

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Mr. Nixon's Resignation (Cont.)

Now More Than Ever

Let us note well the true crime forcing Richard Nixon out of office—the same crime for which Andrew Johnson was impeached: arrogance. Perhaps his predecessors erred in different or similar ways, but perhaps his errors were greater in scope and magnitude, as our society has also swelled in scope and magnitude. The morbidity of his administration must be found, however, not in the precise what or how, but in his presumption and incremental flagrancy.

American society seems to have not only a tolerance but an appetite for the outrageous, particularly if couched in fervor. The tragedy is not that we have lost a leader, nor that we have had an errant leader, but that our tolerance persisted for so long, that we brooked cynical politics, and that we only demanded an end when some mystical point of saturation was reached, long after the errors were committed. Soon the punishment, obscurity, will fit the crime.

But none of the prosecutors nor witnesses, Congress, the press, the American people are immune from arrogance. Now, more than ever before, we are vulnerable to our own excesses of righteous fervor, confidence in our power, and eventually the outrageous. Let us remember how long it has taken for us to bring judgment to bear—and that all of the means and mechanisms of governmental and social arrogance still exist.

PRISCILLA COIT MURPHY.
Alexandria.

Hounded Out?

Wherever I turn in the past two days I hear defenders of Nixon proclaiming that he has been hounded out of office, that he did not do anything seriously wrong—nothing that others do not do too—and finally that "All politicians are crooked. Everybody knows that."

So, we are asked to believe that all politicians are crooked and obviously, we should allow them to continue to be so. We are just plain mean to have rocked Nixon's boat.

What a dreadful reflection on us and our morals. Can we really survive such thinking?

AMELIA PERAZICH.
Washington.



Clemency for All

Perhaps President Ford might be encouraged to offer clemency to Mr. Nixon along with clemency for draft dodgers. Mercy must be democratic or it will be humbug.

SUSAN M. GIBSON.
Arlington.

Thanks the Press

It is indeed unfortunate that the press has taken so much criticism for the events of recent days. Instead of criticism, the news media deserve praise for following through with their suspicions and helping resolve these tragic events. I thank you for caring and doing a job well done.

MRS. C. PELLOCK.
Hagerstown.

Goodbye to the Press

As President Richard Nixon departs this capital city, I should like the opportunity to say goodbye to certain elements of the press—the super self-righteous, unbelievably intrusive, malicious, vindictive, and graceless reporters who in years past have made the national scene more an international pig-pen of news and/or non-news. It is time for them, too, to resign—or, at least, give this country some time in which to build again a reasonable faith in itself.

I shall be especially glad to be rid of—if only for a couple of months—on-the-spot analyses of presidential speeches by sanctimonious, platitudinous—who cannot even pronounce 'heights,' much less reach them.

VICTORIA PEPYS.
Arlington.

Overriding Fact

President Nixon's resignation can only be seen as a just end to his scandal-filled administration. In one year, we have seen the resignations of the two highest officers in the executive branch of government, an unprecedented event in the history of our country. In 1972, almost 50 million people vested their faith in Nixon and Agnew, assuming that their leadership would be honest and forthright. The breach of that faith that we have witnessed is completely repugnant and demoralizing.

The people of the United States have been asked by various congressmen to feel compassion for Mr. Nixon on the basis that the pain which accompanied his decision to resign is ample punishment for the wrongs he has committed. I beg to differ. Granted that his foreign policy has been an extremely successful one, as is evidenced by the ending of the war in Vietnam, our improved relations with China and the move towards detente with Russia, and that these very remarkable achievements might form the foundation for a very cogent argument for immunity, the criminal acts to which Mr. Nixon has all but confessed override them. He has said that he knew about and participated in the Watergate coverup. He used the powers of

the presidency to facilitate his illegal activities and there can be no compassion for a man who has to give up that which he has abused. The faith and trust which the citizens of the United States had in Mr. Nixon was not shared by him. That he had to resort to deceit and trickery to assure his election and to hide it from all his constituents is testimony to that.

I do not think Richard Nixon should be granted any form of immunity.

ANDREW GARFINKEL

Bethesda.

What Next?

Now that The Washington Post has dispatched Richard Nixon with one-sided journalism what new crusade will The Post undertake? There are many of us out here who are honestly fearful since we know that the newspapers and broadcast stations have become both completely invincible and wholly unaccountable for their actions. Will it be nuclear power? Or will The Post somehow decide that the farmers are responsible for our high food prices? You can also step up your one-sided gun crusade or stop a highway somewhere.

It will be a while before you have to decide who will be the next President or who will be our local "elected" officials, so you better jump onto something quickly. Whatever you decide you will be right, of course, you always are, but you know you might try a novel approach for a change. You just might try to show both sides. I don't mean the usual ploy of dredging up some way-out spokesman for the other side, I mean some real down to earth honest journalism. Try it! You might not be able to have your way but it might help us to pick out the truth of the issue.

DANIEL N. SCHMOKER,
Springfield, Va.

Relent?

So, in about three months you will start publishing stories assessing "Jerry Ford's first 100 days."

Don't you guys ever relent?

Don't, you guys, ever relent!

CARL A. EIFERT

Alexandria.

Crucifixion

May The Washington Post congratulate itself with a pat on the back for its completion of the crucifixion of President Nixon. I hope you are satisfied.

TAMI POWSTENKO

Bethany Beach, Del.

Enmity

I want you to know of my undying enmity for the principal part your publication played in weakening the independency of the presidency by your endless attacks upon Mr. Nixon. My only way to express this enmity, so far has been to cease reading your publication and to cease placing in it the advertising for my real estate brokerage agency.

May a rabid camel sit on your lap and nibble your ear.

ELIOT P. Y. POWELL

Annapolis.

Equality of the Law

In view of Mr. Nixon's statement to the American people that he was resigning as President because he had committed a few errors in judgment and had lost his power base in the Congress, I think it all the more important that the judicial process go forward and sweep this matter clean. Mr. Nixon should have this opportunity to vindicate himself. And we, the people should be given the assurance that the rule of law applies equally to all.

EMERSON WALDMAN,
Charlottesville.

'We Must Not Now Succumb to Petty Retribution'

The week of President Nixon's abdication saw the Dow Jones Index rise sharply. On the evening of August 8th, gawking, grinning crowds pressed against the wrought iron fence of the White House. The aimless and disjointed television coverage prior to the 9 o'clock show reminded one of those interminable countdowns at Cape Canaveral *nee* Kennedy *nee* Canaveral back when we got excited about such things throughout it all was the quiet and sometimes raucously explicit relief that finally the country would be rid of President Nixon.

We are a people much attached to our own peculiar kind of cargo cult. Ever present, just over the horizon, lies utopia—if only the present would get out of our way. World War I promised an end to all wars. If we could rid ourselves of Hoover, the depression would vanish. Later, we clutched to the myth that the "savings" from getting out of Vietnam would eliminate poverty, litter, and/or halitosis. Now we rush to embrace our newest vision,

that America will be the better for ridding itself of Richard Nixon.

Before totally immersing ourselves in our hopes of the coming millennium, we might remember the kind of nation that we were when we called Richard Nixon back from seclusion. Our cities were wrapped in a pall of smoke; our campuses were in the hands of a totalitarian radical movement. Abroad, our conscripted poor died in a seemingly endless war. Stewart Alsop and others worried about the coming-apart of America. Richard Nixon was not unknown to us then. He was no mysterious quantity. Richard Nixon was the quintessential cold warrior, the old Red-baiter, the ultimate anathema to the ill-defined but omnipresent liberal establishment. Quite aware, we hired a man to clean a reeking septic tank of our own making and to our dismay, we found that his odor was unbearable in our livingrooms.

Now, Richard Nixon goes to California to join Patty Hearst in exile—both refugees by the actions they have

taken to remedy the ills they perceived in our society. Will this departure quiet the insatiable animal of presidential inquisition loosed under Lyndon Johnson and now encouraged by the fate of his successor? Will inflation disappear and unemployment drop? Will we quickly become disenchanted with the inability of our new messiah to conjure away our national ills?

America passes by the pathetic and shattered remains of Richard Nixon the public man. He will recede into the distance, a man once widely hated, frequently reviled, and finally, cast aside. The mark of our own national grace and nobility will be in our treatment of the person of Richard Nixon as he seeks shelter in private life. We must not now succumb to petty retribution and give vent to spiteful revenge. Let Richard Nixon be, America, and get on with the painful business of growing up.

WILLIAM R. ANDREWS,

Fairfax.

'Let Us Not Forget What We Have So Bitterly Learned'

Richard Nixon's farewell address threatens to cause the American people to lose sight of the meaning of this tragic event. Mr. Nixon attributed his resignation to the erosion of his political base (without ever suggesting why this happened); he devoted the major portion of his speech to claims of great ideals and achievements of his ill-starred presidency. The television comment which followed incredibly eulogized the former President in heroic terms.

What a colossal loss of perspective! Mr. Nixon was driven from office because it had become the near unanimous consensus that he was guilty of high crimes justifying the disgrace of impeachment. Resignation was the form, not the substance of his departure. His great "courage" in resigning, as some characterized it, served to preserve his financial estate. President Ford's reference to Mr. Nixon's "sacrifice" in resigning is ludicrous. If he didn't resign, it is clear the Senate would have convicted him.

These mischaracterizations, this unthinking and sloppy sentimentality, dangerously confuse us. It has become apparent from the evidence, so tenaciously withheld by Mr. Nixon for more than a year (even from his own counsel), that he has consistently deceived those involved in the legal process and the American people. His administration verged on a tyrannical misuse of power. He was faithless to this trust, and he miserved his country. The "errors of judgment" he so cautiously conceded in his address, were undertaken with a view to preserve his political life, not to further the national interest. For us to accept Mr. Nixon's farewell deceit that he acted only in the national interest, is to condemn us to the risk of seeing it all happen again.

Mr. Nixon leaves office, having demeaned it. He is an unindicted co-conspirator. He villified our democratic institutions, which, fortunately, were

stronger than he calculated. He sought to squelch a free press, particularly The Post, which, too, was more vigorous than he suspected. It is foolhardy to allow our understandable sentiment and longing to surmount the Watergate travail to obscure the facts.

Of course, there is a large element of personal tragedy in Mr. Nixon's demise. There is no reason to intensify that; he is entitled to be spared any vindictiveness. But let us not, in our personal generosity to the man and his family, forget what we have so bitterly learned and endured these last two cruel years. It was a sense of decency on the part of the American people that became outraged at high crimes and tyranny in the highest office that compelled this forced resignation. Let not that same sense of decency be exploited to convert this exorcism into a hero's farewell.

DONALD E. SCHWARTZ,

Professor of Law,
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Washington.