

Excerpts From Speech by Richardson

Following are excerpts from a speech by Elliott L. Richardson, the former Attorney General, at the Appeal of Conscience Foundation Dinner here last night:

The evidence on which to base a report on the state of the American conscience is scanty and ambiguous, but not altogether lacking.

Take, for example, the public reaction to the "Saturday Night Massacre." Three million messages descended upon the Congress, the greatest outpouring of its kind that had ever taken place. And for every person who took the trouble to write or send a telegram, there must have been many who felt like it, thought about it, but didn't get around to it.

Though one of the "victims," I could not have guessed that all across the country were so many people who would feel so strongly about the day's events.

'Declaration of Conscience'

It sprang, in part, no doubt, from outrage at the prospect that an honest effort by the special prosecutor to get the truth had been aborted. There seems to have been an element, moreover, of hunger for a demonstration of willingness to draw a line on an issue of principle. As Oliver Wendell Holmes once remarked, "We live by symbols"; that Saturday's events provided the symbolic focus for a declaration of conscience on the part of the American people themselves.

Behind the layers of secrecy successively peeled back by persistent investigation [into the Watergate affair], we caught an ugly glimpse of the abuse of power. It has been a frightening glimpse, not so much for what it reveals as for what it portends.

The significant point, it seems to me, is this: even if the evils of Watergate were assumed to be no worse than the kindred but unremarked acts of past administrations,



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Elliott L. Richardson

the fact that Americans now recoil from such things is a reassuring sign that our instinct of value-preservation is still alert and sensitive. Just as in a simpler age our forebears came to realize that they could no longer tolerate robber barons, we have come to realize that we can no longer tolerate the embezzlement of political trust.

The investigation must go forward. The disclosures not yet made must be carried out fully and unequivocally. The gaps and omissions must be accounted for. But even when these steps are completed, the main task of restoring confidence will lie ahead. To accomplish this, a series of interrelated actions is required. These fall under four distinct headings.

Safeguards Urged

The first is more secure protection against the invasion of privacy. The second is the prevention of campaign abuses. The third is the erection of barriers against the improper use of political influence. Fourth and finally is provision for stricter accountability in the exercise of power.

In the case of the protection of privacy, one construc-

tive step would be the issuance of clear guidelines for the use of all forms of electronic surveillance.

To curb campaign abuses, we can do something now about "dirty tricks" and dirty money. Because the former are not adequately covered by present Federal law, there is a need for a Federal Code of Fair Campaign Practices which would expressly prohibit such things as belligerent or obscure phone calls falsely represented to be on behalf of a candidate, disruption of campaign operations or gatherings by paid political operatives and transmission of sensitive political information by paid "political spies."

With respect to the improper use of political influence, I would urge the extension to other departments and agencies of government of the kind of requirement I put into effect at Justice last August for the keeping of a record of contacts by outside individuals seeking to influence the disposition of particular matters.

'Restore Accountability'

And where responsibility has been blurred by excessive reliance on political amateurs who have not yet learned that it is not always smart to be smart, we can restore accountability by a return of authority to people who are both visible to the public and accessible to Congressional interrogation.

Among my most treasured possessions is a photograph of Judge Learned Hand on which the judge inscribed in Greek a passage from "The Iliad." Archibald Cox had also clerked for Judge Hand, and during a phone conversation with Mr. Cox just before he was fired, I quoted this passage to him. It has special significance for this occasion: "Now, though numberless fates of death beset us which no mortal can escape or avoid, let us go forward together, and either we shall give honor to one another, or another to us."

Let us go forward together.