

2 Views of Nixon Action

Progress Is Cited

By James Reston
N.Y. Times Service

Washington

There is more, much more to be uncovered in the current Washington scandal, but much has been accomplished in the last few days, and this may be a good time to pause and recognize what has been done.

President Nixon has made substantial progress. He rejected the course of defiance and sentimentality.

He was urged by some to "tough it out," even to portray the Republican conspiracy as a defense against a dangerous plot by the militants of the left, and to stick by his two principal assistants, Haldeman and Ehrlichman. But he accepted his responsibility, though not blame, for the mess, and let Haldeman and Ehrlichman go.

As usual, it is wiser to pay attention to what the President does rather than what he says, and he has done enough to make a new beginning and turn the coverup into an objective investigation.

Process

The restoration of public confidence in the integrity of the White House and the political process begins precisely with following generous presidential sentiments with specific presidential acts that match the rhetoric.

This town is full of gloomy conclusions that the President and his administration have been crippled in the short run and irreparably damaged in the long run by these scandals, and while this may be true, it is not inevitable if the President's future acts measure up to his words.

Already, there are signs of a new attitude in the White House. The President has not only cleaned out the top of the White House administrative and domestic staff, but has given Elliot Richardson the right to appoint a special supervising prosecutor from outside the administration to carry on the investigation.

Also, immediately after his speech, he had the congressional leaders in for a talk and called his cabinet into session.

Apology

Meanwhile, Ronald Ziegler, the White House spokesman, actually apologized to the Washington Post for his contemptuous remarks about that paper's reporting on the Watergate, and the President himself visited the White House press room as a gesture of reconciliation.

These are small things, but they are important. At the heart of this long tragedy has been an assumption on the part of the President and his principal aides that those who dissented from his policies were not only wrong but malicious, and if he is now going to try a different course, the chances are he will get a fair response from both the Congress and the press.

It's Called Ambiguous

By Mary McGrory
Washington Star Service

Washington

It figured that Watergate would be somebody else's fault. We learn from the Oval Room that while Richard Nixon is responsible, we are all to blame.

"The lesson is clear," he said toward the end of ambiguous and anti-climatic speech. "America must not

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again fall into the trap of letting the end, no matter how great, justify the means."

We all, it follows from that, figuratively put on rubber gloves the night of June 16 and broke into the Democratic National Committee headquarters to put in or take out bugs, and open a few desks—in the noble cause of re-electing Richard Nixon.

Question

Why did we do it?

The President is still of two minds about the whole thing.

On the one hand, he tells us now, he was "appalled" and "shocked" when he heard about it, even though at the time, his press secretary refused to comment on "a third-rate burglary."

On the other hand, the President can see how it happened.

"I know how it can be very easy under this intense pressure to fall into shady tactics."

"Both of our great parties have been guilty of such tactics in the past," he revealed.

The Watergate break-in was "a senseless and illegal act," he says.

But we must remember that it "may have been a response by one side to the excesses" of the other side.

The "other side" at the moment was a storefront headquarters on Capitol Hill, and nobody has yet said that anybody in the McGovern headquarters was laundering money or burning government documents.

Charges

And while the charges arising out of the matter have raised "serious questions about the integrity of the White House" the President is bowing out of the whole affair.

"I must now turn my full attention once again to the larger duties of this office," he said.

The President did not confide the findings of his own investigations, the "major developments" which caused the scales to fall from his eyes.

"Some people," he said, "are saying the Watergate demonstrates the bankruptcy of the American political system." This is his view of the matter. Most people are saying it is the foulest scandal ever to befall the GOP.

It seems unlikely they will be moved by the President's plea for prayers. What they wanted was facts, not rationalizations and contradictions.