

'Let's Get Rid Of the Smell'

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By James Reston

WASHINGTON—If you listen to all the arguments and threats between the White House and the Congress these days, you might think this town was hell-bent for a constitutional crash, but that's not exactly the way it is.

All kinds of people are saying all kinds of silly and provocative things about the rights, duties and privileges of the executive and legislative branches of the Government, and howling for a "show-down" between the two, but the main thing is what happens here whenever the natural conflict between the parties or the Congress and the White House begins to get out of hand.

Somebody always gets up to defend the national interest rather than party interest, and if the issue is serious enough, to defend the rights of the Congress against any excessive demands by the executive—and this is what is happening now.

President Nixon has no more loyal supporter on defense policy or economic policy than Senator Barry Goldwater, the former Republican Presidential candidate from Arizona, but when it comes to defending Mr. Nixon's handling of the Watergate case, Senator Goldwater rebels.

"It's beginning to be like Teapot Dome," he told *The Christian Science Monitor*. "I mean, there's a smell to it. Let's get rid of the smell. . . . The President has to give assurances. I think the people will believe him. I don't want to see this man end his term with something hanging over him that will keep the Republicans from electing another President. . . ."

Other people, of course, take a different view. For example, Senator Goldwater's friend, Attorney General Kleindienst, told a Senate subcommittee the other day that the Congress could not compel any of the over two-million Federal employes to testify before Congress on the Watergate or anything else if President Nixon didn't want them to, and if Congress didn't agree, he suggested, then its remedies were to cut off the President's money or impeach him.

This was the most provocative statement since Mayor Hague of Jersey City announced in 1937 that "I am the law," and Ed Muskie, when he heard it, almost blew through the roof. But what was much more interesting is that prominent members of the Attorney General's own Republican party protested much more effectively than Senator Muskie.

The chairman of the House Republican Conference, Representative John B. Anderson of Illinois, announced publicly that Attorney General Kleindienst's remarks were "unnecessarily provocative and contemptuous of Congress."

"More important," he added, "it contained such an alarming and dangerous expansion of the notion of executive privilege that I can see only

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one course of action: Congress must immediately pass legislation strictly limiting executive privilege lest the delicate balance of shared power between the two branches be ruptured permanently."

Meanwhile, even Mrs. Anne Armstrong, a White House counselor, who is Mr. Nixon's liaison between the White House and the Republican National Committee, said publicly that she agreed with Senator Goldwater that the Watergate case was hurting the Republican party but was convinced that the Administration was determined to clear it up to the satisfaction of the American people.

Hopefully, Mr. Nixon will read the signals from his own party supporters and get the Watergate suspicions out of the way. He is in more trouble with his own party now than at any time since his first Checkers speech of 1952, and now he needs a second.

As Goldwater says, he needs to clear the air. He needs the cooperation of his own party and of the Democratic majority in Congress to pass his trade bill, to control the budget and inflation, to bring about the many useful reforms of his second term, and come down to the 200th anniversary of the Republic in 1976 with a reasonably united country.

But there is still a crisis of confidence, which Senator Goldwater has defined better than anybody else. Nobody but the President can remove it. He has to speak out.

Other Republican leaders besides Goldwater are telling him the same thing, but apparently things have been done in the name of the Republican party at the Watergate that he is not sure about or cannot admit if he does not know about them, so he holds back.

Meanwhile, Mr. Nixon is confronted with inflationary problems at home, monetary problems abroad, military problems in Cambodia, political problems on Capitol Hill—in all of which he needs the cooperation of a Democratic majority which is affronted by his impounding of Congressional appropriations and his refusal to let his aides testify on Capitol Hill.

So long as this was merely a feud between the White House on the one hand and the Democrats and the press on the other, Mr. Nixon could prevail, but now even leaders of his own party are rebelling against his silence on the Watergate and his dictatorial attitude toward Congress.

They are saying in effect that the political game has gone on too long, that the time has come for plain speaking and common decency, and that the national interest now requires a clear statement of the whole Watergate conspiracy from the President himself.