

Letters To

WX POST

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More Comments on

What About Your Phone?

Those citizens who may regard the Nixon administration's systematic program of political espionage, sabotage, bugging, and burglary as just one crowd of politicians pulling some dirty tricks on another, should ask themselves what recourse they will have if such calculated government lawlessness is turned against them. What will you do when your phone is tapped, your business broken into, phony letters or other evidence manufactured to discredit you, if you incur this administration's displeasure?

Far-fetched? Let it be remembered that it was the Mitchell Justice Department that insisted upon the government's power to bug or wiretap American citizens without a warrant in "national security" cases, and was only stopped from so doing by the Supreme Court. It is now apparent that this administration has not in fact stopped this illegal activity. . . .

THOMAS J. SEESS.

Emmitsburg, Md.

Encouraging Radicals

Your paper and the student radicals in this country have influenced more people to bomb, destroy, tear down our country, etc. than any bugging, sabotage efforts of the GOP. After all, one can't even get a case through Justice Douglas on bugging so what good will it do the GOP anyway? McGovern is just not the man. Tell Herblock to go on vacation.

C. J. O'STEEN.

Wheaton.

"Forgive Them, for They . . ."

. . . You appear to be terribly upset and concerned over the possibility that some people—and all who may be associated with them—might escape criminal prosecution for their alleged acts of political espionage in the present campaign. Your righteous indignation and persistent pursuit of "justice" in seeing that they pay for their deeds is truly overwhelming. Herblock, for example, will undoubtedly set a new worldwide journalistic record for the greatest number of bitter variations of a single theme.

Your resentment of what you call "public apathy" to these matters seems to make you re-double your demands for vengeance. While I share your dislike for such matters, I wonder why that "public apathy"? Could it be the result of so often hearing "Forgive them, for they know not what the imperfections of society made them do" concerning rapists, addicts, muggers, armed robbers and convicted killers, that political expediency seems relatively easy to forgive? Could it be that we, the public, are merely repeating to ourselves the accepted defense of other behaviors which we question: "The poor unfortunates have a right to determine their own needs for their political lifestyle, their self-realization, and/or their need to 'do their own thing'". . . .

Really now, don't you think you should quit publicly shaming and humiliating those poor Republicans lest they have their psyches twisted, and they then commit a really heinous crime—such as resenting your usurping the role of defender of public

The Editor

the Watergate Case

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morality on the one hand, while "Style"-ishly defending public amorality as a "right" on the other? No? Oh, well, I didn't expect you to listen to me any more than I expected to be more than distressingly amused by your frustration over the conditions you have had a major hand in creating.

On the other side, aren't you glad for the "public apathy" toward your belief that "right" consists of the press being free to choose what shall be "right"?

FORREST L. MILLER.

Rockville.

Two Wrongs Make a Right?

. . . I have heard several commentators say that the American public is apathetic toward the Watergate incident, etc., because there is an acceptance of this type of dirty pool as normal political by-play. Maybe the Democrats are doing much the same as the Committee for [the] Re-Election [of the President] is alleged to have done. Does one wrong excuse another? No person with any sense of fair play will answer this question in the affirmative! . . .

EDWARD SHAPIRO.

Washington.

What Matters Is Who Does It

I seem to recall that during the Goldwater campaign The Post relished the fact that some enterprising Democrat infiltrated the GOP ranks and sabotaged a number of press releases and schedules before being discovered. Apparently, the important element is who is being sabotaged and not the fact that such things do happen.

Frankly, I am bored with the Watergate happening and I am sure that a substantial portion of your readers share my ennui.

AMES W. WILLIAMS.

Alexandria.

Another Press Release?

As a reader who occasionally pursues a news article to the last paragraph, I am amazed that no government agency, no columnist, no editorial writer, apparently no citizen, seems to have read the first Post article on the Watergate affair to the end. Did no one else note that two of the five "burglars" caught there are longtime friends, associates, and employees of Jack Anderson, and that Anderson went their bail and invited them to his home upon their release?

Barker and Sturgis, it was noted casually in the last paragraph, are "soldiers of fortune," frequently employed by Jack Anderson.

I am an admirer and regular reader of Anderson's column, but I cannot avoid the impression that some of his material is obtained by means other than the "press release." Anderson has been strangely silent on the subject of the Watergate affair, offering merely an infrequent comment on its scandalous nature.

I offer these observations only to suggest that, rather than a wholly Republican or wholly free-lance operation, the Watergate break-in may have been a mixed bag that included "investigators" of diverse backgrounds and interests.

RICHARD E. GRANT.

Alexandria.

Trusting the President

Would you be interested in one theory as to why the Watergate case, ITT, the fantastic tales attributed to Donald Segretti, and the politicians' contumelies against President Nixon seem to be having so little impact on the electorate?

In the first place, I suggest that people like me do not accept the word of Jack Anderson, ex-FBI agent Baldwin, and those reticent "sources" of yours over the word of the President. It's a matter of trust and confidence.

Furthermore, the attacks on the President by candidates, television commentators and your newspaper's staff writers are so intemperate that the mind suspends belief in what they say. Even such political observers as David Broder, Benjamin Bradlee, Walter Cronkite, and Eric Sevareid—men whose judgment I respected even when I disagreed with them—have seriously damaged their credibility as far as I am concerned.

And finally, I know from experience that any institution, any Congressional committee, and certainly any political campaign organization can be infiltrated by zealots who gallop off on their own private crusades. When their escapades come to the attention of responsible authorities, these people are properly disciplined, prosecuted or dismissed. The man at the top can be faulted only if he condones their actions and keeps them on his staff. He is not required to chastise them in public.

MICHAEL PATRICK RYAN.

Norfolk.

Ironic Happenings

... What irony that these activities should be carried out on behalf of a man who has gained a reputation battling communism as a threat to our freedom. It is difficult to conceive of a greater threat to our freedom than activities which directly interfere with the democratic process of selecting the nominee and electing a President and which infringe on the privacy of those working for the candidate of their choice.

JAY GROSSMAN.

Annandale.

A Congressman's View

In the face of Republican silence on the unfolding story of operations of the Committee to Re-Elect the President, I write only to commend The Washington Post for your professional courage and commitment to the ascertainment of the truth. Regardless of the committee's activities which are still in dispute or unknown, the facts that are known should cause a feeling of outrage and dismay on the part of Republicans who treasure truthfulness and integrity as basic cornerstones of the Republican Party.

Whatever may be the benefits of political espionage and electronic surveillance, they have no place in operations directed from the White House against the political party not in power.

It is a tragedy that the American people have become so accustomed to secrecy, deception and suppression of the truth in recent years, that a public outcry has not already forced a complete explanation from the White House. I know Clark MacGregor to be a decent and honorable man. His attack on The Post, however, is an attack on the motives and credibility of those that would publish the truth; it is not an explanation of the activities of the Committee to Re-Elect the President which he now heads. As this administration declined to question the truthfulness of Ramsey Clark but chose instead to attack his patriotism, so now its practice is to condemn an opponent rather than to answer his charges. I can't express too strongly my respect for The Post in standing almost alone against the enormous power of an administration which is willing to use that power not only to conceal the truth but to suppress it.

At the very least, the President owes a full disclosure of the part played in the Watergate and Segretti operations by personnel employed now or previously by the

White House and the Committee to Re-Elect the President.

In the military service, a unit's excellence is generally the result of a commanding officer's leadership; when a unit performs badly, it is usually because of a failure of that leadership. The commander creates the environment in which subordinates either feel free to commit crimes or not. The Commander-in-Chief owes an explanation as to whether he knew of the Segretti and Watergate operations, and if not, who it was who knew of them but failed to advise him.

I say these things with regret. I have been a Republican all my life. My Republican colleagues in the House and Senate include some of the most decent men and women in America. The activities of the Committee to Re-Elect the President, however, are such as to impel all of us to disassociate ourselves from that committee and those to whom they have reported in the White House until a full explanation is made. The identity of the highest official who was aware of and condoned the Watergate and Segretti operations should be made public and he should resign or be fired forthwith, whether it is Dwight Chapin, John Mitchell or the President himself.

The activities in question challenge that most basic of our national assets, the faith of our people in our very system of government.

Unless this administration is willing to fully disclose the complete operations of the Committee to Re-Elect the President with respect to the Watergate incident and the Segretti operation, I suggest that it should be rejected on Nov. 7 as unworthy of the trust of the American people.

PAUL N. McCLOSKEY JR.,
U.S. Representative (R-Calif.).

Washington.