

Capitol Punishment

Shredding the Bill of Rights

By Art Buchwald 1/14/73

The only way to understand the issue of national security which Richard Nixon recently raised as his reason for employing his own super spies, is to put yourself in his place.

Pretend for a moment that you are President of the United States. Despite all your dreams and hopes for this country there are still people "out there" who are trying to "get" you. They could be students, blacks, congressmen, senators, newspapermen, labor leaders or just misguided souls who are trying to destroy the American way of life.

It is essential, if you are to be elected for a second term, to find out who your enemies are and what they're up to.

Unfortunately the Constitution of the United States with its archaic Bill of Rights does not provide the President with the weapons he needs to find out who is trying to keep him from being reelected.

Yet as President of the United States it is your duty to find out if there is a conspiracy to keep you from serving four more years, and to discover who is behind it. If some other political party took over the government, God knows what would happen to the country we all know and love.

So you do what any strong leader would do. You set up a unit in the White House to devote their full time to finding out who the traitors are.

The group would involve itself in wiretapping, bugging, reading mail and breaking and entering the offices and homes of those people who are seeking to take away your rightful place in history. It may be

against the law, but as President you have to deal with realities.

At first you authorize the CIA, FBI, Secret Service, National Security Agency and Justice Department to take over this illegal work. But when J. Edgar Hoover refuses to go along with the plan, you become angry and frustrated.

Here you are President of 200 million people, architect of a generation of peace, leader of the richest, most well-fed country that has ever walked the face of the earth, and they won't even let you do a little bugging and burglary on the side.

So you say, "Nuts to Hoover. I'll hire my own plumbers to do the job."

You tell your staff to set it up, but keep your name out of it. You also instruct them not to tell you what they're doing in case the plan goes awry. But at the same time you want to know the names of those who are out to get you.

Once the plumbers go into operation you discover your wildest fears about national security are true. There is a plot to unseat you as President, planned and financed by the Democratic Party. You also discover there is another plot by Alabama's Gov. George Wallace to do the same thing. Never has the country been in worse danger.

You discover through intelligence that the Democrats have set Nov. 7, 1972, as the day they plan to overthrow your government.

You have no choice but to get the plumbers to step up their activities.

Everything is going swell, but then through rank stupidity which you have nothing to do with, some of your plumbers are caught at the Watergate. Now you have a real problem. You can either reveal to the nation why you set up the plumbers unit in the first place, or you can tell your staff to keep the White House out of it.

For national security reasons you choose the latter, hoping for the good of the country Watergate will go away. But because of a prying judge and an irresponsible press the story comes out.

It really gets you mad.

With new revelations coming out every day you are faced with three choices: a) resign; b) wait for impeachment; c) tough it out.

If you were President of the United States what would you do?