falls on the people if they do not act to alleviate the situation. As Reedy says,

"We have fallen into the habit of discussing our institutions and our offices as though power were in the institutions themselves. It is misleading, because in reality there is no power in any of those institutions. There is no power in the presidency, there is no power in the governorship, there is no power in the mayoralty. Those offices are merely structures through which we, as a people, have determined that power shall be legitimately exercised."

Reedy's arguments are sometimes abstruse and metaphysical, and his work never strays measurably from what he learned during the Johnson administration. The danger Reedy sees is,

"There is a chain of circumstances and it is vicious. Power breeds isolation. Isolation leads to the capricious use of power. In turn, the capricious use of power breaks down the normal channels of communication between the leader and the people whom he leads. This ultimately means the deterioration of power and with it the capacity to sustain unity in our society. This is the problem we face today."

Of course, any examination of the dangers of Watergate on our system as a whole borders on the possibility of false prophecy, but a failure to even attempt to gauge the ebb and flow of the system and act protectively would be suicide.



KING RICHARD...
FANTASY OR REALITY?

KING RICHARD---FANTASY OR REALITY?

Historians are having a holiday with Watergate. The literary cups are overflowing with historical analogies; the precedents, the precedents of a President, the President as a crook, the President as a king, Teapot Dome, Johnson's impeachment. History is full of all sorts of meaningful comparisons. Herbert S. Levine, historian of German National Socialism and a Senior Research Fellow at Columbia University, has gone as far as to compare Nixon's administration with the rule of Hitler in Nazi Germany. Levine concludes his article by saying, "Hitler's use of the German Government for "dirty tricks" differed only in degree from Nixon's use of the executive branch. There is no discernible difference in kind." ("Watergate: Surreptitious Entry", NATION, Sept. 10, 1973)

It seems to me the most legitimate analogy can be formed along the lines of Schlesinger's The Imperial Presidency, and Reedy's The Presidency in Flux; the common denominator being that both view the Presidency as accumulating a vast amount of power, particularly in the last four decades. That part of the theme is undeniable; the conflict arising between Schlesinger, Reedy, Levine, and others is rather, the cause(s) for the Presidency arrogating excessive power unto itself.

United States history is literally full of instances where a President managed to wield a great deal of power, either legitimately or illegitimately. However, at no time in American history has the tendency been so obvious or consistent as during the past 30 or 40 years. In 1940, Harold J. Laski authored a definitive work on the Presidency which forecasted that power

movement. His book, The American Presidency (New York: Harper and Bros., 1940), predicted a rising importance and centralization of Presidential leadership, and said further,

"Centralization of leadership means, inevitably, a greater concentration of power in the president's hands simply because there is no other plane upon which it can be secured...That, above all, is why I think that the place of the president in the constitutional scheme is likely to be greater, his national authority even more immense, than at the present time."

And in 1940, the nation was only beginning to discover the power a President had at his disposal.

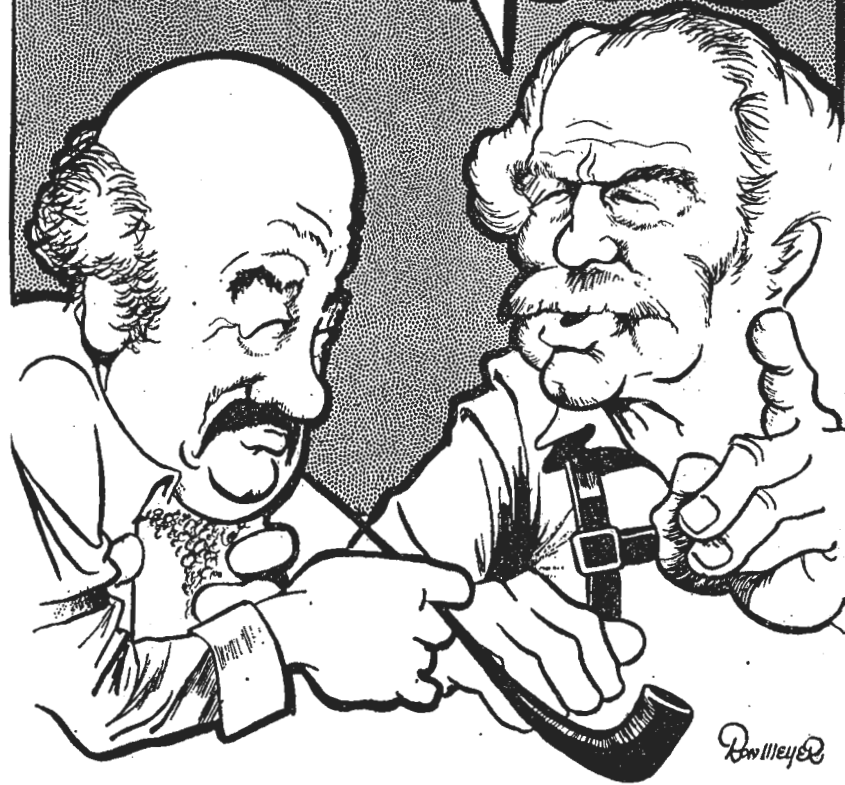
This is the transformation that has actually taken place in the Presidency over the past few decades. Presidential primacy, so indispensable to the American political order, has turned in crucial areas into presidential supremacy. The current rage, on the other hand, is to argue that Nixon has wielded and usurped power to a degree that no other President could or would. That is the distinction of this President and this Presidency. The much deeper questions to be answered are why, how, where and when.

My personal interpretation is that Nixon has not necessarily used more power than any other President, but has merely enraged certain parts of the American electorate by the way he used that power. For instance, I would also argue that the much larger finger should be pointed at a Congress which has shirked its Constitutional responsibilities. During the term of LBJ, it was Congress that enabled the President to carry on a full scale war in Southeast Asia by means of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. This resolution, passed overwhelmingly on August 7, 1964, became the President's "blank check" for the Vietnam conflict. It is

"We Were Only Obeying Orders. . . ."



IT'S NOT THE FUEHRER
I DON'T TRUST, IT'S
GOERING, HIMMLER,
BORMAN, GOEBBELS
AND THE OTHERS AROUND
HIM WHO ARE
TO BLAME



not difficult to understand how Nixon was able to perceive the President as a man capable of singlehandedly waging war, whether it be in Vietnam, Laos, or Cambodia.

Tom Wicker of the New York Times, and Harry S. Ashmore of the Los Angeles Times are representative of the moral outrage over Nixon's secret Cambodia bombings; bombings which Nixon has publicly admitted to authorizing. Says, Wicker, in September of 1973,

"First and foremost, a limit has to be put on the President's...power to commit the nation to war with no more authorization than his own definition of national interest and security."

And when the House over-ruled Nixon's veto of the new war powers bill, Wicker's criticism is clearly Nixon-oriented. (November, 1973)

"That the House could over-ride his veto of such a measure says better than any Gallup Poll how much Nixon's political strength has been eroded, and that the House has sensed a swiftly changing public attitude toward the imperial presidency." (My underlining.)

Ashmore, on the other hand, is enraged because the big bad President kept a secret from him. This is an excerpt from an article by Ashmore which appeared August 12, 1973, in the Los Angeles Times.

"This kind of institutionalized deceit has not been limited to the rough-and-tumble of campaign politics. In some ways the most shocking scandal of recent weeks is the cover-up of 15 months of massive bombing in Cambodia, which required flat lies by the President, the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the falsification of records presented officially to the Congress. To justify this kind of subterfuge in the name of security is an insult to the intelligence."

The implication to be drawn, particularly because of the presence of Ashmore's introductory sentence, is that Nixon's Cambodia bombing campaign is further evidence of Nixon's deceit in other areas; especially, Watergate, campaign politics, and "dirty tricks."

Congress has been profligate in one other major respect; the transferral of fiscal power to the President. The major offense was the Economic Stabilization Act of 1970 which gave the President power to issue "such orders and regulations as he may deem appropriate" to stabilize prices, rents, wages and salaries. And yet, the criticism mounted against the President's fiscal policies was directed at the Oval Office, not the Congress. According to D.L. Robinson ("Presidential Autocracy and the Rule of Law", Worldview, March, 1973) of Smith College, "These new powers were received ungraciously by the White House..."

The mandatory fuel allocation bill is another prime example of the President accumulating immense power than he neither asks for or wants. On the basis of that information, I think it is misleading to accuse Nixon of being solely responsible of creating an "imperial presidency", or as Schlesinger also refers to it, a "solipsistic presidency."

Nevertheless, a school of thought is arising in American which sees Watergate, Cambodia, and other presidential actions as products of the "Nixon mentality." In essence, everything Nixon says and does can be related to his psychological makeup and his attitudes which emerge spontaneously in the handling of his office personnel and in pressure situations.

The following are examples of descriptions of the alleged "Nixon mentality":

From Schlesinger's, The Imperial Presidency,

"Underneath a conventional exterior, Nixon was a man with revolutionary dreams. The structural forces tending to transfer power to the presidency were now reinforced by compulsive internal

OF WHICH THERE IS GREAT CAUSE OF GRIEF OR LESSER DANGER NAME
OF THAT I COULD FORGET WHAT I HAVE BEEN
OR NOT REMEMBER WHAT I MUST BE NOW
KING RICHARD III. ACT III. SCENE III.



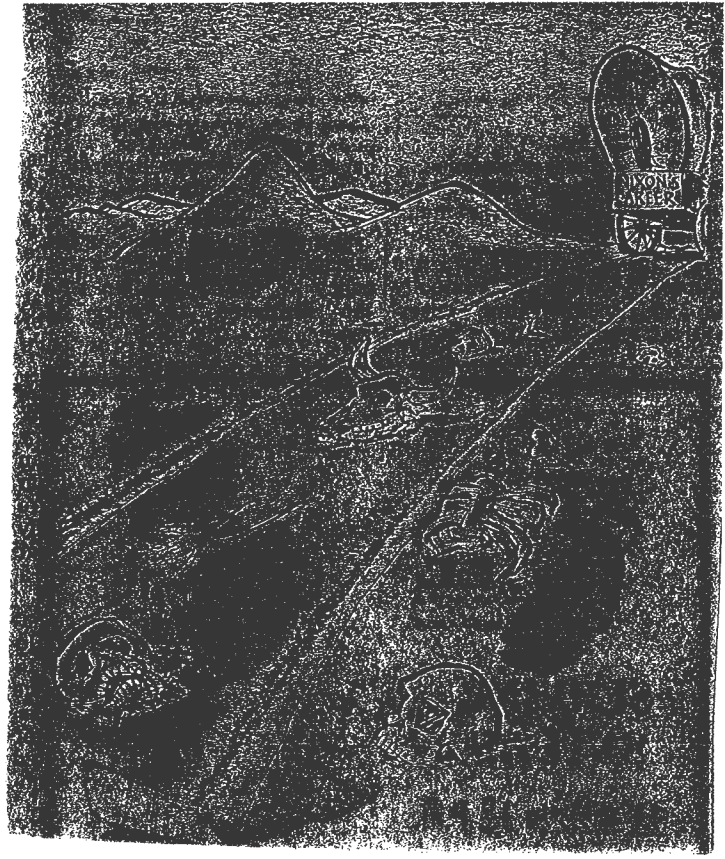
Ehrlichman, Haldeman, Brown, Kalmbach
LoRue, Mohr, Sorensen, McCord, Ladd
Chapin, Hunt, Colson, Knight, Magruder
Young—I Knew Them



© THE WASHINGTON POST 1972

'I Can Be Very Friendly.'







JOIN THE CLUB, SWEETIE. I'VE
HAD A BAD PRESS FOR CENTURIES.'



drives---a sense of life as a battlefield, a belief that the nation was swarming with personal enemies, a flinching from face-to-face argument, an addiction to seclusion, a preoccupation with response to crisis, an insistence on a controlled environment for decision."

The President, said Tom Charles Huston, who served for a year as domestic security planner in the White House, "abhors confrontations, most particularly those based on philosophical convictions."

Senator Charles Mathias (Rep., Maryland) says,

"The more a president sits surrounded only by his own views and those of his personal advisers, the more he lives in a house of mirrors in which all views and ideas tend to reflect and reinforce his own."

Schlesinger once more,

"Remembering the ease of access to the president in other White Houses---Roosevelt's and Kennedy's, for example---one could only wonder at the intense psychic compulsions that led Nixon to establish so rigid and, in the end, so predictably self-deceiving and self-defeating a procedure. The White House became a world of its own, cut off from Washington and the nation."

We must be careful, at this point, to refrain from "witch hunting" by over-emphasizing this argument and carrying it to extremes. Judging from the statements and actions of several of Nixon's aides and associates, the witches have already been located. Permit me to illustrate that point.

Where this simplistic view can lead has been demonstrated by the former Attorney General of the United States who testified before the Watergate hearings that he reached a point where he could no longer distinguish between George McGovern and Beelzebub:

"Senator Talmadge: Am I to understand from your response that you placed the expediency of the next election above your responsibility... to advise the President of the peril that surrounded him? Here was the deputy campaign director involved, here were his two closest associates in his office involved, all around him were people involved in crime...and you deliberately refused to tell him that. Would

you state that the expediency of the election was more important than that?

John Mitchell: Senator, I think you have put it exactly correct. In my mind, the re-election of Richard Nixon, compared with what was available on the other side, was so much more important that I put it in just that context."

What probably antagonizes the committee as well as the American public the most, is the fact that not only have those men connected with Watergate been guilty of misconduct, they have also been unrepentant. During Ehrlichman's testimony is another alleged example of a distorted mentality. In essence, his position has been that anything is within the power of the White House if it declares a national security interest. When a senator asked whether murder was permissible along with burglary, Ehrlichman replied that he did not want to draw the line; he refused to exclude that possibility.

There is more. Take the testimony of John J. Wilson, Ehrlichman's legal counsel:

"There is no one in this room who can assert with categorical certainty that the President of the United States does not have the constitutional power to cause the entry under what would be otherwise illegal circumstances in pursuit of foreign intelligence."

Along with the resignation of Agnew, who James R. Thompson (aid in Justice Department prosecution of Agnew) calls "a simple crook", it is no doubt that people begin to wonder about the mentality of the Nixon administration. However, the really frightening thing is not that they broke the law, but that they were of the kind of fiber characteristic of zealots and crusaders. In effect, they were fully dedicated to their crime. It was

an established pattern of thought and way of life. They bred and multiplied like rabbits; the underlying hope is that Watergate will make that kind of thinking extinct in our political system.

Another area where Presidential primacy has bordered on supremacy is concerned with the use of executive privilege. In general, it has been felt that the President was entitled to receive counsel from his advisers in confidence. In particular, it has been accepted, as part of the doctrine of separation of powers, that a President was not required to release to members of the other branches of government information about confidential advice. However, because the doctrine of executive privilege is not mentioned in the Constitution, nor grounded in common law, most presidents have tried to invoke it sparingly and in a modest manner.

Scholars have recently done some reckoning on claims of executive privilege in American history. Perhaps 75 times since the founding of the Republic, they say, the executive branch has formally refused to give some information to Congress, claiming privilege. Two-thirds of these occasions have come in the last 20 years; about one-third have come in the 4½ years of Richard Nixon's presidency. According to Harry S. Ashmore of the Los Angeles Times,

"No one contends that there is not such a thing as executive privilege—but the evidence is overwhelming that it has been and still is being grossly abused."

Abused, or not, Nixon states his position on executive privilege in respect to presidential documents and material

in a letter to Chairman Sam Ervin of the Watergate Committee, on July 6, 1973:

(in relation to giving up that material)

"Such a course, I have concluded, would inevitably result in the attrition, and the eventual destruction of the indispensable principle of confidentiality of presidential papers."

And in another letter to Ervin on July 23, he said:

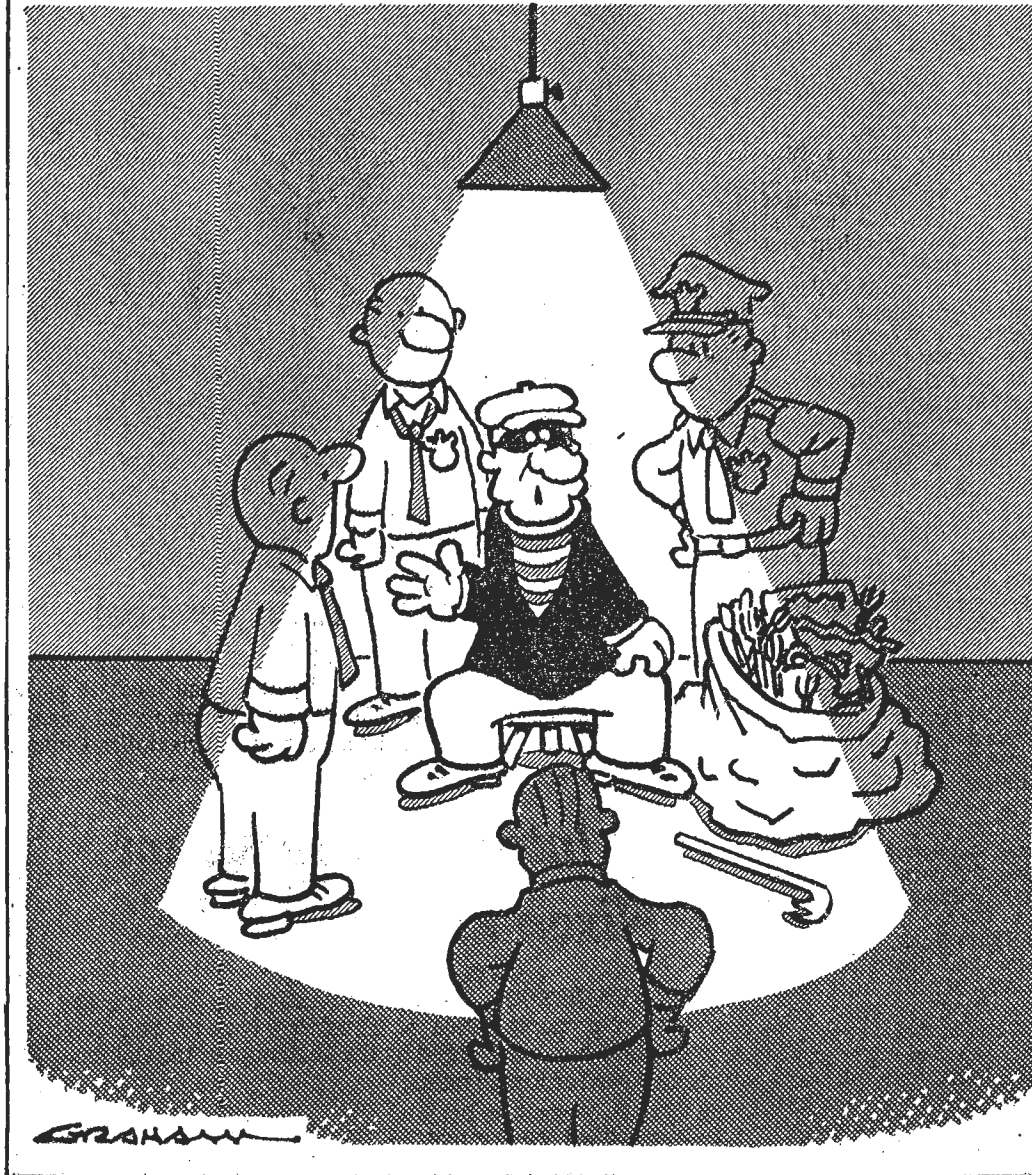
"the principle stated in my letter to you of July 6...applies with even greater force to tapes of private presidential conversations."

Whether or not his argument is constitutionally tenable will probably never be discovered in light of the subsequent fiasco over the tapes. I expect any day now to be told that Watergate was accidentally erased from the minds of the American people because someone upstairs stepped on the wrong button. So a court battle over Mr. Nixon's kingship seems unlikely. According to Joseph Kraft of Publishers-Hall Syndicate:

"The Court tends to duck constitutional issues rather than to seek them out. The Justices are particularly leery of getting involved in a murky fight about the reach of such a nebulous doctrine as executive privilege."

Another Nixon action with imperial implications is his organization of the "plumbers" squad; a small group of men he said he organized to protect and investigate national security violations. The plumbers were involved in several "legal" break-ins; the most conspicuous being the burglary of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office (Dr. Fielding), and the break-in at Democratic National Headquarters (Watergate break-in). Senator Talmadge accentuates the danger connected with the organization

“... Please, Gentlemen, For All You Know This Might Involve the Highest Priority National Security ...”





©1973 HERBLOCK

of a plumbers squad by suggesting that if it was legal to organize one of four or five men, it would logically follow that a squad of fifty, or a hundred, or a thousand men would also be legal.

Like most other omnipotent rulers throughout time, Nixon displays "kingly" tendencies in still another respect—his poor knowledge and interpretation of history. Hitler ignored the experience of Napoleon when he proceeded to invade Russia during World War II. Nixon distorted the facts on the Aaron Burr trial in order to defend his stand on executive privilege. This is his historical "tale" as recorded at his October 26 news conference.

"You remember the famous case involving Thomas Jefferson where Chief Justice Marshall, then sitting as a trial judge, subpoenaed a letter which Jefferson had written which Marshall thought or felt was necessary evidence in the trial of Aaron Burr. Jefferson refused to do so, but it did not result in a suit. What happened was, of course, a compromise in which a summary of the contents of the letter which was relevant to the trial was produced by Jefferson..."

The historical facts are as follows: The letter at issue was not from Jefferson but to him, from General James Wilkinson. Jefferson did not refuse to co-operate in the matter; indeed he offered to be examined under oath in Washington. And he did not produce a mere "summary" of the letter. He gave the entire original letter to the U.S. Attorney, George Hay, who offered it to the Court for copying and use of "those parts which had relation to the cause." In short, Nixon's account was a farrago of untruths.

Anthony Lewis (New York Times) poses some interesting questions:

"Why did he introduce such a historical episode into his discussion and then so gravely distort it? Did he consciously intend to deceive his audience? Or is there in him some unconscious process that reshapes the truth to his ends?...Even on so small a matter we cannot trust the President of the United States."

Norman C. Miller, the acting chief of the Wall Street Journal's Washington Bureau, concluded that,

"the president's misfortune is that his words are not widely believed anymore. And everyone knows that he already has been compelled by events to retreat again and again. So one must wonder if he may finally be forced into total surrender of his office."

That, of course, will be an interesting development; America has never before witnessed the abdication of one of her kings.

George F. Will, Washington Editor of the National Review, doesn't see the denouement of Nixon quite the same way as Miller. He believes that Nixon will succeed in his effort to "treat his legal problems as public relations problems"; it is too soon to evaluate Nixon's "Operation Candor". If you assume, however, that America is not a nation of fools, you must inevitably conclude that "Operation Candor" will fail. The American people are becoming increasingly incredulous.

George Reedy, in The Presidency in Flux, concludes by saying,

"Over the last few years many people have been telling the president, without much effect, that he has been wearing no clothes, but the voices are growing stronger, and I believe they are beginning to penetrate. Possibly some one of these days they will penetrate to the point where the leader of our nation becomes what he was intended to be---a man who really leads, a man who talks with us rather than at us and who is capable of leading a democratic society."

As Tom Wicker has so eloquently said,

"Richard Nixon's worst enemy is not the press and television. Richard Nixon's worst enemy is Richard Nixon."



THE BLESSEDNESS OF WATERGATE

This is the point at which the expository is laid aside and the hypothetical begins to emerge. It is uncommon to find the "blessedness of Watergate" a topic of lively discussion; admittedly, they are strange bedfellows. No doubt, such a connection seems dubious at least, and preposterous at most. Watergate may prove, however, to be of critical importance to the American system; the importance will lie in the blessing—a blessing which is, incidentally, not well disguised. Watergate will be aborted and the real sin is not in its conception, but rather in our misconception of its conception.

Senator Walter Mondale of Minnesota is not untypical of those who misinterpret Watergate. He has proposed that we establish a national commission to determine what constitutional transformation is necessary in respect to the executive department to enable government to once again function legitimately. Senator Mondale's basic point is that, however bad Mr. Nixon may be personally, the real trouble is that something has gone wrong with the office itself in a 36-year trend toward a presidency "larger than life and larger than the law." Proposals of a "council of elders" to replace the single president have been floating around for years. The only advantage(?) to possibly come from that would be that when corruption once again seized our government, it would be initiated as a group effort. I have trouble stomaching one Richard M. Nixon; I hesitate to even consider the paralyzation potential of five Richard M. Nixons. Mondale's theory about something being inherently wrong with the Presidency has been

seized by others as well. The London Times, in a recent editorial, said that it no longer believed that it was just a President (i.e. Richard Nixon) who was being threatened. It now argues that even "the presidency of the United States (is) at stake."

On April 30th, Nixon said,

"Some people quite properly appalled by the abuses that occurred, will say that Watergate demonstrates the bankruptcy of the American political system."

Watergate, regardless of its extent, is still just a scandal. On that basis, Watergate does not signify the bankruptcy of the American political system; it signifies the bankruptcy of Richard M. Nixon, et.al.

Lewis, Schlesinger, Wicker, Reston, Ashmore, and other journalists as well, do not go as far as to advocate an institutional reconstruction. Briefly, they say that Congress and the Courts have the power by which this, or any President can be controlled. They need only exert that power to be a panacea for the system.

Back in the '1950's, historian Daniel Boorstin argued that "the genius of American politics" (also the title of his book) lay in the capacity of the American people, like their Roman predecessors, to operate a system of institutions. Essential to this knack was the sense that the institutions were "given" and that it would be a mistake to disturb them by subjecting them to searching inquiry.

The deepest conviction in the American tradition is that no person can be trusted to dispose of power alone. This proposition is based partly on the understanding that human nature is



"I KNOW WHAT IS BEST FOR VIETNAM...
I HAVE MORE FACTS."



"I KNOW WHAT IS BEST FOR THE ECONOMY...
I HAVE MORE FACTS."



"I KNOW WHAT IS BEST TO STOP INFLATION...
I HAVE MORE FACTS."



"I KNOW WHAT IS BEST FOR CAMBODIA...
I HAVE MORE FACTS."



"I KNOW WHAT IS BEST FOR AMERICA ...
I HAVE MORE FACTS."



"HOW COULD I HAVE KNOWN ABOUT WATERGATE?..
I'M JUST THE PRESIDENT!"

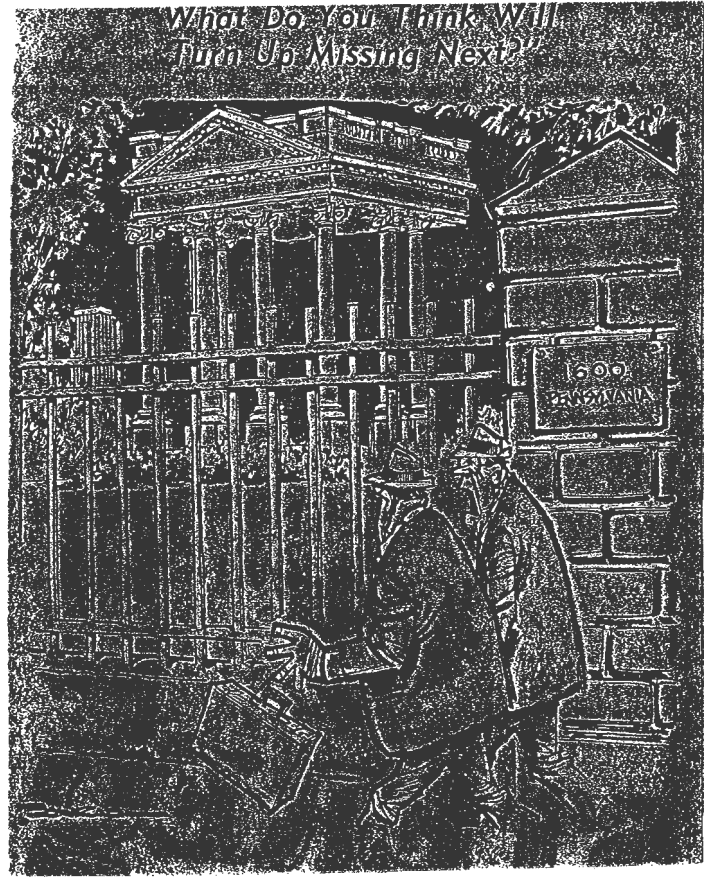
Distributed by Los Angeles Times SYNDICATE

Look—nice tapes—Okay, boy?—Okay?—



©1973 HERBLOCK

What Do You Think Will
Turn Up Missing Next?



sinful, but also on the conviction, enunciated by Aristotle, that practical political wisdom is a composite of diverse points of view. Policy fashioned by many people is thus more likely to be wise. It is also more likely to be sustained in time of trouble by the many who helped to make it. If policy has been made by one man, and if others have merely acquiesced, the vitality of the community will not remain engaged when the venture runs into difficulty. Thus policy made by one man is likely to be both less wise and less enduring than policy made by representatives of the people. This calls for a reassertion of Congressional authority and a revival of respect for the concept of balance of power.

Overreacting to Watergate will cause us to pay an outrageous price if we use it to reinstate our self-righteousness. As Schlesinger says in the June 1, 1973, Wall Street Journal, "The answer to the runaway Presidency is not the messenger-boy Presidency."

The great powers of the American government are shared powers. They reside, as Hamilton wrote in the 75th Federalist of the treaty-making power, in an area of "joint possession." The American democracy must discover a middle ground between making the President a czar and making him a puppet. Or to put it succinctly, we need a strong Presidency within the Constitution. And when metricious trash like Watergate arises on the political scene, we cannot be content to withhold our criticism, indignance and prosecution for the sake of the Presidency; we must make use of it for the sake of the Presidency.

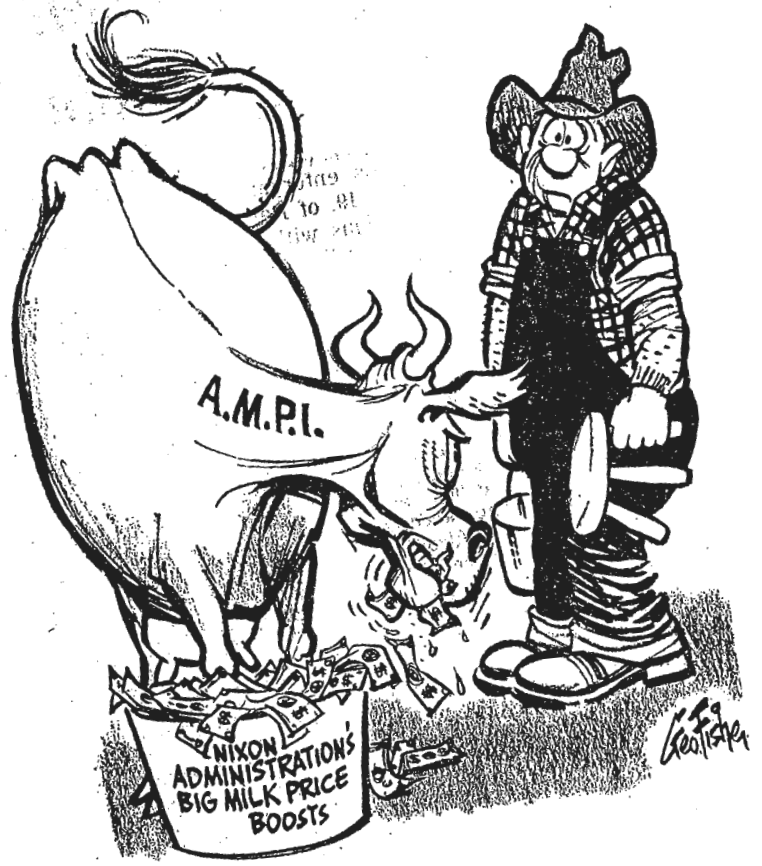
There is no historical parallel in this century to the scope and variety of all the inquiries, suits, trials and bargaining now going on in connection with the activities of a President and his closest associates.

One astonishing page—Page 26—of the New York Times for September 24, 1973, tells the story. In just over two columns of type, under 15 subheads, that page pulls together the present status of six congressional investigations; five Grand Juries; five civil suits; the litigation over Nixon's tapes; two current prosecutions of six former administration officials, including two Cabinet officers; two other officials who have pleaded guilty to criminal charges; and an FBI, IRS and Securities and Exchange Commission investigation of one of Nixon's closest personal and political supporters.

Seven companies were listed as having made illegal contributions to this extraordinary administration; its relationship to another giant business concern is being probed by one of the Grand Juries for illicit campaign and other activities; the Secretary of Agriculture is the target of one of the civil suits, alleging that milk support prices were raised in return for a campaign contribution; and the Secretary of State is a target of another civil suit, alleging that he improperly wire-tapped one of his own associates. The President is the subject of a House subcommittee inquiry into whether he misused government funds for his properties in Florida and California.

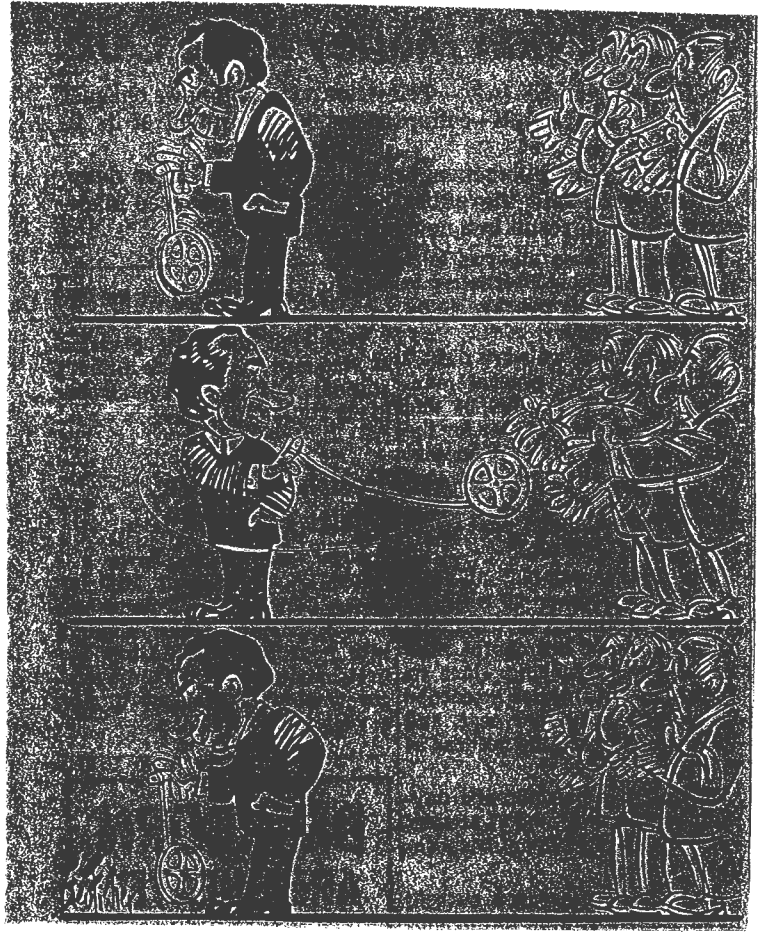
Subsequently we have the firing of Cox, the resignation of Richardson, the firing of Ruckelshaus, the resignation of Agnew,

'I Gave at the Office

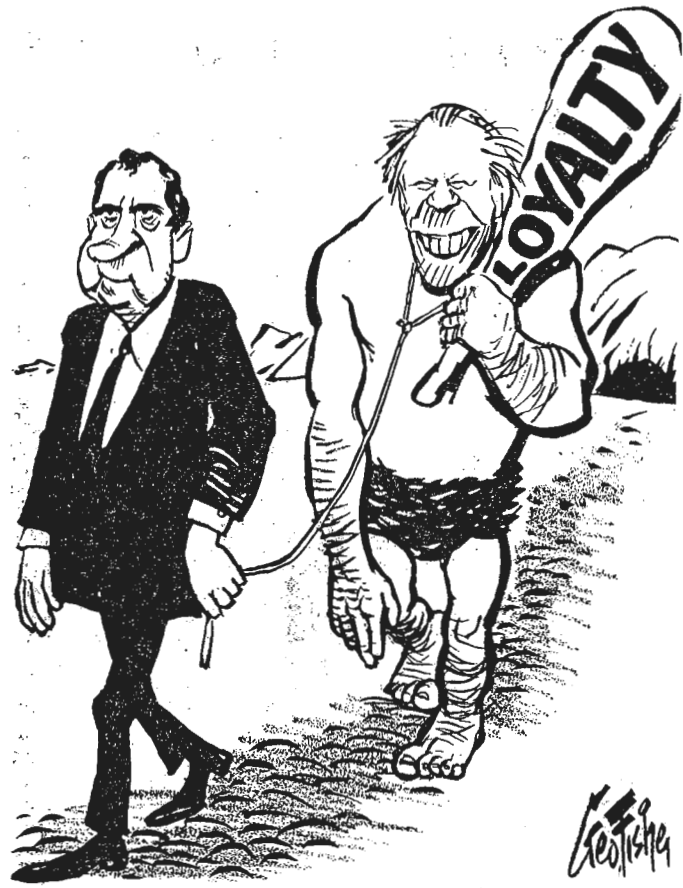


'You Got All the Bags, Bebe?'

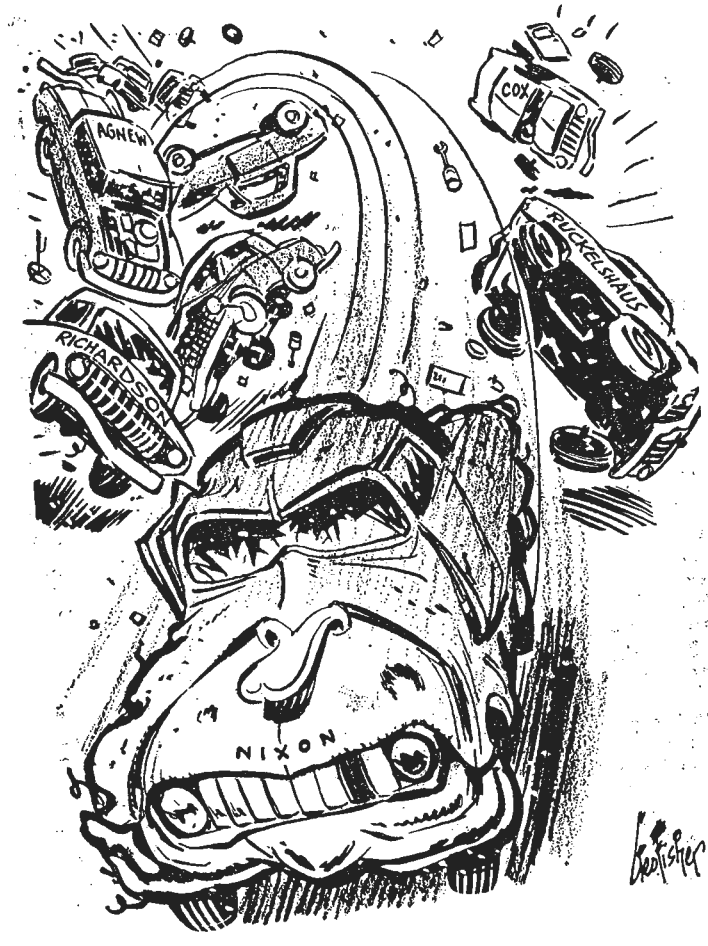




When You Get Back to Basics
—You Get Back to Ford.



Demoition Derby



GUARANTEE

THE SPECIAL PROSECUTOR
APPOINTED BY THE WHITE
HOUSE SHALL HAVE A COMPLETELY
FREE HAND IN ALL OF HIS
INVESTIGATIONS AND SHALL
NOT BE ENCUMBERED IN ANY
FORM, MANNER, SHAPE OR
FASHION.

EXECUTIVE BRANCH
OF GOVERNMENT,
1600 PENNSYLVANIA AVE.,
WASHINGTON, D.C.

**VOID IF SPECIAL
PROSECUTOR STARTS
GETTING TOO NOSEY.**

STRAW

"Gee! Guess What, Mr. President?"



the two missing tapes, Rose Mary's boo-boo, the President's acknowledgment that he authorized the ITT settlement, the failure of the President to pay California income tax while serving as President, and literally a mountain of other information which threatens to become "old hat".

I get tired just reading the list, it is no wonder that the American people are getting sick and tired of hearing about it. Carl Rowan says it explicitly:

"The vast cesspool of official crime and cover-up we have labeled Watergate represents the worst debauching and corrupting of our electoral process in the nation's history..."

Rowan goes on to say that the American people are simply "fed up" with the Watergate revelations.

"They want Old Sam (Ervin) to get lost so they can get back to their Alice in Wonderland notions that they are the freest people on earth living in the most perfect democracy ever devised by man."

James Reston practically echoes that feeling when he says, "the people are tired and bored with the whole thing, and this is the President's hope, and the nation's problem." The Gallup and Harris polls agree that America is heavy-laden with the Watergate blues.

This is precisely where my argument for the "blessedness of Watergate" gets.. The American people are becoming so fatigued from scandal, corruption, and emperors like Richard M. Nixon, that the rise of intolerance and cynicism is inevitable. It is in this intolerance and cynicism that our hope for the future lies. When the American system reaches the point where it becomes

an antibody of this type of licentiousness, Watergate epitomizes the essence of philanthropy. Watergate will serve as the stimulus for the cleansing of the political system. The "political stomach" of America will regurgitate the infectious and fatal transgressions, as well as their perpetrators. The body politic will experience a resurgence of faith and trust as the system returns to normal. The result will not be eternal bliss. The system will surely have other unsettling experiences which threaten the equilibrium.

Richard Lee Strout pointed out the other day that corruption comes to the White House in 50-year cycles---the Grant scandals of 1873, the Harding scandals of 1923, now the Nixon scandals of 1973. Public indignation seems to be a protective inoculation. The way to preserve the system is not to spare the President, but to root out the facts, follow the truth wherever it leads and make examples of all who betrayed the public trust. Only this will both restore popular belief in the Presidency and deter future Presidents and their associates from illegal behavior---so long, at least, as Watergate remains a vivid memory. Around 2023 the American people would be well advised to start nailing down everything in sight once again.

James Madison made a good point a long time ago:

"Knowledge will forever govern ignorance. And a people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power knowledge gives. A popular government, without popular information or the means of acquiring it, is but the prologue to a farce or tragedy."

When this nation was founded, there was a holy Roman emperor; Venice was a Republic, France was ruled by a king, China by an emperor, Japan by a shogun, Russia by a czar, Great Britain by

a king. History has taken its toll; all these regimes are now a part of antiquity. Among the world powers, the only government that stands essentially unchanged is the Federal Union put together in the 1780's by thirteen states on the East Coast of North America.

It will survive Watergate.

CONCLUSION

The reason Watergate has caused such a clamor and aroused so much fear over its future implications is due to the fact that it has so completely pervaded our minds. In my personal opinion, Watergate and Richard M. Nixon present no real threat to our system in the long run. The Presidency will undoubtedly survive, if for no other reason because it is so traditional. Constitutional change is unlikely, and the future role of the President will depend a great deal, if not entirely, on the personality of the man who occupies that office.

It is rather easy to be a Watergate "monger" or a Nixon "monger", and forecast great dangers for America. But if the system were not stronger than one man, even a Nixon, it would have fallen apart at the seams long ago. Corruption will never be the death of our country; it's analogous to having one bad spark plug in your car---it won't keep the machine from operating, it just prevents it from operating at peak efficiency. Even then, the plug does manage to fire every once in a while (e.g. Cox, Bueckelshaus, Richardson).

Watergate will not be traumatic; it will be redemptively cleansing.

Jim Starnes