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... Time to Make A Public Accounting

Two months ago Richard Nixon was inaugurated for the second time as the 37th President of the United States. After a near-record landslide this was the crown of perhaps the most remarkable comeback in American political history. Everything looked rosy with the President himself predicting for 1973 one of the best years of our lives.

The transformation occurring in these two months is the difference between day and night. With the second devaluation of the dollar and the swift drop in the stock market the economic picture looks far from bright. Inflation is pushing prices to levels not only for food but for almost every item in the household budget so high that consumers are in open revolt.

Most deadly of all is the Watergate scandal. The latest revelation by James W. McCord Jr., one of the convicted defendants in the bugging case, indicates that far more individuals were involved and that every effort was made from close to the top to put the lid on this odorous mess.

Everything The Washington Post reported, as coming from anonymous sources, seems about to be proved out. Repeated denials by the White House and denunciation of the newspaper have been shown to be futile in the attempt to hush up the whole matter. The trial of the seven, as forthright Judge John J. Sirica said at the close, was a farce.

The scandals of the Harding administration were crude money scandals. Warren Harding himself was a bumbling incompetent who had insisted before his nomination that he was unsuited for the presidency. Proved tragically correct he died before the men he had chosen for his cabinet were unmasked as bribe-takers and betrayers of his trust.

In the Truman administration the gift of several deep freezers to one of the President's aides was blown up into a national issue. Under President Eisenhower, poor Sherman Adams was driven out of office because he was found to have accepted a vicuna coat and a rug from an acquaintance with a petition for help from the government.

These, even the Harding scandals, were minor compared to what is coming to light today. They were examples of simple greed. The Watergate scandal and the reported scheme to sabotage Democratic candidates in their primaries was aimed at subverting the political process itself.

Directly related are the shenanigans in gathering in the \$47 million for the campaign to re-elect the President. Merely on newspaper reports the law appears to have been repeatedly violated. If prosecutions do not follow, the Department of Justice may be considered part of the conspiracy of silence.

Of the Republican Presidents of this century no two could be more unlike than Warren Harding and Richard Nixon. Harding's private weaknesses—women, whiskey and poker—contributed to his public downfall as in his amiable way he surrounded himself with dubious friends whose standards were lower than his own.

Mr. Nixon is the soul of probity. In his own private life and that of the members of his family he has sought to set an example to the country of propriety; a counter to the lowering of standards in so many areas of society. This surely contributed to the landslide.

But for all his personal righteousness the time has long passed when it is enough merely to deny that the White House is in any way involved in the Watergate scandal. Stretching the cloak of executive privilege to cover not only present but past members of the President's staff serves merely to feed the suspicion that something really rotten is at the heart of the whole wretched business. Nothing short of a complete and documented disclosure with the President's imprimatur will suffice.

It was all so needless. As the President said in his interview with the Washington Star-News the election was decided the day the Democrats nominated Sen. George McGovern. Why then the amassing of such vast sums of money by sly and highly questionable means? Why the folly of the Watergate and the vicious effort to undermine the Democratic primaries? Until responsible answers are forthcoming, public suspicion is certain to grow.

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