

# Watergate Reverberations

To the Editor:

I am intrigued by Ronald Ziegler's use of the word "operative" in his explanation of the President's latest remarks on the Watergate scandal. According to the press secretary, the President's statement last week now constitutes "operative fact" regarding Watergate, notwithstanding a series of previous contradictory public statements by our Chief Executive.

Does Mr. Nixon think that his most recent comment on a given matter constitutes the creation of a new reality? To the contrary, the reality is this: Either Richard Nixon knew about Watergate planning, etc., long ago and has been lying to the public, or his trusted staff assistants were lying to him by omission or commission. In the former instance, the President may be an accessory to a felony; in the latter, his judgment of those he has selected to handle complex and sensitive matters of national trust is to be gravely questioned.

In either event, he is clearly within the circle of responsibility for the larger legal implications of the Watergate affair.

ELIOT H. STANLEY

Washington, April 21, 1973

To the Editor:

It bores me that on every newscast there's the Watergate story. Every daily newspaper headlines Watergate. Why the clamor? Why such a fuss over this particular incident?

I respectfully ask the following question of those people who are so determined that the full story of Watergate be published and aired, and who seem hell-bent on a modern-day crucifixion:

Why didn't you demand, with equal vigor, that the American public be given the full story from the Warren Commission on President Kennedy's tragic assassination? (There was no death at Watergate.)

Another life was lost at Chappaquiddick. Why only a slap on the wrist and never bring it up again?

A former Attorney General visits the enemy during wartime. Why no organized move to censure him?

Political espionage is nothing new, though, I imagine, the methods change. Senator Barry Goldwater said on a Dick Cavett Show that he and his aides were spied upon throughout the 1964 Presidential campaign. The morning after that show there was no clamor, no fuss.

Sure, I would like to know about Watergate, but before we are all driven into being a lynch mob on the matter, I would like to know the full particulars on the other stories I've listed. Let's not operate on a double standard. It's not the true American way. Let's "let it all hang out."

BOB MORRIS

Andalusia, Ala., April 20, 1973

To the Editor:

In parliamentary governments, if high officials were implicated in a violation of ethical and legal norms such as has occurred in the Watergate af-

fair, a vote of confidence in the administration would be in order. There would also be a real possibility that the government in power would resign and call for a new election.

If Richard Nixon wishes to clear the air of the Watergate break-in and restore the confidence of the people in his Administration, the resignation of his Administration to facilitate a vote of confidence would be an honorable course of action.

(Asst. Prof.) DAVID ZIPPIN

William Paterson College

Wayne, N. J., April 21, 1973

To the Editor:

The removal of Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst from responsibility for the Watergate case is understandable. The substitution of Henry E. Petersen is puzzling, if not ominous.

Much of Mr. Petersen's career stems from promotions given him by former Attorney General John N. Mitchell. Not only has Mr. Petersen expressed tremendous admiration for Mr. Mitchell, he is indebted to him.

Furthermore, in this instance, Mr. Kleindienst would appear to be the more reliable prosecutor. He has always been close to Senator Barry Goldwater. Indeed, it was his relationship with Mr. Goldwater that got him his job as Assistant Attorney General, under Mr. Mitchell, and now Attorney General. Senator Goldwater's outspoken criticism of the White House handling of Watergate, a criticism that must have come after discussions with Mr. Kleindienst, strongly suggests an objective attitude on Mr. Kleindienst's part.

Whether Mr. Mitchell will be indicted is a question of judgment. Enough has been said by Mr. Mitchell himself to suggest strongly the possibility, even if the statements of Jeb Magruder and others are ignored.

Looking at this matter in the kindest possible way, the question of whether or not to indict Mr. Mitchell must be an agonizing one for Henry Petersen. Looking at it less kindly, the circumstances suggest a contrived attempt by President Nixon himself to protect his old friend and confidant, Mr. Mitchell. It was after a day of conferences with Mr. Kleindienst that the President removed him and substituted Mr. Petersen. Mr. Petersen will report directly to the President. The fine hand of the President seems to be in evidence.

Even more ominous is the possibility that the President may be protecting himself. If the President knew of these sordid affairs, he certainly knew from Mr. Mitchell.

What if the President himself were called to take the oath? Is he above the law in this respect? What if Mr. Kleindienst had suggested it?

If the purpose of this exercise is indeed to search for the truth, Henry Petersen, however commendable his qualities, is not the man to do it. The investigation, and the prosecution, must be conducted by a lawyer free of any conflict of interest or affiliation and free of any appearance of conflict.

Unless this is done, it may always appear that responsibility goes to the President himself.

LEE S. KREINDLER

New York, April 23, 1973

To the Editor:

It is a disturbing measure of our times that so many Republican apologists repeatedly grounded their earlier disavowals of White House complicity in the Watergate affair on the "certainty" that "nobody at a responsible level could be so stupid."

It is curiously revealing that what they found unbelievable was simply the stupidity. Never mind ethics, legality, constitutionality or fair play. Stupidity was the inconceivable. The incongruity of the other possibilities (now realities) in a law-and-order Administration troubled them apparently not at all.

For John Mitchell, former Attorney General and "law and order" champion, the go-ahead rested on productivity—the only consideration cited by him in dissuading him from support for the Watergate activity, if he was indeed dissuaded.

Concern over corruption of the democratic process seemed to figure less, if at all. Even today, such concern for Governor Meskill (news story, April 20) constitutes the self-indulgence of "titillation" and "Congress should be devoting itself to more important matters."

In the thinking of such apologists, it was politics, not a crime—the crime itself gave them hardly a moment for pause.

IRENE WINKELMAN

New York, April 20, 1973

To the Editor:

The Nixon Administration has so often resorted to charging those involved in radical political activity with conspiracy (when no other charge would be vague enough to gain a conviction) that it would seem only fitting that aides of the President involved in the planning of the Watergate break-in and other acts of political sabotage be charged with conspiracy.

It is indeed ironic that the very crimes Daniel Ellsberg and Anthony J. Russo are now on trial for in Los Angeles—espionage, conspiracy and theft—are the very activities engaged in by President Nixon's own aides.

Many reporters and commentators have suggested that it might be difficult to prove illegal activity on the part of some Presidential aides. I would only point out that this Administration has never lacked ingenuity in prosecuting political activists through vague and sometimes forgotten statutes. And lacking this, the

very weapon most often used by the Nixon Administration, namely conspiracy law, should be turned against it. If ever there was a clear case of conspiracy, it is the Watergate.

Nor does this conspiracy involve only the actual planning and burglary of the Watergate; it also involves the attempt, through large sums of money, to silence the seven defendants in the case who were tried earlier this year. Furthermore, there may have been a conspiracy in the White House investigation last August to conceal the real truth and the extent of involvement by some of the President's most trusted aides.

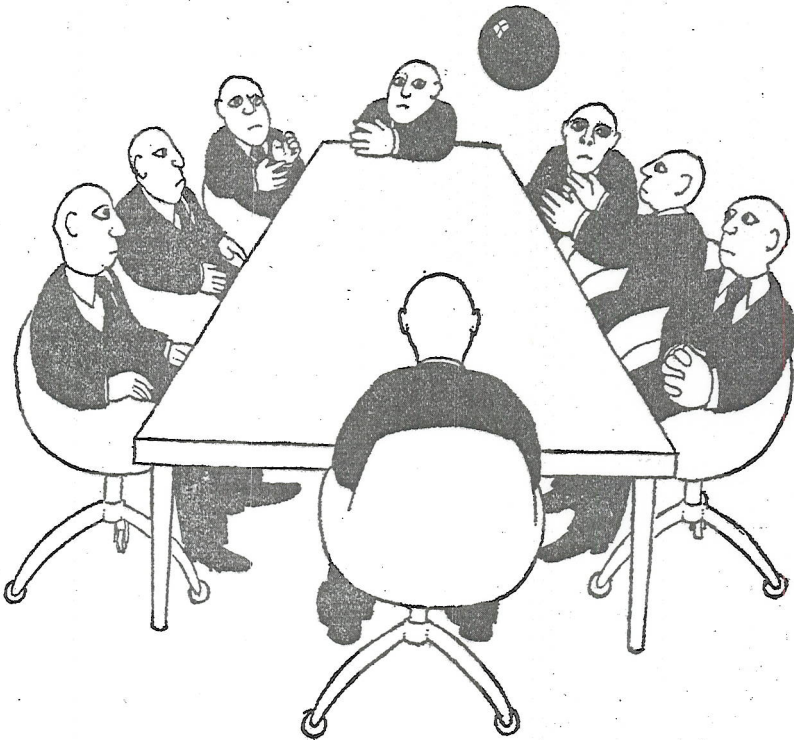


The Administration has practiced its conspiracy on two levels: through political trials and through a campaign of espionage, burglary and disruption against the opposition party. The time has long since passed when this condition should have been exposed.

RALPH V. ROGERS  
Sudbury, Mass., April 19, 1973

To the Editor:

How ironic that the Attorney General of the United States, in an April 19 Op-Ed column, should harken back more than 2,000 years to find the words to vent his wrath at a criminal-justice system that allows burglars, forgers and thieves to remain free on



Tom Kleh

bail to continue plying their trades.

"Those who do not prevent crimes when they might, encourage them," Attorney General Kleindienst quoted Roman statesman Cato the Elder.

April 19 also happened to be the day that Attorney General Kleindienst disqualified himself from the Watergate investigation because of the involvement of several of his present and former colleagues in the Nixon Administration.

Among those implicated in the sordid spectacle of spying, lying and bribing were:

President Nixon's closest political adviser and Mr. Kleindienst's predecessor as Attorney General.

President Nixon's White House counsel and former deputy to Mr. Kleindienst in the Justice Department.

President Nixon's chief political fundraiser and former Secretary of Commerce.

President Nixon's former deputy assistant and appointments secretary.

President Nixon's personal attorney.

President Nixon's former special assistant and deputy campaign manager.

I wonder whether Mr. Kleindienst would apply the tough, timeless standard of Cato the Elder to himself or to the President—especially to the President.

Even if the President and the present Attorney General somehow manage to escape direct implication in the Watergate crimes, how can they escape the larger crime suggested by a great statesman some 2,000 years ago? It is surely a crime that reaches beyond the likes of mere burglars, forgers and thieves.

Ultimately, the crime posed by Cato is a Presidential crime, and its commission is already too painfully apparent to the American people.

PAUL LEVENTHAL  
Washington, April 20, 1973

To the Editor:

The Times "log" (April 18) of the successive tacks in President Nixon's 180-degree veer in the Watergate affair brings to mind Eleanor Roosevelt's dead-pan response, some years ago, when asked her opinion of the then Senator Nixon. Quoth Mrs. Roosevelt, "He is a man without conviction."

CHARLES PEMBERTON  
New York, April 20, 1973

To the Editor:

John N. Mitchell's present position—sworn to, as far as one can gather, before the grand jury—seems to be that on at least two occasions while he was Attorney General, Jeb Magruder and G. Gordon Liddy (perhaps joined by John W. Dean 3d) had discussed with him their plans for bugging the Watergate. This raises two interesting questions:

Why would men conspiring to commit a crime go to the Attorney General of the United States, the country's chief law enforcement officer, to tell him about it?

Why would the Attorney General, having heard this on at least two occasions from their own lips, not take steps to have them arrested for conspiracy?

HERBERT APERI  
Larchmont, N. Y., April 23, 1973