

# 'A Courageous Leader'

By Carl T. Curtis

WASHINGTON—I wouldn't defend the people who are responsible and who took part in Watergate. I do think that it is being vastly overplayed. It was wrong but it should not be blown out of proportion. It was a stupid act and in violation of law. It does not constitute a betrayal of our country, nor a pilfering of the Treasury. No elected official was involved.

The Watergate scandal has been a cross to bear for President Richard Nixon and he is totally innocent of any wrongdoing. He didn't plot it. He didn't condone it, and the facts were withheld from him for too long after it happened. Our President is an honest and honorable man. I believe in him and I want the whole world to know it.

President Nixon on the 30th day of April, 1973, made a clear-cut statement in reference to Watergate. In making this report to the nation he said that he had found himself accused of involvement in activities he had never heard of until he read about them in the newspapers.

The President spoke in plain and unmistakable language, yet in spite of his forthright statement the nitpickers and a few publicity-seeking politicians want to place him on the grill. There are those who were unable to "get Nixon" last November and they want to do it now.

Watergate has brought into being a determined and militant coalition, whose object is not justice but rather "to get Nixon." These include (1) the Nixon-haters, (2) a group of politico-sadists, of the type who enjoyed their efforts to destroy L.B.J. over the war issue, (3) a small segment of newsmen who prefer political propaganda over objective reporting, (4) a few extreme partisans whose sense of justice is numbed by their desire for political gain, and (5) those politicians who are willing to exploit any issue for personal publicity.

We are, however, a Government of law. Stability of the Government and ordinary justice demand that the judicial processes and the rules of evidence be faithfully followed. Hearsay, rumor, gossip, partial truths, innuendos, suspicions and imaginations buoyed by self-interest have no place in the American system of justice, and to indulge in such is not in the public interest.

The offer of immunity to a wrongdoer who has violated the law may place before him a greater temptation than he can bear. To dangle before a law violator the promise that he may go scot-free if he involves someone else can be an obstruction of justice

as wrong in its consequences as any conspiracy to obstruct justice which is perpetrated by actual law violators themselves.

The immunity statute was submitted to Congress as an aid to combat organized crime. That was the purpose for which the Congress enacted the statute. Its use should be confined to matters involved in organized crime. It is my opinion that it has no place in proceedings such as Watergate. It was enacted as a part of the "Organized Crime Control Act of 1970."

The committee report confirms the fact that this immunity statute was intended to deal with organized crime.

It is quite significant that when President Nixon sent his message to Congress on April 23, 1969, on the subject of organized crime, he said: "With this new law, Government should be better able to gather evidence to strike at the leadership of organized crime and not just the rank and file."

I think that in the interest of justice the time has come for us to take a realistic view of the Watergate case and a realistic view of all the efforts to smear the President.

I have been in a few political campaigns myself. In all my political campaigns there were things that happened which I did not know about. Yet the responsibilities that I have with my job and the size of my campaign are so insignificant compared to that of the President. Less than 1 per cent of the population of the United States lives in Nebraska. My job is many times less important. The President of the United States must carry the burdens of our foreign policy. President Nixon was involved in winding down a war and getting our prisoners home.

Few people will ever know the burdens that have been carried by Richard Nixon. He has been a peacemaker in the Middle East with considerable success. All during his years and months in bringing the Vietnam war to a close, he was hammered by his critics, insulted by some, and on several occasions angry citizens marched on Washington. It is no wonder that such a man had to trust his campaign to subordinates.

We are grateful to President Nixon for maintaining the good name of the United States of America. We shudder to think of what would be our situation if President Nixon's most extreme war critics had determined our national policy. President Nixon will go down in history as a great and courageous leader long after all of his critics have been forgotten.

*Carl T. Curtis, Republican U.S. Senator from Nebraska, made these remarks in a speech to the Senate.*