

For the Record

Goldwater
On Watergate

Excerpts from an interview by CBS newsmen Dan Rather with Sen. Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.) on CBS Special Report, "The Watergate Year," June 17.

Q: Vis-a-vis Watergate, what needs to be done most right now?

A: Mr. Nixon has to convince the American people that he's telling the truth. Now, I don't know how he's going to do that. I don't buy the idea that he has to have a press conference because you can get into every subject in the world but Watergate if you have a press conference. I don't see any advantage to his making a national television statement again. He's done this again and released another rather lengthy document that maybe half the people believed. I think he has to do everything in his power to convince the people that he's innocent of a cover-up and, two, that come hell or high water he's going to be the President and leader of this country.

Q: Should President Nixon resign?

A: No. I don't think he should. And I don't think he should be impeached. Now, I might not take that position if it could be proven without any question that he's lying. But I don't think he's lied. I don't think it can be proved even if he did lie. And I think the danger to the American—the danger to the country would be so great in these very pressing times overseas that I don't think it would be worthwhile risking it. Now, if it gets down to the fact that he has been guilty, and I don't think he has, I would say resignation would be the cheapest, easiest, and quickest way and put Agnew in and get going. But I don't expect anything to happen to bring that about.

Q: Where are the best examples or worst, if you prefer to put it that way, of government being in a state of paralysis or near paralysis right now?

A: Well, let's take a look at the Pentagon. We have no confirmed Secretary of Defense. I don't believe there's a single secretariat filled in the Air Force. There is a man who's filling in at the top but he's not going to be, as of now, the Secretary of the Air Force. There's at least eight or nine over there. I think there's over 60 vacancies in government that are really creating problems. For example, we want to write up the defense organization bill. We can't because we don't have a Secretary of Defense to bring over and say now, what about this, and what about that? And the same thing holds true all down through government where you find posts not filled...

Q: Senator, you've known Richard Nixon for a long while... In his moments of victory and moments of defeat. How much, if any, of what has happened can be traced to his quality as a loner?...

A: I think probably most of the trouble he had is the fact that he's never been able to be one of the boys. Now, I've seen him on occasion sort of let his hair down and there's no more delightful man in the world, no more communicative a man than Richard Nixon is when you catch him in those few, rare moments when he isn't measuring every single word he says or every gesture he makes. His biggest weakness has been the fact that he's lived his life by himself. He's never let his hair down to friends. He's never asked enough friends what he's done wrong or what he's done good. So I'd have to say that's his problem...

Q: Is this whole Watergate mess likely to be a major factor in the next presidential campaign?

A: It's going to have its effect. There's no question of it. I don't think it's going to have a major effect. Although there will be a large bloc of voters who will never forgive the Republican Party, even though the party had absolutely nothing to do with it, they'll never forget the word Republican as it relates to Watergate anymore than the oldtimers would forget the Depression as related to Hoover, even though Hoover had nothing at all to do with the Depression. This business is a question of where you are at the wrong time or right time. Again, it's a matter of who the Democrats put up. I think Agnew will be the Republican nominee. And I don't think Agnew has been touched by this. We get back into how much damage has it done at the precinct and district level. This is where you win elections. You don't win them in Washington. You don't win them in state capitals. You win them when you can turn out a thousand people to work for you when you only need about 500...

Q: Is it the constitutional aspects of some of the alleged acts that bothers you most?

A: Yes and no. The thing that gets to me—my favorite word is bug—things that used to bug me—I've got to think up a new word. The thing that bothers me is here I have spent over a third of my life, trying to build the Republican Party, adding my little bit to it, having been successful in the South and in the Southwest, and then all of a sudden, as I near the end of my time in politics, I wonder—what the hell's it all been for? Here we are just drifting around. More Independents than Democrats or Republicans. And we need a two-party system. I feel terribly let down frankly. That is the feeling that prevails over every other feeling. I just—I get up in the mornings and I think, oh, well, what the hell, what can you do?

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(Excerpts from this interview also carried by the NYTimes, same date, and includes additional quotes.)