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## Ray Cromley

### Worse Yet, He Still Sees Nothing Wrong

By Ray Cromley

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We are all idealists — Republicans, Democrats, Independents, conservatives, liberals and middle-of-the-roaders.

It is essential for us to believe we are led by men of high standards, however they may act.

When we look at the soul of a president, as revealed in his private conversations, and find repeated evidence of self-serving pettiness and a lack of principle, with no offsetting hint of human concern for others, we all stand a little less tall.

We will tolerate a certain amount of financial dishonesty — but not cynical amorality or a lack of sensitivity to what is considered decent. We are shaken when a leader lacks moral courage when faced with a crisis.

Watergate now is not the matter of first importance, nor what constitutes grounds for impeachment. What is of preeminent concern is whether Mr. Nixon, can do his job in light of how we see him now since he has given us his thoughts on thousands of feet of tape.

Will he be able to attract first-rate men and women to office and hold them? Two of my close friends, both loyal, lifelong, high-echelon Republicans, have recently refused tempting White House posts.

Will he be able to lead the federal bureaucracy, difficult for all Presidents even in the best of times?

Will he have that cooperation from Congress necessary for the proper exercise of government?

In this country, the ability to lead and to enforce the law depends not on power, but on our willingness to follow. This is true whether we are discussing the President, the Supreme Court, Congress or the Constitution itself (witness the failure of Prohibition).

The question thus is has Mr. Nixon lost his power to govern?

I believe the published private conversations of Presidents Roosevelt, Kennedy or Johnson might well have been equally appalling. But these men are gone. We are dealing with the only President we have. (The morals of an Edward M. Kennedy will be a legitimate issue in 1976.)

Particularly bothersome are reports Mr. Nixon originally ordered these tapes made to preserve for posterity firsthand knowledge of what went on in the White House in his administration. Also, that Mr. Nixon issued these transcripts publicly in the belief the American public would find in them justification for his actions. These decisions indicate Mr. Nixon does not see in his conversations the deviousness apparent to others. It was a similar lack of sensitivity to what the average man thinks of as basically decent that the state of Maryland found most lacking in former Vice President Spiro Agnew. It was probably the principal reason for his disbarment.

If a man's thoughts are wrong and he comes to realize they are wrong and then disavows those thoughts, there is hope. If a leader cannot recognize when his views are morally warped, we have real problems.