

Guilty

NYT 1/27/74

The jury verdict in Federal District Court in Washington yesterday finding the four major Watergate defendants guilty of conspiracy in the "cover-up" plot, and three of them guilty of obstruction of justice and perjury, brings to its climax the many long and agonizing months of the Watergate drama.

The trial, and yesterday's almost inevitable conclusion, represent a kind of catharsis for the nation; the American people can now feel with relief that the worst of Watergate is behind us. The honor and integrity of this democracy, and its constitutional structure, have been upheld.

Once again in the long march of American history it has been demonstrated that this is indeed, with all its obvious faults, a nation governed by laws and that no man, irrespective of rank, can with impunity violate the country's basic sense of legality and decency.

Although it is a former Attorney General, a former Assistant Attorney General and a Chief Executive's two most trusted aides who were convicted yesterday, it must be recognized that in effect former President Nixon himself was also on trial. While he escapes legal sanction because of the unconscionable pardon he received at the hands of his successor, he too most certainly was a defendant in spirit. The jury's "guilty" verdict in effect applies, *a fortiori*, to Mr. Nixon as well as to the luckless subordinates who acted in his behalf.

Yesterday's verdict in Judge Sirica's court by a jury of ordinary citizens was literally as well as figuratively a verdict of the American people, and a restatement of faith that in the long run this people will brook no tampering with their constitutionally protected liberty under law.