

11

Nixon made and there were made for him a long series of promises to be getting the "truth" and "all the fact" to the people, for all the world as though there were or could have been any impediment. There was nothing to keep Nixon from disclosing anything he wanted to disclose. The only thing that kept this "truth" from coming out is that Nixon saw to it to the degree he could that it did not and could not.

This ploy began with the naive claim that he, personally, need to know this evanescent truth. That is the thrust of his statement of April 17, 1973. Gradually it developed into a repeated promise to tell all, coupled with another promise, that the telling of all would "clear" him.

It was immediately obvious that whatever he said, judge by Mitchell's dictum of judging him by his acts, not his words, Nixon was simultaneously doing all within his power to let any of this "truth" out. The first of these obvious ways, aside from his personal silence when he could have spoken freely, was his insistence that nobody be granted immunity to testify without self-incrimination. This is the time-honored prosecutorial method: get the small-fry to talk, under immunity, and thus get the evidence against the big fish. When Nixon was asking Congress for the 1969 crime bill he described this right to grant immunity as a means "to strike at the leadership of organized crime," not just its lower echelons. (~~Wp 4/29/73~~)

But for months there was this monotonous repetition that Nixon would tell all and all would make him clean.

Somehow, the papers avoided tabulating each of these repeated and unkept promises, usually in the same words. As late as December 7, 1973, Earl Warren was saying for him, as Carroll Kilpatrick wrote in the next day's Washington Post, "that all matters 'will be cleared up completely' when all the facts are made known.

By then, with a year and a half in which to do it, Nixon still had not made "all the facts" known.

But unblushingly Warren did say still again that it was Nixon's intention "to disclose to the public all the pertinent information surrounding various charges against him and members of his family."

It is to wonder if the delay was because of the reluctance of the ghost of Checkers to rise from the grave. Or if the moths had done in Pat's "Republican cloth coat" because the millionaire President's wife had no need for it.

Neither Nixon nor Warren embarrass easily, so there was also this:

"The President wants to clear up any doubts that remain" and "He will continue to pursue that course, and we believe it will be successful."

"That course" was not pursued. Each time Nixon made a statement it was promptly proven false. One of the more damaging, at the beginning of what was, with the subtlety of Madison Avenue West, dubbed "Operation Candor, was his solemn promise to the convention of Republican governors in Memphis on November 20, less than a month earlier, that there were no more "bombshells." When he said this he knew that some of his fabled secret tapes had been destroyed. Others just did not exist. And the day after that newest in his series of solemn promises was proven false the very next day when his lawyers admitted in court that this tape had been erased.

Through all those long and painful months, Nixon kept promising to tell all, told only what was not true, and then pretended that none of this had happened while simultaneously pretending that some mysterious cabal of imagined enemies and antagonistic press conspired to prevent his speaking and dispatched gremlins into his White House to issue false financial accounting, spurious explanations that explained nothing and in cussed general were out to get and ruin this man of unimpeachable honor and integrity and to keep him from that never-explained course to which he was elected and remained dedicated.

The one who never erred was Nixon. Ask him. The one who never spoke falsely is the one who never spoke any other way. And it was always this paranoid assumption that it was all the fault of these others.

Like the press, the ownerships of which was 95% behind him.

And the politicians, who had cowed in fear all those months and from that fear had not nothing more than repeat what had been leaked and the little more, so far less than all, that saving their own faces required.

The one clear conspiracy was to protect Nixon.