

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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On the Future of Richard Nixon

In a recent column by Joseph Kraft dealing with the issue of whether or not ex-President Nixon should be given amnesty, Mr. Kraft gave what appeared to be one of the glibest blessings of white collar crime that I have ever seen in print.

As an attorney I must protest such myopia concerning this type of criminal conduct. Such rationales which lead men to commit such "non-sweaty" crimes are at the very root of that sordid mess popularly described as the Watergate crimes. Continual blinking at such behavior will, at a minimum, entrench a class system in this country far beyond any historical standard heretofore found to be tolerable. At a maximum it may so erode confidence in our legal system as to render the promise of equal justice an illusory sham, more dependent on who the criminal is rather than the seriousness of his crime. Is this what we want? I hope not.

In short, if that should occur, the demise of credibility in our legal institutions will not have been caused by those who desparately steal in order to eat but instead by those comfortable criminals who were driven mostly by greed and that ever pervasive lust to "get ahead." That such sophisticated crime is tolerable at all I suspect may be because it is our neighbors who do it and not some desperate soul lost within the inner sanctums of our slums.

Have the tragedies of Watergate taught us nothing? The Nixon gang plain and simply tried to overtly steal our form of government. In so doing and in conjunction with the subsequent "stonewalling" the citizens of this country were offered the excuse that "everyone does it." This play to our darker sides of morality is nothing better than a covert attempt to steal what had been denied overtly. For Mr. Kraft to now throw all of this poison into the comfortable caption of "white-collar crime" only perpetuates this unseemly episode. I pray that others do not so lightly disregard the wisdom of our mechanisms of justice. A corollary to the constitutional guarantees of equal protection of the laws is the axiom of an equal enforcement of those laws. This is a must.

John S. McCreery.

Washington.

Thoughtful Americans must surely be appalled by the current national debate attempting to influence Special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski's decision as to whether or not former President

Nixon should be further pursued in the courts.

It is understandable that a Congress forced into the distasteful position of forcing a President from office should want to spare us the spectacle of a former President becoming a convicted felon.

But has it occurred to these leaders that pursuit or non-pursuit of Richard Nixon in the courts is as much a part of the constitutional process as the "semi-impeachment" which served as the catalyst of Mr. Nixon's self-destruction?

Will history record that the 37th President was constitutionally ousted, but through resignation remained immune (and therefore outside the law)

from responsibility for his own alleged criminal acts solely out of political and emotional considerations?

Judge Sirica and Special Prosecutor Jaworski hold the evidence, as ordered by the Supreme Court, and it is the Special Prosecutor and, possibly the grand jury, who must make the final decision.

We must face the truth as shown by this evidence and accept the judgment determined by the system which has served us so well to this point. Resignation should not influence the conviction or acquittal of Richard Nixon.

L. Craig Pyron.

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My first reaction, like that of most people I imagine, was that President Nixon's resignation had made impeachment superfluous by making the issue moot. Nor was I particularly impressed with the argument that there will be significant question as to Mr. Nixon's guilt if the impeachment proceedings are stopped short of conviction in the Senate.

However, immediately after resigning from the presidency, Mr. Nixon indicated that he expects to continue working in public life. We cannot know what offices he might have had in mind, but he would not be foreclosed from holding a federal position, perhaps by appointment.

For that reason, if impeachment proceedings were terminated because of the resignation, a major constitutional purpose would be frustrated. Article I, Section 3, of the Constitution provides that impeachment and conviction shall result in "disqualification to hold and enjoy any Office of honor, Trust or Profit under the United States."

Obviously, therefore, if Mr. Nixon was indeed guilty of impeachable offenses, the Congress should so declare in appropriate constitutional manner so that the constitutional purpose of disqualification from holding federal office can be fulfilled.

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To bind up America's wounds so we can all look to the future! This will come sooner and more justly if we temper our decisions with reasoned compassion. While the world lasts, Nixon's name will bear the disgrace already attached to it. As long as he lives, that public shame will plague his consciousness. Falling from a greater height in itself inflicts greater pain and punishment. It would look to many not as justice but as callous overkill — callously kicking a broken and publicly punished man — if there were further action against him.

Accused persons usually are protected from having to testify against themselves. Nixon was forced to let his own voice confidentially recorded be the basis of his televised "trials."

If his privacy could be so sweepingly invaded, what about yours and mine? As to his public disgrace, perhaps all of us who are normal and honest with ourselves could say: There, but for the grace of God, go I.

James F. Coppedge.

Los Angeles.