

# The Washington Post

AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

## The Resignation of the President

A PRESIDENT OF THE United States has resigned from office. It is a profoundly sad and profoundly heartening occasion. The sadness all but speaks for itself. Richard Nixon, a man whose entire adult professional life was dedicated to the quest for and exercise of the powers of the office of the presidency, leaves that office under a cloud of wrongdoing and shame. To respond to the tragedy that has now befallen him and his family is not to dismiss or minimize the terrible danger in which his wrongdoing put the nation for as long as it remained undiscovered and uncorrected. Nor is it to say that the wrongdoing was undistinctive or run-of-the-mill, even though some of the worst impulses to which he and his lieutenants yielded on such a massive scale may be impulses that are familiar both in certain presidential patterns of performance and as individual personal failings.

So the general sadness of the occasion can be said to transcend all partisan political feeling—and so, we would emphatically add, should be the sense of pride and reassurance to be gained from what has happened. For Mr. Nixon's particular constituency must know that it required the courage and ultimate decency and good sense of many of those who speak for them in public life to reaffirm those standards of public conduct against which he was judged and found wanting. Indeed, the role of these people—Southern Democrats as well as conservative Republicans in all branches of government and all walks of life—proved decisive.

Maybe too much has already been written—and written too sentimentally—about the marvels of the system and how it "worked." But it did. And it is important to be precise about *how* it worked. We do not, for example, subscribe to the Fluke Theory, although chance played its part. For in the end and most importantly, it was the conscience and pride and responsibility of innumerable people and numerous institutions that combined to assert that 1) there was (and is) a norm of official behavior that is recognized and respected by all Americans and 2) the President's

departure from this norm was sufficiently gross and calculated to require an extraordinary and unprecedented remedy.

Cataclysmic as it is, this denouement and the events which led to it, can in no way be said to comprise the whole story of the Nixon presidency. There are many positive achievements to be noted and analyzed and there were also many substantive failures that have little to do with the particular failures that brought Mr. Nixon down. But there will be plenty of time to seek to balance the books on the Nixon administration and to assess the terms and manner of his leaving office. For the moment our thoughts, like those of most others, turn to the challenge now facing Gerald Ford and the transfer not just of authority but also of public attention to him.

In an important and wholly legitimate way, Mr. Ford is entitled to take as his mandate the continuation of that part of Mr. Nixon's policy and program which has not been discredited by the events and disclosures which led to Mr. Nixon's departure from office. That there has been an overwhelming public judgment against Richard Nixon is indisputable, even without the formal test of impeachment and Senate trial. His party leaders in Congress told him as much two days ago. But it will be important in the weeks and months ahead not to confuse Mr. Nixon's repudiation with a repudiation of the electoral will he could have fulfilled had he been as faithful to the rule of law as he professed himself to be. Gerald Ford, of course, is free to be his own man and to make of his presidency what he will. But we would suggest that abruptly as he comes to the office, he also comes to it with a valuable legacy: At no time in the country's history has the standard of acceptable conduct of the presidency been so clearly defined or so widely subscribed to. This standard will now be Mr. Ford's to uphold and enforce. In this particular duty he will have unparalleled and unprecedented public support.

# The Next President and Inflation

GERALD FORD'S first and most urgent concern, as President, will necessarily be the inflation. For most Americans, the real test of the new administration will be its success in restoring stability to our economy. The current surge of inflation, which has been running for nearly two years now, is affecting every family and diminishing the nation's general standard of living. Far from slacking off, as past forecasts kept suggesting hopefully, the latest figures indicate that it may actually be accelerating. Its causes lie deep, and there is no magic that the new President can invoke to check it painlessly. There is no simple change in economic policy, or technical adjustment, that will automatically make prices stand still. But there is much that the incoming President can do, immediately, that will reassure the country and reduce the dangers now apparent.

Mr. Ford brings to the White House the tremendous advantage of being able to talk constructively with people who had lost all faith in the previous administration and had broken off relations with it. He has the second advantage of being able to address the American people candidly, without recourse to meretricious optimism, and being believed. The essential issues are perfectly comprehensible. The extraordinary rises in the costs of food and fuel have genuinely diminished the real income of most Americans. The solution lies in the traditional American response of increased productivity—a response that necessarily takes a certain amount of time. As this process goes forward, someone is going to have to make people throughout this country take account of each other's concerns, and assure them that the misfortunes of an uncertain time are going to be fairly shared. Only a trusted President can do that.

A high and sustained rate of inflation, like the present one, is always a matter of much more than narrow economics. It is a public judgment on government, indicating insecurity and anxiety. It is a warning of a loosening of the glue that holds a society together. As people conclude, privately and individually, that they are going to have to save themselves as best they can, a bad trend gets steadily worse. The Federal Reserve Board fears that it will get no support from the rest of the government, and it takes the interest rates to the highest level in our modern history. Businessmen fear that their costs will keep soaring, and they try to protect themselves by price increases that anticipate the worst possibilities. Labor unions fear that the cost of living will keep going up and they lunge for steadily larger wage raises to cover it. Asked why they anticipate higher prices, the

unions can reasonably point to the inordinate interest rates. The process is circular. The question for the new administration is how to break the circle.

The first move for Mr. Ford is to open a conversation with the labor unions. The coming round of contract negotiations are going to have an effect far out of proportion to the numbers of workers directly involved. The dramatic upward swing in pay since April, when the controls expired, is an ominous forewarning of what will happen if matters are left to themselves. The next President might usefully ask the unions what it would take to keep the contract settlements down to a reasonable level. The answer is fairly clear. The AFL-CIO executive council, meeting earlier this week in Chicago, delivered a sharp and persuasive denunciation of the damage that the high interest rates are doing to the country. These rates are not only contributing directly to higher prices, the council argued, but depressing productivity and pushing the housing industry toward a severe depression.

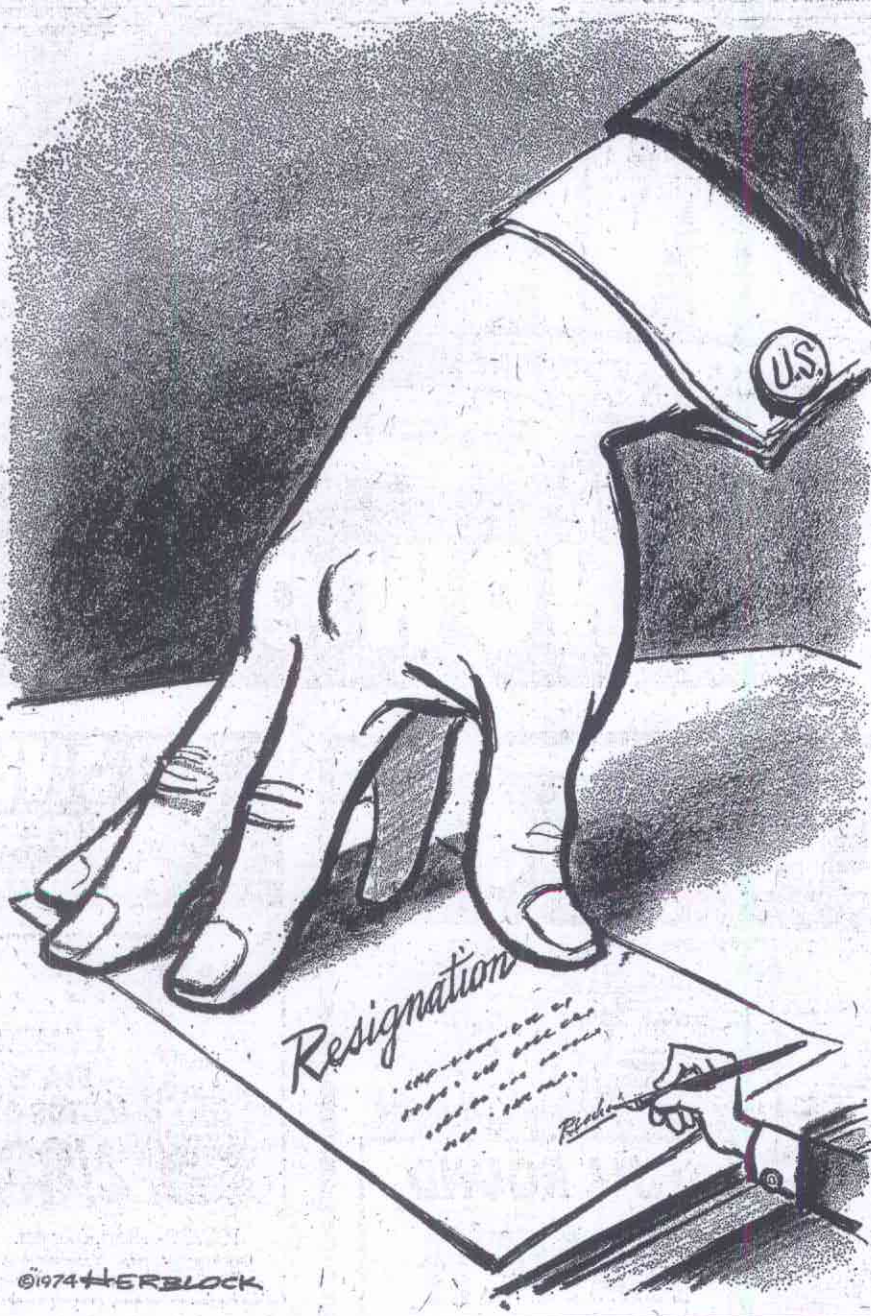
If Mr. Ford can extract a conditional pledge from the unions to limit their wage demands, he can then go back to Dr. Arthur Burns at the Federal Reserve Board to talk seriously about lower rates. If interest rates begin to move down and there is evidence of moderation in wage settlements, it then becomes risky for businessmen to keep raising prices. In some cases—the oil industry, for instance—the President will need to remind Congress of its neglected responsibilities to end the most notorious of the tax subsidies and demonstrate that a few lucky companies are not going to be permitted to enrich themselves at the expense of everyone else.

The American economy is now running sufficiently close to its limits that each new misfortune and setback sets off new waves of anxiety and inflation. In past years, the effects of a midwestern drought would have been largely absorbed by the nation's huge stocks of grain and corn. But now those stocks are very low, and the shortfall of rain this summer is registered in the daily rises in the prices of food. Mr. Ford cannot promise the country that there will be no further disappointments and reverses—nor should he try to promise anything of the sort. The time is long past for empty optimism. Americans are ready to carry great burdens in the public interest, if they believe that those burdens are fairly distributed. A President cannot say that inflation will be over tomorrow. He cannot say with any assurance when it will end. But he can offer to do his level best to see that its costs lie equitably throughout the country as it slowly diminishes. That is now Mr. Ford's job.

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## For the Record

*From remarks by Rep. James Mann (D-S.C.) during House Judiciary Committee debate on articles of impeachment, July 29:*

You know, Americans reverence their President, and rightly they should because they know that by his oath he is supposed to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution, to enforce the Bill of Rights, which is their heritage, your rights and mine, whether I am a Democrat or a Republican, rich or poor, and that he will see that the laws are faithfully executed and that the individual liberties of each of us is protected, whether President or pauper.

Now, this committee has spent 10 weeks reviewing the evidence, and it is not fair to you in these sessions to pull the tidbits out on one side or the other. There is no way that you can bring yourself in the position that we are in with the knowledge of the facts that we have. I wish you could. As your representatives, we are charged with determining that truth, and although we have laid something on the table during these past three or four days, and having sat here during these three or four days I have had people ask questions about what the evidence was, and I would have been wondering if maybe they were here with me, because it is on that evidence that each of us is making our decision, and as we seek a way to escape that decision, we cannot escape that still, small voice . . . .

And in this situation, as we look at how the office of the Presidency has been served by an individual, I share the remarks of George Danielson that it is not the Presidency that is in jeopardy from us. We would strive to strengthen and protect the Presidency. But, if there be no accountability, another President will feel free to do as he chooses. But, the next time there may be no watchman in the night.

David S. Broder

## The Country He Leaves Behind...

Now that it is over, now that the long ordeal has ended for the man and the nation, now that the angry emotions have been vented into the vacuum created by his departure, what one can feel is compassion for Richard Nixon and renewed confidence in the country he left behind.

He wanted so much to be President. The office tantalized and terrified him for 13 years before it came into his possession. And like any passion too long nurtured before it was fulfilled, it turned into something monstrous, something he could not control.

Had Dwight Eisenhower's heart not been so strong when that first severe coronary attack came in 1955; had Richard Nixon, then 42, unembittered and awed by his fortune, become President accidentally, he might have made something quite different of it, for those were simpler times and his was a less convoluted character.

His mentors then were men like Bryce Harlow, Bill Rogers and Jim Mitchell, the genial, decent Secretary of Labor. The cynical, secretive men like John Mitchell had not then even entered Nixon's life. His chief of staff was Bob Finch, not Bob Haldeman.

But that was not to be, and in the 13 years before the presidency was his, he suffered a series of humiliations that would have embittered and perhaps destroyed most men: the abortive "dump Nixon" drive of 1956, undertaken with Eisenhower's tacit blessing; his President's tactless "give me a week and I'll think of one" remark about Nixon's contributions to the Eisenhower administration record; the dictated surrender to Nelson Rockefeller at the "Fifth Avenue Summit"; the first debate; the heartbreakingly nar-

row and clouded loss to John Kennedy; the defeat in the California governorship race in 1962; the "last press conference," and its permanently embittering effects on his relations with the press; the fiasco of his self-promoted stop-Goldwater effort at the 1964 Governor's Conference.

All this and much more—the thousands of petty, personal slights that came to him as he wandered from Washington to California to New York and around the world, seeking another chance—he carried with him when he finally came to the Oval Office.

What we now understand is that someone who craves presidential power as much as Richard Nixon did may not be trusted with its possession; but most of us did not know it then, in 1968, and he may not have known it either. Those of us in the press who had witnessed the long saga were admiring of the personal tenacity and technique which marked his climb back from political ruin to the presidency. Only later, when it was too late, did most of us come to question whether the rigid self-discipline and the secretiveness that surrounded it were healthy in a President.

There is no blinking or condoning the abuse of power that took place in his presidency, or, what is almost worse, his cynical misuse of people and degradation of institutions. But in the end, Richard Nixon himself came to understand that he had irreparably lost the confidence of the people who had elected him and he relinquished what he had paid such a price to obtain.

Like Lyndon Johnson before him, he came—through pain—to accept that the presidency belongs to the people, not to any individual, and that when

a President cannot lead, he must stand aside.

Because the American people in their mute strength, were able to bring this message home twice in six years to even their most powerful and insulated elected representative, American democracy has not only survived this ordeal but been vindicated.

The constitutional process did not fail us, and new leadership will soon be lawfully installed. The next President is one of us—with the simplicity and openness and honesty we like to think we possess as a people, and also with the limitations of wisdom and foresight which our history shows to be typically American.

He is, as he reminded us not so long ago, a Ford, not a Lincoln, but he is, like Lincoln, aware of the distinction between adversaries and enemies, and that is no small thing.

His presidency is as unexpected to him as it is to us, and, for that very reason, he may remember that it is circumstance and accident, not special virtue or wisdom, that has given that power, which belongs to the people, temporarily into his hands.

We have—Gerald Ford right along with the rest of us—been through a dreadful passage in the decade since John Kennedy was murdered, and none of us has been left unscarred.

But the people have not wavered, or buckled, or fled the responsibilities of freedom, or abandoned their faith in the destiny of this democracy. On the contrary, they have, under agonizing circumstances, proved themselves worthy of their heritage. And the pain they have suffered—Richard Nixon, not least—may be worth the price, if it reinforces the confidence vindicated in the cardinal principle of this Republic: Trust the people.

Stephen S. Rosenfeld

## ... And the Foreign Challenges Ahead

The notion is current that, as a result of Richard Nixon's departure from the White House, we will somehow have an easier time of it in the world. But unhappily, this doesn't necessarily track at all.

It is one thing to note that Watergate and the prospect of losing office have distracted Mr. Nixon, undermined his credibility among foreigners as well as Americans, and prevented him from mustering the requisite support in the bureaucracy, the Congress and the country to carry his foreign policy forward. The stalemates in strategic arms talks with the Russians and in trade legislation can fairly be attributed, in considerable part, to the President's political woes. Many other matters large and small have been stacked up at his desk.

Secretary of State Henry Kissinger said Tuesday, "When questions of peace or war are considered, no foreign government should have any doubts about the way in which foreign policy will be conducted." But unless he meant that a few close aides were discreetly conducting an interregnum, it meant little. In a real sense, "questions of peace or war" are the easiest for a beleaguered President; a sense of common peril fills the gap where leadership would be otherwise. Mr. Nixon's effectiveness during the Mideast war last fall demonstrates the point.

It is quite another thing to claim, however, that the departure of the President will take up the international slack. If Gerald Ford has credibility, then he lacks experience, expertise or even a strong interest in foreign affairs. Unlike Richard Nixon, he has never had a defined, if debatable, world view. He does not project a sense of realizing how difficult and painful the choices in foreign policy are. And his honeymoon can't last long.

Mr. Ford has, to be sure, Henry Kissinger, no small asset. But in current international conditions, whether an aide's talent and legend can be an ade-

quate substitute for his chief's own performance is an open question. Such precedents as there are for weak Presidents and strong Secretaries are not very encouraging.

It needs also to be asked whether events or popular pressure or Mr. Ford's own evolving concept of how the presidency should be conducted might not lead him to assert himself personally in foreign affairs in a way that none of us can contemplate at this time. Mr. Nixon's big vote in 1972 and George McGovern's small vote are evidence enough of the American people's craving for a forceful international president. Yet Gerald Ford must know that any initiative of his own will be suspect as the product of his own untutored ambition.

It is conceivable that in not too long a time, the widely remarked weakness of the Nixon presidency in its terminal stages may loom less large than its earlier achievements in international affairs, however incomplete they were.

Mr. Ford's relationship with the other principal national security officer of the Nixon administration, Defense Secretary James Schlesinger, also needs to be weighed. He indicated some months ago that he was so dissatisfied with the way Schlesinger was handling Vietnam aid in Congress that he would let him go. His complaint seemed narrow and prideful, hardly a satisfactory basis in itself for making such an important decision.

Meanwhile, it should be apparent that no change at the White House will reduce the size and complexity of the problems with which the President and the country must deal—for all that Mr. Ford's elevation will doubtless trigger a hail of appeals for bipartisanship and rallying around.

If the Russians toyed with the possibility of exploiting one politically vulnerable President, they will be no less ready to see if another politically weak President—a man presumably eager to build a foreign policy record of his own to run on in 1976—can also be ex-

ploited. I don't say it will happen, but hardball is the name of the game.

To judge by the poor results of Mr. Ford's own vice presidential efforts to coax more Vietnam aid from Congress—supposedly an area of his special prowess—he has no magical way to bend the legislature on the issues on which congressional support is crucial to executive policy.

As for crisis management, one must wait and see. Unlike Mr. Nixon, Mr. Ford has no obsession with the personal qualities needed for passages of high international tension. He strikes me as sane and level-headed. But we as citizens do not have to apologize for wondering how each new Chief Executive will stand up under the intense and unique pressures of nuclear decision-making.

In brief, I do not think that in foreign policy terms, Gerald Ford will necessarily be a welcome deliverance. Two years of coping and coasting, while waiting for the American people to give a newly elected President a mandate of his own, may be about the best one can expect. Any effort by him to do much more could just enhance the general nervousness. No one who has a healthy respect for the pace of events and the heat on the White House can contemplate this prospect with ease.