

NYTimes

The President Has Spoken

To the Editor:

The pathetic element in President Nixon's Watergate address is not in his failure to refute charges against him or to remove the doubt they have created. It is rather in his inability to assess the depth and significance of the crisis Watergate has created for the republic.

Instead, he encourages our desire to forget it by promising, with Watergate off his back, to get on with really important matters. He appeals for support by assuring us the whole thing has been exaggerated, and then he clouds the issue by suggesting that privileged communication between Presidents and advisers, lawyers and clients, ministers and parishioners, husbands and wives (and psychiatrists and patients?) can only be preserved if he refuses to release tape recordings that could lay the controversy over his guilt or innocence to rest.

If President Nixon had the courage to face the deeper issues of Watergate, if he could abandon clever politics for a statesmanship that reflects awareness of the tragic dimensions in the history of great nations and their leaders, if he could help the American people understand how the interplay between our strengths and weaknesses creates the likes of Watergate, and if he could summon the moral integrity that opens the springs of cleansing, healing and renewal, Watergate might be the "lesson" he talks about. He cannot do it by claiming that the excesses of his staff were inspired by the amorality of the radical left.

But Richard Nixon is not Abraham Lincoln, who knew that the American destiny was not to be fulfilled by self-righteously justifying error. We cannot expect from President Nixon Lincoln's wisdom and moral sensitivity to help us learn the deeper lessons of Watergate.

And that may be the greatest tragedy of Watergate for Richard Nixon, and the nation's greatest loss at this critical moment in our history.

JOHN BATHGATE

Stony Point, N. Y., Aug. 17, 1973

To the Editor:

I agree with President Nixon. It is time to stop the wasteful and costly "Watergate" hearings. Let the courts decide the guilt and punishment.

What bothers me is the battle cry of "Congress must run the country." Its record is hardly worthy of that responsibility. Waste and extravagance are the order of the day. Costly and wasteful office buildings, unjustified pay increases, absenteeism, junkets, politics above the welfare of the country, unmanageable programs, pork-barrel legislation are and have been the bench marks of Congress.

I for one would like to see the representatives of the people set examples for the public, use self-control, have the courage to clean their own house, pass legislation that is good for the country regardless of the political origin or impact. When signs of this kind of leadership become evident, then I for one will pay closer attention to the need for a balanced government.

At this moment the only person showing the courage to stand up against waste, extravagance and try to do what is right for the country is the President. Maybe that is why Congress is out to get him.

CHESTER H. HEDGER

Smithtown, N. Y., Aug. 17, 1973

To the Editor:

President Nixon's speech Wednesday night made me think of Peter Pan's appeal to the children to applaud if they believed in fairies.

I don't think the American people are childish enough to mistake Mr. Nixon for Peter Pan.

Tinker Bell died years ago.

ANN GERINGER

New York, Aug. 16, 1973

To the Editor:

I write in reaction to President Nixon's speech of Aug. 15. His broad evasiveness was obvious, with his wish to return to affairs of state, etc., etc. But I react personally to his equation of antiwar and anti-establishment protesters with the Watergate criminals.

As a typical student protester, I participated in protests not out of love of excitement or chaos but because I felt it my duty as a citizen in a participatory democracy to assert my opinion regarding the immorality and illegality of U.S. military actions abroad and occasionally in domestic affairs. This was also an open assertion of the First Amendment: The right of the people to assemble to petition for the redress of grievances.

It should be noted that it was a rule among antiwar protesters to obtain necessary permits before staging protests. When acts of civil disobedience were committed, they were openly done. Furthermore, I consider myself representative in my innocence of any

intention of committing any personal acts of violence.

President Nixon justified, or excused, the Watergate break-ins and associated illegal and outrageous acts on the ground that "excess breeds excess." To equate the generally pacific and legal acts of protesters concerned with striving to restore legality and morality to an erring nation with the eccentric, illegal, immoral actions of the Watergate criminals—those known and those whose guilt remains to be discovered—is the thought pattern of an amoral and dangerous mind.

One can only hope that through the efforts of the Senate investigation, truth will be discovered, justice done and sanity restored to our nation.

ALICE HENKIN

Brooklyn, Aug. 16, 1973



To the Editor:

There was good, sound advice from the President in his recent talk on Watergate.

The country is getting sick and tired of the whole thing and wishes the Government to get on with the business of governing. It is highly unlikely that further Senate Select Committee sessions will provide any important evidence which might link the President to Watergate — after 37 witnesses and eight weeks of testimony no one has been able to do that. Why beat a dead horse?

May I add that the impetus for carrying on this national trauma emanates from that segment of the populace which must be classified as "Nixon haters," whose venomous letters, prior to the election and to this very day, have been granted by The Times an overgenerous allotment of space on the editorial page.

Could it be that these disgruntled and frustrated liberals wish to achieve by national chaos what they could not achieve in the election? Watergate was a disgraceful affair, but it does not justify a national upheaval nor can it ever change the natural political philosophies of the country, i.e., it cannot turn conservatives into liberals and so warrant a reversal of the 1972 election results.

Let the law take its course, the guilty be punished and the innocent absolved; and if doubts remain in some minds about the President's role in Watergate, let us give him the benefit of those doubts—something we should do for any President—and get on with solving the momentous domestic and foreign problems now besetting us.

J. STUART TORREY
Swarthmore, Pa., Aug. 16, 1973

To the Editor:

Mr. Nixon asks the people to put Watergate into the past, out of their minds. He wants the Senate investigation to stop before it gets the main facts, such as those on the tapes. He is asking everybody to support him in forgetting what his staff did, so that he can turn completely to other business.

Richard M. Nixon is trying to enlist the whole country now in covering up Watergate. It is the height of impudence.

NORMAN GUTTMAN
Durham, N. C., Aug. 16, 1973

To the Editor:

I am disturbed and baffled by your Aug. 17 editorial comment "No Defense... No Excuse." Granted that the President is culpable. Let us admit that he was aware of Watergate; that he was in on the Ellsberg psychiatrist's office burglary and that he was fully cognizant of the "cover-up." Let us say that he was guilty of all of the above. Then what?

Let us examine the alternatives. Would you have him resign "at this

point in time"? Or perhaps even have him impeached? Imagine the upheaval and the attendant ills that would ensue. Picture our posture in the capitals of the world. Our stature.

I can visualize a shock to our prestige on a scale so devastating that it might shake the very foundations of our already very, very sick world. I can foresee only chaos and futility both at home and abroad. It would serve no useful purpose.

Why not play down Watergate. There is so much to be done. We are on the brink of an era of peace and coexistence. And you can credit President Nixon for that.

We have a world plagued by a unique disease of inflation spurred by a prosperity so vast where so many people are clamoring for wants that are in insufficient supply. We must find the remedy for this. And the President is trying. Let us help him to help us.

H. Z. SMALL
Woodridge, N. Y., Aug. 17, 1973

To the Editor:

After listening to the President's speech last night, then reading his statement today, I've come to the conclusion that they could be aptly described by one of my favorite quotations from Ring Lardner, "Shut up, he explained."

JANE BIRCHFIELD
Ashburn, Va., Aug. 16, 1973

To the Editor:

What does Richard Nixon mean by saying that he accepts responsibility for White House involvement in Watergate? As a consequence of such involvement there are people in jail and others yet to go to jail, their families in torment, their careers in ruins. All of these people are forced to accept responsibility for their part in Watergate.

What consequences does Mr. Nixon contemplate for himself? In the matter of those tapes he invokes the dignity and puissance of the Presidency, which by his irresponsibility has been degraded and weakened. And he demagogically urges the electorate to bring pressure upon the Congress to abort its inquiry into Watergate. We must conclude that far from accepting responsibility for crimes committed in his behalf he seems to accept only the payoff.

JOSEPH COTTLER
Elkins Park, Pa., Aug. 16, 1973

To the Editor:

In his long-awaited speech, the President explains why he won't release the tapes by saying that "the law has long recognized that there are kinds of conversations that are entitled to be kept confidential, even at the cost of doing without critical evidence in a legal proceeding." He then goes on to say that this "rule" applies to conversations between lawyer and client, priest and penitent, husband and wife.

When it comes to psychiatrist and patient, Mr. Nixon's silence is deafening.

SYLVIA SIMMONS NEUMANN
Wilton, Conn., Aug. 17, 1973

To the Editor:

In an Aug. 16 editorial you refer to the President's speech as "disappointing." It is your editorial that I find disappointing: It is a clearly biased and unobjective analysis of the speech.

You complain that "Mr. Nixon offered no new information..." and that "he repeated his now familiar denials..." The fact is that you are the one who is again repeating your familiar cry for the release of the confidential tapes.

President Nixon, on the other hand, has discussed (for the first time) the problems involved in releasing these tapes. The reasons he gave for not releasing them sounded very sound, and justified to me. You do not take issue with his reasoning; you make no attempt at all to show why his reasoning is wrong. Nevertheless you again call for the release of these tapes.

Instead of echoing the President's hope that from the Watergate scandals would come "a new level of decency and integrity," you state that the chances of realization for this "are doubtful so long as the factual issues in the Watergate case remain unresolved, and Mr. Nixon's speech did almost nothing to resolve them." These chances can't possibly be realized if you (and other news media) refer to them as "doubtful" right from the beginning.

The President made it clear in his speech that he too would like to see the factual issues in the Watergate case resolved, but he also thought that the time has come for the courts rather than for legislative bodies to be engaged in this.

Your response to the President's appeal to turn away from a backward-looking obsession with Watergate in favor of concentration on urgent national problems is simply that the President's "failure to release the tapes and his refusal to make a clean break with the past" is that "which prevents an early resolution of the Watergate issues."

Here again you completely ignore the facts: (1) The President did explain why he couldn't release the tapes and (2) he did break with the past in many ways: He got rid of all the aides and officials that were involved; he publicly accepted responsibility; he publicly acknowledged that there were serious abuses, and he promised to be more vigilant in the future to prevent recurrence of such abuses.

What else can you ask for? What else would you do if you were in his place?

N. FELDMAN
Woodbridge, N. J., Aug. 16, 1972