

GOP Leaders Seek Special Watergate

Prosecutor

President Nixon's speech Monday night, following his belated purge of top White House staffers who betrayed him in the Watergate bugging and cover-up, was an "adequate" start, in the word of a long-time associate, but major power centers in his own party are not jumping with new-found joy.

To the contrary, most of the men of real power inside the Republican Party—as contrasted to the button-down Nixon aparatchiks now purged from the White House—feel that the President was pushed into action against his will. They fear he is still dealing with Watergate by a series of tactical expedients, not by the grand strategy of full disclosure they want.

Moreover, Mr. Nixon is under private but harsh criticism by powerful Republicans for the clumsy way he handled certain aspects of the two most important new assignments he has made: that of Elliot Richardson as Attorney General, and William Ruckelshaus as Acting Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Ruckelshaus, a young political activist with charm, shrewdness and a bright future in national Republican politics, has now been effectively barred from running for the Senate next year, or perhaps ever, by the President's sudden, ill-considered decision to put him in charge of the FBI. Not wanting the job, and feeling not fit for it, Ruckelshaus nevertheless was sent there for a few months as "Acting" Director.

Far worse, the President's quick decision to put "Mr. Clean" at the FBI—a tactical decision that fits into no discernible long-term strategy—has now guaranteed another period of dangerous uncertainty for the harassed FBI, already clubbed into a semi-comatose state during the hapless reign of the unfortunate L. Patrick Gray, III.

Far more revealing of the President's inability to deal decisively and come sharply to grips with his worst crisis was his inexplicable refusal to name a special Watergate prosecutor but to leave that Presidential decision up to Richardson.

Given the long and ugly Watergate cover-up by Mr. Nixon's closest aides in the White House, it is understandable that such Republican establishmentarians as Sen. Barry Goldwater, for-

mer Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird, Rep. John Anderson, the GOP conference chairman, and many, many more are insisting that only an outside prosecutor can clear the air of scandal . . . and clear Mr. Nixon of public suspicion.

It was, in the word of one such Republican, "shocking" that Mr. Nixon hung this decision on Richardson. Again, the President's refusal to meet the demand of a vast—perhaps a unanimous—majority of his own party in the matter of a special prosecutor smacked of tactics, not the grand strategy required to bring his administration and the country back from the brink.

Finally, what has failed to give Mr. Nixon a fully clean bill of health inside the power structure of his own party is the continued secretiveness of the decision-making that culminated in his commendable Monday morning purge and his "adequate" Monday evening report to the people.

Thus, Mr. Nixon has not once (as we write this) asked for *political* advice from the men best equipped to give it to him. Laird, Goldwater, former White House counselor Bryce Harlow, Sen. Hugh Scott, Rep. Gerald Ford of Michigan, the House Republican leader—all these have been kept in the dark.

Both Ford and Goldwater, tortured by worry that the Watergate disclosures had become a constitutional and psychological crisis spiralling beyond reach, had to beg Laird to take the Republican Party's case to the President. But, uninvited, he never did.

Moreover, Mr. Nixon is known to be furious at Goldwater for his April 11 public demand that the President stop pretending Watergate would go away. It is that set of Mr. Nixon's mind that, in spite of the laudable and hard decisions he made on Monday, that deeply worries party elders who want his clean-up to succeed.

For they see as yet no sure signals that the President is finally ready to open up his office and his mind to the outside opinion—most particularly the opinion of politicians in his own party—that might have saved him much of his and his country's present grief.

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President Nixon