

WIXPOST  
"Watergate: Due Process and the President"—Comment on The Post's Editorial Response to The Times of London

JUN 2 5 1973 JUN 2 5 1973

We Lose

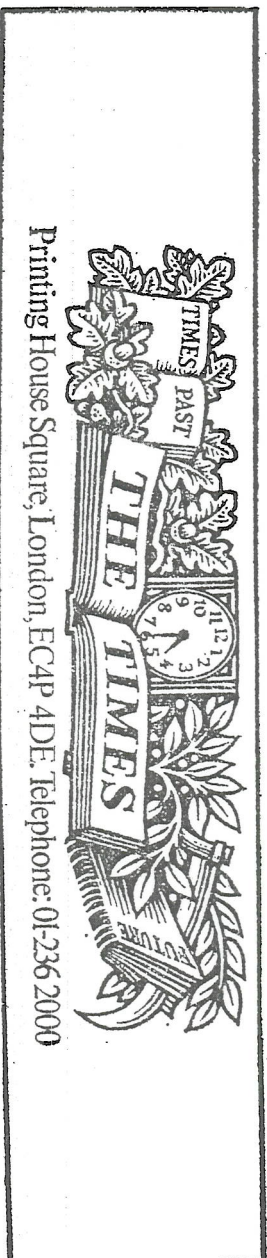
Reference your June 13 editorial:  
The Times—1, The Washington Post  
—0.  
Vienna, Va.  
W. E. MCKINNEY.

Could Have Been Harsher

Your criticism of the London Times attack upon you and the New York Times was more than warranted. Indeed you could have been far harsher. The editorial displayed not only the rather arrogant assertion that what's best for Britain is best for America but also a remarkable ignorance: of both the U.S. Constitution and of the way in which the Nixon administration has attempted to suppress the Watergate affair so far.

The idea that the press should censor news that the law allows it to publish because that news is damaging to a politician is an extraordinary one for a paper ever to advocate. When it is applied to a politician who has, for twelve months, allowed himself and his employees to do all that they can to discredit and mislead the press, it becomes grotesquely irresponsible.

The views expressed by the London Times editorial do not reflect those of one single British journalist whom I have ever met over here. So far as I know we all share an unqualified regard for the way in which you — and especially Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward — have pursued and still pursue the truth of the story. I personally think it is one of the finest pieces of journalism I have ever seen. The views expressed in the Times editorial seem to be more suited to a government information service than to a



newspaper. We have been spending a great deal of time recently disassociating ourselves from them.

WILLIAM SHAWCROSS.

Washington.

(The writer is a correspondent for the London Sunday Times, currently on a year's leave of absence in Washington.)

Thanks

Reference your editorial and that of the London Times in the June 13 edition: may I thank you for showing us the difference between a reckless editorial policy and a responsible one.

PAUL N. IVANCIICH.

Washington.

"Just Won't Wash"

The Times of London in its editorial "Due Process of Law" of June 5 has, in my opinion, properly indicted the American press (including television) and particularly The Washington Post and The New York Times for the use of lynch mob tactics in their reporting of the Senate Watergate hearings and the concurrent grand jury deliberations. Your June 13 editorial response

"Watergate: Due Process and the President" was the self-serving pleadings of the lynch mob's leader who has been caught with the grisly fruit of his efforts still hanging from the tree. It just won't wash.

With regard to your statement that "it was not the press nor Congress which brought us to this sorry state," let me venture the opinion that it precisely was the press which brought us to this sorry state and that Congress has done nothing to improve the situation. I submit that the press, in actively seeking out and encouraging the public babbling of presidential confidences by self-important persons, in subverting good order and discipline through the indiscriminate disclosure of the contents of state papers and in instigating by unwarranted press coverage the senseless rioting of juveniles not yet dry behind the ears, caused both Presidents Johnson and Nixon to withdraw farther and farther behind tightly-knit facades of personal advisors and to institute or permit to be instituted increasingly repressive measures to protect against the disclosure of confidential information. From that point, it was not far to Watergate.

Thus, in response to The Times of London's indictment, I paraphrase the recently unpublished but not published Doonesbury cartoon: "GUILTY, GUILTY, GUILTY!"

DONALD I. MOORE.

Alexandria.

Amend Constitution

The Times of London has made a strong case against "a Washington variant of lynch law" in the simultaneous trial of Mr. Nixon by Senate committee, TV, the Courts and the Press.

Some of the Times' conclusions may be too narrow for the broad ramifications of Watergate, still the British themselves may have some wiser wording in their Constitution than we do. For instance the following proposed amendment would change us toward the British form. (The proposal has been commented on by both Senator Percy, and Times of London Editor William Ress-Mogg at two recent National Press Club luncheons, during the Q and A. Percy didn't like it; Ress-Mogg felt it was for Americans to decide.)

Here it is:

XXXVII Amendment to the U.S.

Constitution:  
The President Vice President and all civil officers of the United States, shall be removed from office on a vote of no confidence by a majority of the House of Representatives when sustained by two thirds of the Senate.

This amendment would supply a missing ingredient to our Constitution: A more direct responsibility to the people by the Chief Executive. It would allow removal of a President and his administration from office at junctures when they have lost the people's support, but have committed no crime. It would also return some of the strength to the Congress it has recently lost.

Admittedly such an action as a no confidence vote from the Congress would be an extreme step, but it is nearly impossible to conceive of a Congress taking such measures lightly.

The Speaker of the House would succeed to the presidency through this machinery (which works precisely as does the present impeachment procedure, but spares the onerous—and high-impossible — need of imputing guilt to a sitting president.)

While the Speaker might be accused of forwarding his own interests by backing no confidence in the House, he would have no voice in the subsequent action (if any) in the Senate There, if two thirds of the Senate voted no confidence, the President and Vice President would be out, and the Speaker of the House would become President.

STAN JENNINGS.

Chevy Chase.