

Watergate Breakup 4/24/77

The walls of secrecy surrounding the Watergate scandal are now tumbling down. After wearisome months of defending themselves by ridicule, denial, disparagement, and diversionary tactics, Administration officials led by President Nixon himself are at last admitting that this was no "caper" and that serious illegal acts have been committed.

At last it is now possible, though not yet certain, that the full truth may become known to the public and that all of those guilty of approving, planning, financing, committing and benefiting from these sinister acts may be exposed and punished.

President Nixon has now done the minimum required of him by the circumstances and conceded, contrary to past protestations, that present and former Administration officials cannot hide behind the protective cover of executive privilege when asked to testify by a Congressional committee about wrongdoing. It was perhaps superfluous of the President to state that any official who was indicted would be suspended from office and anyone convicted would be fired. Had anyone supposed that such an official would be promoted?

Ten months after the case first broke, it is still astonishing that senior officials in the confidence of the President should have contemplated the systematic subversion of the American political order by espionage, sabotage, theft and surveillance. But it is perhaps even more astonishing—and more distressing—that once a small part of this dreadful story became public knowledge, the same highly placed persons began a systematic and well financed campaign to obstruct justice and subvert the judicial order.

We do not yet know who is guilty and who is innocent; and that judgment must await the outcome of investigations by Senate and grand jury alike. But what we do know is that the lies and half-truths and evil propaganda that have served as walls between the public and the truth are now breaking up. The implications of this case are so serious and so profound that the press and public cannot rest until the entire truth is known.