



Why Scandal Must Be Cleared Up Fast

Joseph Alsop

A WHILE AGO, this reporter offered the suggestion that the time had come for President Nixon to resign. It was an inherently meaningless suggestion because it came from a reporter. But it was also meaningless because the President is plainly never going to resign. By all the signs, he will only leave office if two thirds of the Senate votes to convict him.

Another suggestion, also meaningless, is now in order. In brief, it is high time for the leaders of all factions of both parties, plus the much - involved leaders of the media, to conspire together to get the Watergate mess out of the way as soon as possible. It does not matter whether the thing is done by impeachment or by impeachment's early failure. The rights and wrongs of the case do not matter all that much either. Only two things matter, and they both matter greatly.

First, the impeachment process is a mere exercise in futility — barring another unforeseen bombshell that will blow the President straight out of the water. What the House of Representatives does is of little consequence. Without another bombshell, there is not the remotest possibility of the needed sixty-seven Senate votes to impeach Richard M. Nixon. So much is common knowledge.

★ ★ ★

S ECOND, it is self-indulgent folly to prolong any exercise in futility that is also deadly dangerous. The longer the present exercise continues, the more deadly dangerous it will become. We have been warned in these last months.

The U.S. government cannot operate effectively, in fact, without a fully operational President. No President can be halfway operational, if he is 95 per cent preoccupied with defending himself, as President Nixon understandably is today. It is inconsequential whether you loathe the President or have high confidence in him.

These last months have warned that for perfectly practical, all too visible reasons, every single one of us can take a really hellacious hiding from quite possible, perfectly foreseeable events that only the government can cope with. At the moment, to begin with, every leading industrial - financial country in the non - Communist part of the world has a truly shocking inflation rate.

★ ★ ★

N O SUCH condition of inordinate, generalized inflation has ever prevailed for long, without leading to a resounding bust. Preferring Sir Galahad in the White House will later prove an exceptionally feeble remedy, if nothing has been done to prevent the bust.

To the problem of inflation, you must then add the problem of energy. An enormous, worldwide bust is also threatened, because none of the leading industrial - financial nations can possibly pay for their essential energy requirements at the new price levels. This problem is strikingly intractable, and it also interacts directly with the broader problem of inflation. One problem feeds upon the other, in fact.