



The Tug of War Over John Dean

THE WATERGATE AFFAIR, a redundant and idiotic masterwork of practical politics which bombed thoroughly when held up as an issue in the recent Presidential election, appears now to have grown into a cause celebre that has party leaders, Republican no less than Democratic, calling upon the White House for enlightenment.

The outcry from Democrats was inevitable but the chorus of pleas from Republicans is somewhat startling inasmuch as it seeks full disclosure of the facts from White House aides who have any, especially the President's own counsel, John W. Dean III.

Senator Marlow Cook (Rep-Ky.) has taken to the radio to appraise the affair as "a rather severe stigma on the Republican party. Senators John Tower (Rep-Tex.) and Norris Cotton (Rep-N.H.) have directly called upon the President to let Dean talk, and Senator William Roth Jr. (Rep-Del.) has joined in.

NOW, SENATOR JACOB JAVITS (Rep-N.Y.) and Charles Mathias (Rep-Md.) have stood up on the Senate floor and orated quite eloquently on the desirability of White House co-operation toward demystifying what they called "an appalling spectacle" and "a reprehensible affair" that is having "a devastating effect among conservative Republicans" and creating "a malaise and lack of faith in our institutions."

What they are saying is that the Watergate Affair has raised questions that are embarrassing, and need answers, and the White House should with "a forthright presentation" provide those answers and in the words of Senator Cook "get this egg off our face."

In so saying, they are also asking the President to delimit the executive privilege which he has invoked in the case of Dean and let him answer such questions as the Senate investigating committee stands ready to throw at him. Indications are that he will not do so. In the four years since he announced that he would be soft on privilege and would not use it in connection with matters that are "merely embarrassing" he has hardened to a degree where he says that he cannot and will not permit Dean, or any member of his staff past or present, to go to Congress to field its questions.

IN THIS, HE IS UTILIZING a shield that all Presidents before him have found useful, and is using it without stint or limit. It is his conviction, apparently, that in the best interests of the White House, the executive privilege must be absolute and without exceptions, and in the long run will thereby better serve its purpose and arouse fewer suspicions than if from time to time some White House aides are permitted to testify and some are not.

In the Senate there is dissent.