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**Editorials**

## Dealing at Last With Watergate

**THE HIGH TIDE OF WATERGATE** that beached four of the high figures in the Nixon Administration yesterday has left the President without his righthand men. It has left the U.S. military without a civilian chief; also the Environmental Protection Agency. The White House staff is reported to be demoralized and drifting. The country has become suspicious of government and feels betrayed. Many political figures, even conspicuously partisan Democratic figures, recognize this spreading loss of public faith and confidence and, far from exploiting it, are concerned to shore it up. As Senator Muskie has said: "The whole political process is damaged by Watergate. All of us are damaged. There is nothing for Democrats to be gleeful about."

Thus matters stood upon yesterday's announced resignations of Attorney General Kleindienst and White House Assistants H. R. Halde- man, John D. Ehrlichman and John W. Dean III. And yet as the day wore on and the American public settled back to await Mr. Nixon's accounting and explanation of these reverberating develop- ments, we had the sense of the Presidency having successfully passed through the eye of the storm. The President had wiped his slate and he conveyed a sense, which we share, of readiness to get on with the work of government.

**IT HAS TAKEN A VERY LONG TIME** and very hard and penetrating digging to bring out into the open what is so far publicly known about the Watergate burglary and bugging operation and the associated deceptions and big-money scandals of the re-election campaign. These disclosures are owed, we think, primarily to the persistence of newspaper reporters, and theirs is rightly called a bright chapter in American journalism. "Political skulduggery," commented the London Observer on Sunday, "has happened in many countries, but in few could it have been exposed as publicly as now in the United States."

It now remains to say that the passionately dedicated, jealously powerful, yet rather impene- trable men around the President who are no long- er to serve him must be presumed innocent while the affair takes its course in the Federal grand jury. Still, we cannot avoid the feeling that their moves to dissociate the President from the Water- gate crime come unfortunately late.

**WHATEVER MAY HAVE BEEN** their role in setting up this operation last spring, they appear to have known about it for quite some time. In short, it is not easy to understand a professed loyalty that waits as long as this to disencumber the President for the task he has now assigned to his new attor- ney general, Elliot Richardson, of "uncovering the whole truth about this matter."