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# CONDUCT OF ASSOCIATE JUSTICE DOUGLAS

Speech in the House of Representatives by Republican Leader Gerald R. Ford of Michigan

Mr. GERALD R. FORD. Mr. Speaker, last May 8 I joined with the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. TAFT) in introducing H.R. 11109, a bill requiring financial disclosure by members of the Federal judiciary. This was amid the allegations swirling around Mr. Justice Fortas. Before and since, other Members of this body have proposed legislation of similar intent. To the best of my knowledge, all of them lie dormant in the Committee on the Judiciary where they were referred.

On March 19 the U.S. Judicial Conference announced the adoption of new ethical standards on outside earnings and conflict of interest. They were described as somewhat watered down from the strict proposals of former Chief Justice Warren at the time of the Fortas affair. In any event, they are not binding upon the Supreme Court.

Neither are the 36-year-old Canons of Judicial Ethics of the American Bar Association, among which are these:

Canon 4. *Avoidance of Impropriety.* A judge's official conduct should be free from impropriety and the appearance of impropriety; he should avoid infractions of law; and his personal behavior, not only upon the Bench and in the performance of judicial duties, but also in his everyday life, should be beyond reproach.

Canon 24. *Inconsistent Obligations.* A judge should not accept inconsistent duties; nor incur obligations, pecuniary or otherwise, which will in any way interfere or appear to interfere with his devotion to the expeditious and proper administration of his official function.

Canon 31. *Private Law Practice.* In many states the practice of law by one holding judicial position is forbidden . . . If forbidden to practice law, he should refrain from accepting *any* professional employment while in office.

Following the public disclosure last year of the extrajudicial activities and moonlighting employment of Justices Fortas and Douglas, which resulted in the resignation from the Supreme Bench of Mr. Justice Fortas but not of Mr. Justice Douglas, I received literally hundreds of inquiries and protests from concerned citizens and colleagues.

In response to this evident interest I quietly undertook a study of both the law of impeachment and the facts about the behavior of Mr. Justice Douglas. I assured inquirers that I would make my findings known at the appropriate time. That preliminary report is now ready.

Let me say by way of preface that I am a lawyer, admitted to the bar of the U.S. Supreme Court. I have the most profound respect for the U.S. Supreme Court. I would never advocate action against a member of that Court because of his political philosophy or the legal opinions which he contributes to the decisions of the Court. Mr. Justice Douglas has been criticized for his liberal opinions and because he granted stays of execution to the convicted spies, the Rosenbergs, who stole the atomic bomb for the Soviet Union. Probably I would disagree, were I on the bench, with most of Mr. Justice Douglas' views, such as his defense of the filthy film, "I Am Curious (Yellow)." But a judge's right to his legal views, assuming they are not improperly influenced or corrupted, is fundamental to our system of justice.

I should say also that I have no personal feeling toward Mr. Justice Douglas. His private life, to the degree that it does not bring the Supreme Court into disrepute, is his own business. One does not need to be an ardent admirer of any judge or justice, or an advocate of his life style, to acknowledge his right to be elevated to or remain on the bench.

We have heard a great deal of discussion recently about the qualifications which a person should be required to possess to be elevated to the U.S. Supreme Court. There has not been sufficient consideration given, in my judgment, to the qualifications which a person should possess to remain upon the U.S. Supreme Court.

For, contrary to a widepsread misconception, Federal judges and the Justices of the Supreme Court are not appointed for life. The Founding Fathers would have been the last to make such a mistake; the American Revolution was waged against an hereditary monarchy in which the King always had a life term and, as English history bloodily demonstrated, could only be removed from office by the headsman's ax or the assassin's dagger.

No, the Constitution does not guarantee a lifetime of power and authority to any public official. The terms of Members of the House are fixed at 2 years; of the President and Vice President at 4; of U.S. Senators at 6. Members of the Federal judiciary hold their offices only "during good behaviour."

Let me read the first section of article III of the Constitution in full:

> The judicial power of the United States shall be vested in one supreme Court, and in such inferior Courts as the Congress may from time to time ordain and establish. The Judges, both of the supreme and inferior Courts, shall hold their Offices *during good Behaviour*, and shall, at stated Times, receive for their Services, a Compensation, which shall not be diminished during their Continuance in Office.

The clause dealing with the compensation of Federal judges, which incidentally we raised last year to $60,000 for Associate Justices of the Supreme Court, suggests that their "continuance in office" is indeed limited. The provision that it may not be decreased prevents the legislative or executive branches from unduly influencing the judiciary by cutting judges' pay, and suggests that even in those bygone days the income of jurists was a highly sensitive matter.

To me the Constitution is perfectly clear about the tenure, or term of office, of all Federal judges—it is "during good behaviour." It is implicit in this that when behaviour ceases to be good, the right to hold judicial office ceases also. Thus, we come quickly to the central question: What constitutes "good behaviour" or, conversely, ungood or disqualifying behaviour?

The words employed by the Framers of the Constitution were, as the proceedings of the Convention detail, chosen with exceedingly great care and precision. Note, for example, the word "behaviour." It relates to action, not merely to thoughts or opinions; further, it refers not to a single act but to a pattern or continuing sequence of action. We cannot and should not remove a Federal judge for the legal views he holds—this would be as contemptible as to exclude him from serving on the Supreme Court for his ideology or past decisions. Nor should we remove him for a minor or isolated mistake—this does not constitute behaviour in the common meaning.

What we should scrutinize in sitting Judges is their continuing pattern of action, their behaviour. The Constitution does not demand that it be "exemplary" or "perfect." But it does have to be "good."

Naturally, there must be orderly procedure for determining whether or not a Federal judge's behaviour is good. The courts, arbiters in most such questions of judgment, cannot judge themselves. So the Founding Fathers vested this ultimate power where the ultimate sovereignty of our system is most directly reflected—in the Congress, in the elected Representatives of the people and of the States.

In this seldom-used procedure, called impeachment, the legislative branch exercises both executive and judicial functions. The roles of the two bodies differ dramatically. The House serves as prosecutor and grand jury; the Senate serves as judge and trial jury.

Article I of the Constitution has this to say about the impeachment process:

> The House of Representatives—shall have the sole power of Impeachment.
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> The Senate shall have the sole Power to try all Impeachments. When sitting for that Purpose, they shall be on Oath or Affirmation. When the President of the United States is tried, the Chief Justice shall preside: And no Person shall be convicted without the Concurrence of two-thirds of the Members present.

Article II, dealing with the executive branch, states in section 4:

> The President, Vice President, and all civil Officers of the United States, shall be removed from office on impeachment for, and conviction of, Treason, Bribery or other high crimes and misdemeanors.

This has been the most controversial of the constitutional references to the impeachment process. No concensus exists as to whether, in the case of Federal judges, impeachment must depend upon conviction of one of the two specified crimes of treason or bribery or be within the nebulous category of "other high crimes and misdemeanors." There are pages upon pages of learned argument whether the adjective "high" modifies "misdmeanors" as well as "crimes," and over what, indeed, constitutes a "high misdemeanor."

In my view, one of the specific or general offenses cited in article II is required for removal of the indirectly elected President and Vice President and all appointed civil officers of the executive branch of the Federal Government, whatever their terms of office. But in the case of members of the judicial branch, Federal judges and Justices, I believe an additional and much stricter requirement is imposed by article II, namely, "good behaviour."

Finally, and this is a most significant provision, article I of the Constitution specifies:

> Judgment in Cases of Impeachment shall not extend further than to removal from Office, and disqualification to hold and enjoy any office of honor, Trust or Profit under the United States: but the Party convicted shall nevertheless be liable and subject to Indictment, Trial, Judgment and Punishment, according to Law.