

Letters to the Editor

The Administration: A Defense and a Condemnation

To the Editor:

As the Watergate and related disclosures continue to unfold, the commentators in the press have belabored the immorality inherent in such practices and the corruption to our democratic institutions which they represent.

In the prevailing climate of judgment and law, it is almost impossible to consider the question from another perspective, since any such attempt is taken as compromising. Similarly, the suggestion of compassion is rejected as inappropriate to the case at hand—because of the seriousness of the offenses: firstly, because they were sneaky and hard to detect; and secondly, because of their pervasiveness. Furthermore, there is a special significance in the breach of the law by those who are sworn to uphold it.

However, from the perspective of political truth and pragmatism (which *realpolitik* is the dynamic motive underlying all international behavior) a case can be made to justify the underhanded and extralegal activities of the Republican politicians. For we have been witness for some years now to the spectacle of an organized campaign to subvert our national institutions—and all in the name of morality and protected by the tradition of democracy. Now even if we grant the protesters purity of motive, they must nevertheless be faulted for undermining our laws and for the disestablishment of our society.

I would suggest that the Watergate reaction not only was nobly motivated but was even justifiable in its execution. It is imperative that the Government preserve itself for the sake of

the country. If we succeed in purging the practice of internal spying from the Government, then we must also resolve to behave with respect and constraint toward it. I do not mean to prejudice the juridical aspects of the case but only to interject a few words of common sense and balanced judgment into the ongoing discussion in the press.

(Rabbi) OSCAR LICHTMAN
Brooklyn, May 22, 1972

To the Editor:

Amidst the furor of the Watergate scandal at least one truth is beginning to emerge. It is that we are not going to get the right answers until we begin asking the right questions. Up until now the main concern seems to have been: Can the Nixon Administration survive? The question we should be asking ourselves is: Should the Nixon Administration survive?

Why continue wasting the taxpayer's money trying to find out whether President Nixon told the truth when he absolved himself from all guilt in the Watergate affair? In the light of what Watergate and the Pentagon papers trial have revealed, the actual bugging and break-in of the National Democratic Committee headquarters appear as only a minor incident in a whole network of illegal operations in the conduct of government on the part of the Nixon Administration. Whether the President did or did not have anything to do with this particular operation now seems to be quite beside the point.

The real point is that a President cannot be removed from office for

being a liar. He can be put out of office for abusing his power, subverting the Constitution and failing to uphold his oath of office to defend that Constitution. All these things President Nixon has done. No longer is it a question as to whether we are going to get fascism in this country. The revelations of Watergate and the Pentagon papers case show us that we already have it.

If the American people have sunk so low in their moral standards, and even practices of decency for that matter, that they are willing to proclaim before the whole world that they would even think of condoning, to say nothing of actually approving, such unsavory goings-on at the very highest level of their Government, of course the Nixon Administration will survive. But the question still remains: Ought it to survive?

If the answer to this question is a resounding "no," then impeachment proceedings are no longer premature. In fact, the sooner they are set in motion the better will it be for the country. There is no point in continuing to pile up instance after instance of misconduct in the Administration while doing nothing about the matter. Enough evidence is now available to show what needs to be done. It is now time to act, whether by impeachment, as prescribed by the Constitution, a Supreme Court declaration proclaiming the election null and void because of fraud, as proposed by Ralph Nader, or the route of the 25th Amendment, as suggested by Anthony Lewis on May 17.

NORMAN BOARDMAN
New York, May 17, 1973