

At last, if inadequately and incompletely while for what it is passionately, the Post tries to put what has been called the Watergate into perspective. Where it falls most short (aside from examining its own record on so many vital issues) is not not saying the obvious, that from the time social progress became a strong effort in this country those who have by any convenient expedient opposed it have always said they stood for "the system" and were and remain, in fact, subversive to the system while those who sought progress, including the Communists, actually were attempting to givin !the system" viability.

It falls far short in isolating the ITT stink. This is merely the one that got attention. It is typical and permeating. Among the obvious newsworthy items the Post has ignored is the misuse of the judicial process by the administration, against "the system" and as corrupt as could be.

Nixon typifies those who built careers by blending corruption, personal, political and financial, with loud bleatings about his defense of "the system" and became most subversive of that system. Those who follow him seem to be largely those who would emulate. Yet there is an unreality to all of it. These people actually still BELIEVE. An example is the letter from the former Creep director of publications who at this late date still pretends that none of it happened and that it is all some kind of persecution of a truly glorious leader. HW 3/25/73

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The Post's "Real Concern"

Now that Rowland Evans and Robert Novak have had their say on "Stretching the Doctrine of Executive Privilege," [March 21 Post column], I finally realize where those of us who uphold this presidential right have gone wrong.

It is now clearly evident that the real concern, of Post editorial writers and syndicated columnists who oppose the President's action, is not the President's *right* to evoke the privilege but the harm he is doing to *himself* by doing so.

This is terribly reassuring. For a while, there, it really looked as though The Post was piqued because evocation of the privilege prevents a parade of White House people before those Hill witch-hunters who provide The Post with front page stories and juicy editorial filler on slow news days.

It is also very decent to worry about the President's "political danger," his "tenuous position," and the resultant "increase (of) speculation about White House Watergate involvement." Surely, if there were no political dangers in the presidency; no presidential positions that were tenuous; and nothing that gave rise to speculation—Rowland & Robert & Katherine & Phillip would have to play to an empty house.

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The System—And Its Enemies Within

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A few years ago, when students on various campuses and blacks in many big cities were promoting, in word and deed, violence as a method of redressing their grievances against this nation's political system, we regarded their doctrine as misguided—and we still do. It is not an incipient campus uprising or big city conflagration which brings this back to mind, but rather the development which occurred in Judge John J. Sirica's courtroom Friday morning. For we speak now not as resolute pursuers of the Watergate story over the past several months, but rather as true believers in the rightness and efficacy—for all its imperfections—of the American political system. And those of us who continue to hold that particular configuration of political and judicial arrangements dear, can only feel betrayed by the information that has been issuing forth over the past few weeks in Washington concerning the manner in which the Nixon administration is abusing the system itself, cheapening and endangering it. That, more than the light it sheds on specific details of the Watergate case itself, is the significance of James McCord's letter to Judge Sirica.

Mr. McCord, former security chief for the Committee to Re-Elect the President and a man who was found inside the Democrats' Watergate headquarters during the burglary last spring and convicted for his crimes in January, wrote a letter to Judge Sirica shortly before he was to be sentenced. From it, we learn:

- That "political pressure" was brought on the defendants to "plead guilty and remain silent";
- That his family has expressed "fear for my life if I disclose knowledge of the facts in this matter";
- That "perjury occurred during the trial in matters highly material to the very structure, orientation and impact of the government's case";
- That others were involved in the episode who "were not identified during the trial when they could have been by those testifying."

Mr. McCord said that he was forwarding this letter to the judge "in the interests of justice, and in the interests of restoring faith in the criminal justice system, which faith has been severely damaged in this case."

Well, there is certainly a lot of restoring to be done.

For even as we have heard Mr. McCord's testimony to the effect that the judicial process has been perverted by the politicians in the matter for which he was on trial, we have been hearing further evidence that the disease is not contained. Witness the newest revelations of concern and activity at the highest levels of the Nixon administration with the rearrangement of the ITT case—all of which was roundly and publicly and shamelessly denied by the administration last spring. Witness the President's nominee to head the FBI, L. Patrick Gray III, acknowledging that the President's counsel, John Dean, "probably" lied to him last summer in a matter of serious moment in the Watergate investigation.

Contemplate everything you have tried to absorb over the past few weeks regarding the manner in which federal investigators and high administration officials have bent what you might have thought of as the inviolate procedures of our system of justice to their own personal and political interests. Contemplate Mr. McCord's anxieties: His family's fears for his life, he says, seem to him excessive—but he does believe that if he reveals what he knows "retaliatory measures will be taken against me, my family and my friends."

May we remind you that the culprits in all this are not Abbie Hoffman or Mark Rudd or Bobby Seale or Eldridge Cleaver? May we remind you that this series of grotesque events has been brought to you by the same wonderful people who brought you slogans about law-and-order and attacks on those who would not "work within the system" and pieties about standing up for what was "right about America"?

We raise these questions not because we are contemptuous of the principles which animate those slogans, but rather because we took them on faith, because we continue to place our trust in the right working of what others so contemptuously dismiss as "the system." Our point is that the enemies of that system, enemies who perhaps threaten it most, do not turn out to reside exclusively among the obstreperous or violent elements of our society. They reside in positions of great trust and responsibility within government itself. That is what is so disgraceful and so dispiriting about the latest news.