

Of Nixon, Ford and the Presidency

To the Editor:

As this should be a time for healing, further proceedings against Richard Nixon would be self-defeating for us all. But his removal from office does permit the people to assert an absolute right they were denied two years ago: a Presidential election.

With paid spies, forged letters, wire tapping, judicial persecutions, concealment of evidence and related immoral and illegal acts, the White House effectively misled the nation, destroyed Democratic candidates and selected the nominee of that party. For all practical purposes, there was no Presidential election in 1972.

There is a way by which Gerald Ford—the choice of one Congressional district in Michigan and the discredited President—could restore the postponed heritage. Rather than nominate a new Vice President, he could request the political parties, probably acting through their national committees, to make selections for that office. By special advisory election within a very short period of time, either through direct majority or the traditional Electoral College, citizens could nominally select a Vice President. By prearrangement, Mr. Ford could formally submit the nation's choice to Congress for confirmation and then resign. The person who serves in the White House until 1977 would thus be there by popular mandate.

Such a procedure would be a most extraordinary sacrifice for President Ford, whose cooperation would be essential. But with all due respect, he is the unwitting recipient of stolen goods. The Presidency is not his. It is ours.

L. S. WAGLE
Seattle, Aug. 8, 1974

To the Editor:

I could not believe my ears on hearing commentators, after Richard Nixon's speech, saying it was "courageous" and "magnanimous." What is courageous about resigning to avoid certain impeachment and conviction, and whom is he in a position to forgive? The press? The Congress?

Richard Nixon's speech exemplified perfectly what is wrong with the man. There was no indication that he was aware of the connection between his actions and his being forced to resign his office. He appears to think he is great, tragic and misunderstood, but I think it is very necessary for the American public to remember that by his concern for his own advancement he perverted the democratic system on which America is based, and his forced resignation should be an occasion for real joy in that the American people have truly saved the Republic.

CYNTHIA HARRISON
Verona, N.J., Aug. 9, 1974

To the Editor:

To say that Mr. Nixon resigned because of erosion of his political base is at best less than the whole truth. It demonstrates again the total lack of understanding of the nature of his crimes against the American people and its legal system. For historical clarity, it is essential that the trial continue to a decisive verdict, and sentencing if he is found guilty. What lesson of equality of justice will be learned if such lesser figures as Halde- man, Ehrlichman, Dean, etc., go to jail and Mr. Nixon is not even brought to trial?

CHARLES I. COHEN
New York, Aug. 9, 1974

To the Editor:

Congratulations on the wonderful hatchet job you did on Richard Nixon! You staged a beautiful crucifixion all the way.

And you taught the American people a good lesson. We know now that we must never vote for anyone you don't like. If we do, you'll just find a way to have him removed.

I'm sure that from now on we'll always be good little girls and boys and vote only for somebody you like. Then, even if he commits murder, we know that you'll hardly comment a word about it.

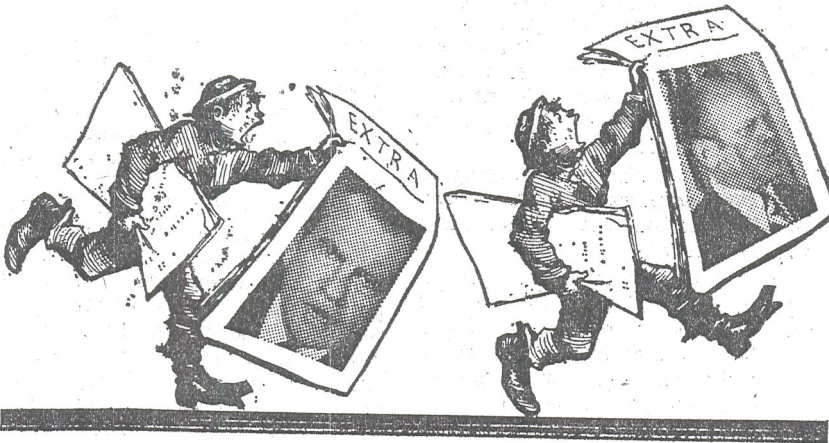
I salute you! You are among the lords of creation. And a prominent Senator recently mentioned what else the media are.

EDITH BAUMANN
West Hempstead, L.I., Aug. 9, 1974

To the Editor:

I am opposed to any amnesty for Richard Nixon which does not include a grant of amnesty for all of the Indochina war resisters. Richard Nixon enriched himself at the expense of the American people; he cheated on his taxes and he attempted to subvert the United States Constitution. The war resisters merely resisted participation in an immoral, undeclared war.

FRANK C. BRANCHINI
Croton-on-Hudson, N.Y., Aug. 8, 1974



To the Editor:

In his farewell address, Richard M. Nixon did in effect spit in the face of every decent United States citizen. He resigned, he said, because "I might [sic] not have the support of the Congress that I would consider necessary" to continue. He admitted nothing, except some errors in "judgment." He recited what was under the circumstances an arrogant litany of self-praise and cynical, false superpatriotism.

One thing he made perfectly clear: that he neither understands nor gives a damn about the simple, superb moral principles that define what we used to call the American Dream. This dream was never really so crude a concept as a dream of empire or "Manifest Destiny," or so cheap a thing as a dream only of affluence and irresponsibility. It was, and is, a noble hope of freedom, decency and fair dealing in everyman's everyday affairs.

This man, Nixon, may fairly be said to have dedicated at least the last few years of his public career to the deliberate destruction of the American Dream. He did not see it that way, of course. He said, a thousand times (five

or six times in the first few minutes of his final address), that everything he did or desired was "in the best interests of the nation." In eighteenth-century France, a king made the same point much more succinctly—"L'état, c'est moi!" ("I am the nation!")

We will not, of course, behold Richard Nixon. But it is really unthinkable that this most dangerous demagogue in the history of the nation should be praised for "self-sacrifice" or offered immunity from future prosecution. WALTER F. WOODFORD
Rye, N.Y., Aug. 8, 1974

To the Editor:

What has occurred in this country seems a travesty of justice and the democratic system. A President who by his own admissions was shown to have been guilty of obstruction of justice at the time of his election, who has been named by a grand jury as an undicted co-conspirator, who has been accused by a Congressional committee of abuse of his own office and of other governmental agencies, who is, by the standards under which others are judged, guilty of income-tax evasion and whose first Vice President resigned from office under threat of indictment—has been allowed to choose his own successor. It is definitely a failure of the democratic system that in such circumstances the American people cannot choose their own President directly. RAY FISCHER
New York, Aug. 8, 1974

To the Editor:

Gerald Ford is the 38th President of the United States. He has reached this office without being elected. His only constituency is the "best interests of the country," which he has stated he will work to serve. Without a conservative Southern, Northeastern liberal or Midwest farm constituency upon which to base his Presidential mandate, we should all encourage Mr. Ford to make "the best interests of the country" his only constituency.

We should all encourage President Ford, with our prayers and letters, to offer the dynamic leadership which can not only solve our domestic problems but strive to build a lasting peace. He has a unique historical and political mandate which offers the opportunity for him to rise above partisan interests and forge a bold and imaginative Administration dedicated to designing a new American spirit of progress and purpose as we enter our bicentennial. Mr. Ford can truly honor that mandate and the nation by conscientiously serving his new constituency, the best interests of all America.

GIDEON FEREBEE JR.
New York, Aug. 9, 1974

To the Editor:

Now that we have gone so far so well in carrying through the constitutional process by which the nation met the crisis of a debased Presidency, it would be tragic if the House deviates from the direct constitutional process by legislating an alternative by which the President may escape the legal consequences of his acts.

I am not concerned with "punishment" of Richard Nixon but with the impact special legislation would have on the moral, legal and constitutional values of my country. Indeed, such action would demean the House itself by associating it with the President's conduct. It would disavow a principle of justice which we have for generations claimed as a peculiarly American virtue.

How could we then in clear conscience try the lesser men who surrounded the executive and participated in its misdeeds? Are their rights less secure than those of the highest officer charged with final responsibility to see that the laws be faithfully executed?

If the House does take such an action, it will dupe the faith of many Americans such as myself in the ultimate integrity of the principle of equality before the law.

SHEPHERD L. WITMAN
New Florence, Pa., Aug. 7, 1974

To the Editor:

Richard Nixon has resigned the Presidency—and has ignited a display of rhetoric as astonishing in its illogic as it is demonstrably inconsistent with Mr. Nixon's longtime and oft-expressed political philosophy.

His self-serving address to the nation is described as "courageous" and in the "national interest." What is "courageous" about a defendant facing certain conviction and severe financial penalties (loss of pension and staff expenses) cutting his potential losses by evading trial? What "national interest" is served by clouding the issue of demonstrated abuse of power and obstruction of justice, of self-admitted lies and deceptions, of greedy, grasping financial manipulations by admitting to only some mistakes of judgment and loss of political support?

But even less credible is the chorus of those chanting, "Blessed are the merciful . . ." while demanding amnesty and immunity for a man who throughout his political career has made a shibboleth of "law and order," who has denounced humane judges, who showed neither mercy nor understanding to Alger Hiss, who called for severe penalties for college dissidents and antiwar activists, who refused to consider amnesty for the thousands of young men who refused to serve in the immoral slaughter in Vietnam, whose only act of mercy as President was to ease the burden of America's most notorious war criminal.

Many Irish-Americans supported Mr. Nixon in 1968, and an even larger number in 1972, and Mr. Nixon and his wife have both claimed Irish antecedents. What mercy, amnesty, immunity (or even their due process rights) did Mr. Nixon and his Administration accord the Fort Worth and Baltimore defendants, young Irishmen and Irish-Americans whose only crime was their patriotic devotion to the 800-year-old struggle for a free and united Ireland?

Mr. Nixon's own public history, the evenhanded administration of justice, logic and equity require that the articles of impeachment be voted, that he be tried and convicted by the Senate and that he be indicted, tried, convicted and punished for such violations of the laws of the United States and of individual states as are still within the statute of limitations.

DONAL E. J. MACNAMARA
Prof. of Correction Administration
John Jay College of Criminal Justice
New York, Aug. 9, 1974

To the Editor:

Watching Richard Nixon leave raises grim hopes that the White House might once again become a source of significant inspiration and leadership, rather than public relations. Will Gerald Ford, maintaining that inflation is the country's number one problem, inspire and lead anyone or anything but the business community? I look for a President who will face the reality of contemporary America—an entire population suffering from hundreds of years of white racism. Will we ever have a President who will articulate that reality, and thereby begin to speak for all of the people?

GARETH NELSON
New York, Aug. 9, 1974

To the Editor:

Reflecting upon the events of the past two years which bear upon the moral principles supporting the foundation of our democracy, I now feel an exhilaration that the nation can celebrate our second-century anniversary in 1976, rejoicing in the fact that the democracy has passed through its hour of testing and has survived in the spirit of the founders. Individuals from every stratum of our nation have risen above their local concerns to attest, again, and to support the belief and faith that Government of the People, by the People and for the People shall not perish.

It is clear now that the Nixon Administration brought this country perilously close to dictatorship (editorial Aug. 6). The courageous men who took part and risked their careers, as our forefathers did in 1776, to disclose now the corruption of the Constitution in the function of the highest offices in our Government deserve enduring praise of every citizen and of generations to come for the preservation of their liberty.

JAMES HOLDEN
White Plains, Aug. 8, 1974