

"Ford Blames 'Elite Guard' For GOP Ills" WxPost 3/31/74 (Cannon)

Missing in this (properly) lead story is what was on last night's TV net news, the speech was written en route by Ford and his staff. This adds to the anti-Nixon nature of the speech and its reception.

I think this development means more than that Ford is disassociating himself as much as possible from Nixon and that the party pros are, too. I think it means that both recognize their future is jeopardized by his survival, have decided to heed their, not his needs, and are prepared to abandon him to whatever fate impends if not one they anticipate.

There are many developments with which this sharp shift can be said to coincide and by which it can be said to be influenced. Of them all I believe the one that may be most "operative" is the political impossibility of any GOP in Congress in particular but running for office anywhere to pretend that he does not know that Nixon is stalling deliberately and being expedient rather than principled. St. Clair as the lawyer may regard this as essential to his client's interest, but in following his client's legal interest he was not able to hide his strategy. It has to be interpreted as recognition of guilt and with little doubt of criminal guilt. (Note that Mansfield also said he would oppose any deal that would immunize Nixon from crimes, for first time this past week.)