

Proxmire Sees Nixon Involved In Watergate but Scores Press

NYTimes

By LINDA CHARLTON MAY 9 1973

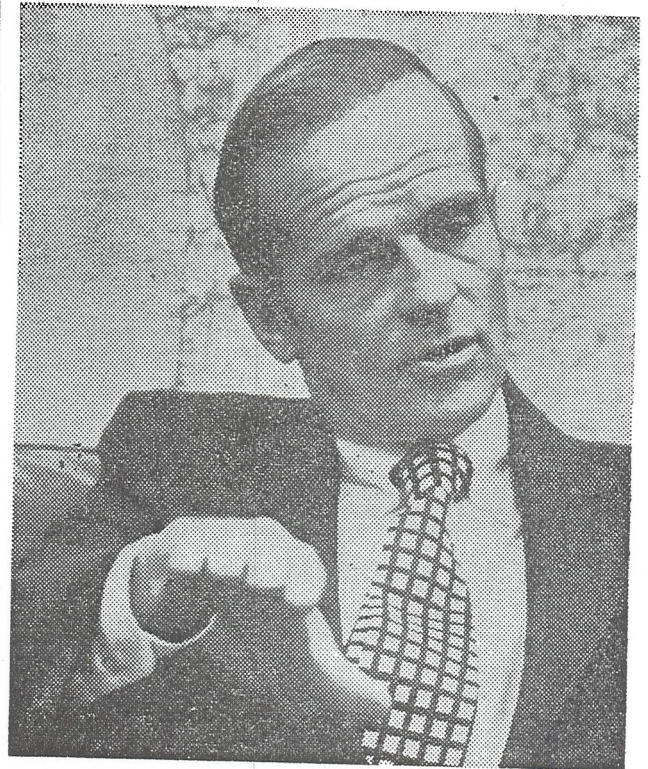
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, May 8—White House meetings that seemed to imply that Mr. Nixon had direct knowledge of and involvement with White House attempts to cover up the Watergate operation and related incidents.

In a telephone interview, Mr. Proxmire said that he remained "very, very bitterly opposed" to many Nixon Administration actions and programs but that "I think fair is fair."

He said, in reply to a question: "I don't think the President should be treated with any more consideration than his aides. But the crux of the whole matter is whether or not the President had knowledge of the Watergate case, and this should not rest on the

Continued on Page 28, Column 3



The New York Times

Senator William Proxmire in his office in Washington

Proxmire Calls Press 'Unfair' To Nixon in Watergate Articles

Continued From Page 1, Col. 7

apparently unsupported allegations of unidentified investigators."

Later today, Miles McMillin, the editor and publisher of The Madison (Wis.) Capital Times, said that Senator Proxmire "told me in a telephone conversation Monday that President Nixon is involved in Watergate up to his ears, that he could not see how he could get out of it."

Senator Proxmire, asked to explain an apparent contradiction between his own expressed judgment on the President and his attacks on the press for printing "disputed, unproven, secret charges" against Mr. Nixon, said, "I don't think there's a contradiction. There are all kinds of reasons why the President's actions could be suspect," he said, noting that he had recalled in his speech Mr. Nixon's campaigns for the House and the Senate.

Mr. Proxmire added that he thought there was "lots of evidence" that the President was involved: "I think in my mind he probably is."

But, he said, there was a great deal of difference between expressing his private convictions in a private telephone call—he made the statement to Mr. McMillin, who is married to the Senator's first wife, in the course of a conversation about family matters.

Mr. Proxmire's Senate speech drew immediate support from both sides of the floor. The majority leader, Mike Mansfield of Montana, and Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania, the minority leader, joined in echoing Mr. Proxmire's criticism. Senator Scott said:

"We are seeing the shaking and scaring of the people of this country needlessly. They read in the papers that somebody said something terrible

about the President. . . . There is no time to tell the people, look, the President didn't do this. There's no proof."

Senator Mansfield urged that judgments in the Watergate case be withheld "until the evidence is in," saying: "Rumors and innuendos flourish, but they are not facts."

Senator Proxmire opened his speech by praising the press for a "superb job" in uncovering the Watergate scandal and said that the investigation must continue "until the whole story is told no matter who it touches or destroys, including the President himself."

But, went on, "when former White House counsel John Dean is reported throughout this country to have privately told grand jury investigators that the President was directly involved in a Watergate cover-up, President Nixon is being tried, sentenced and executed by rumor and allegation."

He noted that the "secret allegation" was reportedly made "by a witness as part of his bargain for immunity from his own prosecution," asking: "Doesn't the President have the same simple right that every other American has to be innocent until proven guilty?"

He noted his consistent opposition to Mr. Nixon and to many of his legislative proposals. He also recalled what he described as Mr. Nixon's "ruthless orders" for renewed bombing of North Vietnam last December and the "cruel and useless bombing of Cambodia" now.

"But none of this," he went on, "justifies the McCarthyistic destruction of President Nixon that is now going on." The several Watergate investigations, he said, including those being carried on by "at least 20 of the best investigative reporters in the business," are a guarantee of the discovery of "every significant fact."