

# Getting on With National Business

For the next part of the congressional session, President Nixon's prospects appear a lot better than anyone has suggested as yet. He may even regain a surprising share of the lost authority of the White House.

Obviously, he must first steer clear of two huge snags. If the Supreme Court upholds U.S. District Judge Sirica on the famous tapes, and the President then defies the Supreme Court, Richard M. Nixon will automatically have a good chance of being impeached—and so he should! Vice President Agnew's problems also carry the risk of general shipwreck, although it appears a small risk. Yet these are observations any fairly noticing observer would immediately make. What is not being noticed is probably much more important. Consider, for example, what has been happening within the Senate Watergate investigating committee.

Before the congressional recess, an unseen split had already developed between the committee counsel, Sam Dash, and the senators whom Dash serves.

Almost without exception, the senators had begun to hanker to discharge their mandate from the Senate as soon as possible, and then "to turn the affair over to the courts," as the President himself has put it. Dash, in contrast, still wanted to go on with the big public show as long as possible, and this remains his desire.

Dash has been maneuvering for sup-

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port for a big public show in the recess. But the senators have been more significantly exploring the grass roots in their own states. If you will talk with them, you will find about the results you would expect.

In other words, the sympathy for Richard M. Nixon at the grass roots is minimal, and it is wholly confined to a loyalist minority. Even among the Nixon loyalists, plenty have been outraged by the sordid glimpse of the former Nixon White House afforded by the Watergate horror. But at the grass roots the country's situation is not regarded as cancerous, in the sense of requiring drastic corrective operations. There is a lot of support, too, for getting on with other national business, now that the needed Watergate exposure has been accomplished.

These being the approximate findings of the Senate committee members during the recess, it would appear that the senators will vote to shorten their

witness list and also to begin to run two concurrent sets of Watergate hearings. In both cases, the purpose would be to shut up shop as soon as possible. Some of the evidence still to be heard, especially in the truly ghastly areas of Republican money raising, may still be sensational, of course.

Yet unless the senators change their minds, the crucial thing is that an end is probably in sight. Sens. Herman Talmadge (D-Ga.) and Howard Baker (R-Tenn.) are probably the key figures under the committee chairman, Sam Ervin of North Carolina. Both Talmadge and Baker are known to have named Oct. 15 as the committee's most desirable cut-off date. There is no discoverable sentiment among the senators either for a radical committee report aimed to be directly hurtful to President Nixon.

The senatorial sentiment could be easily changed by a presidential defiance of the Supreme Court. But barring such folly, what may be called the super-public, super-spectacular phase of the Watergate horror should be drawing to a close. If this is indeed true, it has enormous and very hopeful meaning to the President.

One meaning is that the country may now become capable of contemplating other matters besides Watergate. In the last months, for example, the relationship between the Soviet Union and China has gone from bad to worse—to put it very mildly indeed. If the sadly applicable lesson of Czechoslovakia teaches anything at all, it teaches that a Soviet attack on China, necessarily nuclear, cannot rationally be ruled out any longer.

We have reached a strange pass, when such an increased possibility of a nuclear war attracts no interest whatever in the United States. Liquidation of this situation, so long prevailing, is bound to help the President because only presidents can deal with great matters in the United States. And this kind of future change should help the President in another way, too.

It should give the first-rate team the Watergate horror has all but forced on the White House a much better chance to show the team's paces. A much altered White House there dealing with the major crisis, with Henry Kissinger at the State Department and the other departments all in partnership—here is a future spectacle that can go very, very far toward altering the political climate.