

Sadness in Mid-America

MY home town of Greenfield, Iowa, is still a pretty good place from which to look back at the White House now in its season of anguish. The village is rich in nothing so much as its black soil and enduring common sense. It is a cross section of very little except deep human feeling. Slow to anger, slow to forgive, profoundly humble from living on the unrelenting prairie, the people of Greenfield are disturbed by Richard Nixon's presidency.



The impact of the new Watergate revelations is felt. But there is more. The people who stop now around the square in the first warm sun of spring seem to teeter between a quiet revulsion and a kind of muted tolerance. They still hope for the best. They don't want the President to be disgraced. They don't want Richard Nixon to fail. It is Nixon's own abuse of this special grace which they hold out to him that baffles and disappoints them the most.

Watergate by itself means almost nothing—not even the new revelations about White House aides and former Attorney General John Mitchell. Nixon's effort to cover it up for ten months, however, means everything. His ending of the American involvement in Viet Nam is praiseworthy. His continued bombing in Cambodia and Laos seems senseless. His cutting of small domestic programs that affect the people is understandable. His reluctance to rein in defense spending and what is often seen as his toadying to millionaires and corporate giants are discouraging.

His urge to enlarge his power and win his way over his adversaries in the press and Congress is nothing new in human affairs. But his disregard for tradition and good manners, his indifference to humans or institutions that get in his way, are appalling. His concern about high food prices is entirely reasonable. But allowing the blame to fall on farmers whose costs have risen astronomically over the past few years is unfair.

In short, almost all those singular contradictions which mark Nixon's presidency are perceived and now raise concern in this old Republican barony. The specifics of the issues are often not even known or understood, but a rule as old as the presidency still is operative. The most telling measure of a man's stewardship finally is himself, or at least the way he portrays himself.

We gathered one night, friends in mourning for a young mother killed by cancer, and the talk drifted from personal tragedy to national concern. The doctor summed up what many were thinking. "I don't know a man who does so much of what I want and whom I dislike so much," he said of Nixon. Time and again the theme was repeated: Why must the President pursue noble objectives in such underhanded ways?

"It's the stupidity of the thing that gets me," declared a retired druggist about Watergate. He was one of many who felt that nothing was quite so bad as the insult to the national intelligence, the degrading spectacle of their Government run by men with such small minds.

Not once but several times, a rhetorical ghost from more than ten years ago came back voluntarily. "How's Tricky Dicky?" asked a farmer in the lobby of the bank. A few hours later a small businessman shook his head more in sadness than in anger and remarked, "Well, old Tricky Dicky is in a mess."

Said a lawyer-farmer: "It seems that it is only the little guys who are allowed to fail and go broke under Nixon. The big guys are taken care of. They just go on, no matter what they do."

A printer turned his thumb down when Nixon's name came up. The justice of the peace wondered, "Does he care about anyone any longer?"

The indictments were almost total. Yet, they were for the most part delivered gently, almost with more hope that they would be dispelled soon rather than confirmed. "These people aren't against Nixon on everything," insisted the banker. We were back full circle to the thought that the President was violating those intangible dimensions of democracy like decency and concern and candor that he preached about all the time. Curiously, nobody but Nixon was blamed for Watergate. The names of White House staff members and Mitchell were of no importance. It all piled up at the door of the Oval Office.

Will such people forgive? Maybe, if the full truth really does come out. Last week the residue of a brutal winter was finally disappearing in Iowa. A warm wind caressed the long horizon, and a huge moon rose in a clear sky. Thoughts turned to the new growing season and the struggle ahead. There will not be much time for anything else for a few weeks. But memories are not erased by gimmickry and button-down flackery. Living on the land gives people a special sense of participation. "Who does Nixon think he is doing this to?" asked one man. "Who does he think this Government is? It's us."

The Big Shake-Up in

In Hong Kong, an agent of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency slips into a railroad yard and checks the wear on ball bearings of freight cars coming in from China to try to spot unusual troop movements. Meanwhile, another agent goes to the Hong Kong central market and buys a large order of calf's liver from animals raised in China to run a lab test for radioactive fallout.

In Eastern Europe, a CIA team tries to obtain a sample of a Communist party chief's urine. Purpose: to determine his state of health. The CIA did this successfully with Egypt's late King Farouk but failed recently with Yugoslavia's President Tito.

THESE are only a few of myriad missions that the CIA has performed around the world. The agency is also constantly accused of fantastic James Bondian exploits that more often than not it has nothing to do with. The fact is that no nation can any longer accept Secretary of State Henry Stimson's bland dictum of 1929 that "gentlemen do not read other people's mail." In a nuclear-ringed globe, intelligence is more vital than ever. Nor can a world power automatically limit itself to such a passive role as mere information gathering; trying to influence events may at times be necessary. But it can no longer be done with the crudity and arrogance displayed in the Bay of Pigs invasion of 1961, or the attempt with the International Telephone and Telegraph Corp. to sow economic chaos in Chile in 1970. To harness the CIA's excesses and yet utilize its immense capabilities for keeping the U.S. abreast of world developments, the Nixon Administration has ordered the greatest reorganization in the agency's 25-year history.

Cooperate. Reports TIME's Diplomatic Editor Jerrold Schecter, who has been keeping a watch on the CIA: "For the first time since its founding the CIA is undergoing a thorough shakeup of personnel and redirection of mission. The two main targets of U.S. intelligence activities continue to be the Soviet Union and China. But a rapidly developing *détente* with those countries has created different demands on the intelligence establishment. Along with traditional estimates of the missile and military capabilities of Communist countries, the White House is insisting on a new emphasis on assessments of their political and strategic intentions. The entire intelligence estimating process is being refined to include more stress on such developments as Soviet and Chinese grain outputs and computer advances."

To chart this new direction, President Nixon has turned to a tweedy, pipe-smoking economist and military strategist, James R. Schlesinger, 44, who