

## Donnelly's Revue

# The Foresight Saga

By Tom Donnelly

"Hindsight" is a word that echoes and reechoes at the Watergate hearings. "In hindsight," witnesses keep testifying, they realize it might have been better to call a crook a crook instead of, so to speak, sweeping the crooks under the White House rug. Former Attorney General John N. Mitchell is one who concedes that hindsight tells him he should have done a few things rather differently.

However, at the time he decided not to tell President Nixon he was surrounded by liars and criminals, it was impossible, even metaphysically, for Mitchell to call on his hindsight. All he had at his disposal was foresight.

With only his foresight to guide him, Mitchell figured if he told President Nixon the truth the Chief Executive would have immediately and publicly "lowered the boom" on the malefactors and this would have hurt him with the public and might even have cost him his reelection.

Using a panoramic process of my own called wide-sight, I have surveyed the recent past and come up with a scenario based on John Mitchell's vision of the dire consequences that might have followed if Mitchell had decided not to "keep the lid on."

We fade in on the oval room of the White House, where the President sits before a microphone, surrounded by Mrs. Nixon, Tricia and Ed Cox, Julie and David Eisenhower, a bust of Abraham Lincoln, and a small urn of the sort designed for ashes. The urn is marked simply but very, very legibly: "Checkers."

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much keen detective work and sharp character analysis—that certain members of my staff are implicated in the burglary of Democratic national headquarters and a subsequent attempt to cover up that burglary. Now I could have taken the easy way. I could have kept mum on the whole affair. But the easy way isn't the right way. It isn't my way. I am publicly turning the rascals out of my office. I am lowering the boom on them."

Pat Nixon and the Coxes and the Eisenhowers sob, whistle, stomp, and cheer as the President holds up pictures of the malefactors, calls out the name of each, and tears each picture in two. "I wanted to get a real boom in here to lower," says the President, "but that would have been the easy way to make my point. Besides, I was afraid of damaging the woodwork, which belongs to all of the American people."

As a quick montage shows, the first reaction to the President's speech is highly favorable. We see George McGovern entering a Western Union office to send a telegram: "Never thought I'd live to see the day. You have come over on the side of us angels. You've got my vote, Dick. Love to Pat and the girls."

But from this point on it's downhill.

As the campaign moves along it becomes clear that Nixon has lost the support of most of the lawyers in the country; they seem to feel he's a traitor to his former profession. But is it his fault that so many of his deceitful associates are lawyers? In a nationally televised TV speech Nixon explains that he would have turned those White House helpers in if they'd been butchers or window washers or auto salesmen or surgeons; this speech loses him the votes of hordes of butchers, window washers, auto salesmen and surgeons.

Methodical, ambitious, humorless, neatly barbered and conservatively dressed young men in a great variety



By Douglas Chevalier—The Washington Post

Former Attorney General John N. Mitchell: A vision of consequences.

THE PRESIDENT: Ladies and gentlemen of the vast television audience, my fellow Americans. I have an unprecedented announcement to make. Tonight I am facing my seventh crisis. I have discovered—and it was a discovery arrived at, if I may say so, through

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of professions come out against Nixon; he has lowered the boom on too many of their own kind.

He loses the "everybody knows politicians are all crooked" vote. Out of some unfathomable perversity these people seem to blame him for proving there is an amount of truth in what they have always mechanically asserted.

The clergy turns against Nixon. He is accused of being holier than they.

He loses the vote of the politicians in his own party. None of the White House malefactors Nixon has lowered the boom on were ever elected to public office but even so they are classified as "politicians" by a large sector of public opinion—a circumstance that has the real pros climbing the walls. Especially when think of all the money those White House types got to play with.

Nixon's advocacy of truth, fair play, and impartial justice proves offensive to millions of voters. They think he's copying McGovern and they don't want a "Me Too" candidate. Other voters are disconcerted to find what they claim is a New Nixon in midstream.

As inevitably happens, a good many Americans think Nixon said the opposite of what he did say. They think he's in favor of keeping crooked associates in the White House and they keep inundating the letters-to-the-editor columns with indignant protests. It does Nixon no good to repeatedly explain he was lowering the boom on those crooks, he wasn't giving them a boon.

However, as the polls show, the loss of the above groups, while serious, isn't what proves fatal to Nixon's second term ambitions. No, he is done in by the millions of citizens who turn against him because they believe he has taken a little insignificant meaningless fourth-rate burglary and "blown it up out of all proportions."

We fade out on John Mitchell looking at a newspaper headline ("MCGOVERN WINS BY LANDSLIDE") and muttering, between deep racking sobs, "I should have kept the lid on! I should have . . ."