



Proposal for Ending Watergate Horror

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BY GENERAL AGREEMENT of his colleagues, Herman Talmadge of Georgia is one of the ablest, most national minded men now in the Senate. He is also an influential member of the main committee investigating the Watergate horror. Hence some remarks of his are now highly pertinent.

"You can't tell how long this thing is going to go on, any more than you can tell how long it will take to unroll a ball of string," Senator Talmadge has said about the Watergate investigation. "But one thing any damfool can tell. It will be bad for the country — in fact it can be really dangerous for the country — to go on much longer without knowing the truth about the President."

Talmadge has therefore suggested a tentative proposal that makes good sense. The proposal is to take immediate steps to get to the bottom of President Nixon's real degree of involvement in the Watergate horror.

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ON THE BASIS of all the evidence to date, there are only five men who can now testify to the President's personal knowledge and complicity, or clear him from all material charges of knowledge and complicity — as the case may be. These five are the former Attorney General John Mitchell; the Republican bagman, Maurice Stans; and the three key White House staff members, H. R. Haldeman, John Ehrlichman and Charles Colson.

Daily we hear what the President was thought to have wanted — but always at second hand.

No one so far has testified, however, that "the President told me," or "the President requested," or "the President

ordered." The chances are immensely high, too, that no one can so testify — at least without committing perjury — except for Mitchell, Stans, Haldeman, Ehrlichman and Colson.

What Talmadge therefore has in mind is calling these five men out of order, without further delay, and without prejudice to subsequent orderly investigation of their own actions. They would be on the stand under oath. This time around, they would be asked solely about the President's role. In fact they would only need to be shown the seven denials in the President's Watergate statement of Tuesday and asked:

"Are these statements by the President true or false, to the best of your knowledge and belief?" If a single one of the five said there was untruth in any of the President's denials, that would be the proper signal for serious consideration of impeachment.

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ON THE OTHER HAND, if all five of these men supported the truth of the presidential denials, that would be the effective end of the poisonous talk about the President's own knowledge and complicity in the worst of what has been going on.

As Senator Talmadge remarked, moreover, it is desperately dangerous to go on as we are going, with the President's guilt or innocence always in doubt. The shadow of Watergate is known to have hung heavily on the Vietnam negotiations in Paris. The threat to the value of the dollar, the threat of galloping inflation, the threat that the energy crisis will get out of control — all these are also demanding immediate and bold action.