

An Appeal for

(third in a series)

Advertisement

Advertisement

Advertisement

Fairness

"THE SIMPLE TRUTH"

On Wednesday, August 16, 1973, the President of the United States addressed the American people:

"I had no prior knowledge of the Watergate Break-In; I neither took part in nor knew about any of the subsequent cover-up activities, I neither authorized nor encouraged subordinates to engage in illegal or improper campaign tactics . . .

That was and that is the simple truth."

The President has indeed spoken "the simple truth;" he is innocent and he said so —simply and directly. Under the American system of justice an innocent man need do no more. As the President put it:

"In all the millions of words of testimony (before the Ervin Committee), there is not the slightest suggestion that I had any knowledge of the planning for the Watergate Break-in. As for the cover-up, my statement has been challenged by only one of the 35 witnesses who appeared—a witness who offered no evidence beyond his own impressions, and whose testimony has been contradicted by every other witness in a position to know the facts.

This too is "the simple truth."

THE RESPONSE: FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC

The President's speech was aimed at clarification—at putting Watergate in perspective. The reaction from the major media—television, radio and the press—was immediate and savage. The President's image had scarcely faded from the screen when breathless and eager commentators appeared to tell us what the President had said and why we should not believe it. But before we review the strange media reaction in this country, let us, like the President "put things in perspective." The uniqueness of the American media's outlook on all issues involving Richard Nixon can best be seen in contrast to the World Press reaction to the speech. On Friday, August 17, The London Times editorialized as follows:

"The first responses in the United States to President Nixon's speech is reported (in the American Press) to have been lukewarm. That was predictable."

But the Times goes on to express its own view:

"His (Nixon's) reaffirmation of his innocence last night, which must be accepted unless proved otherwise, suggests that he believes the threat of impeachment is now behind him.

The question of the tapes remains . . . the President is on firm ground when he claims executive privilege . . . a principle widely accepted by the American people, the Congress and the Supreme Court . . . and his appeal to get on with the urgent business of the nation will not go unheard.

Senator Ervin and his committee have had more than their day in court, or before the television cameras, they have had twelve weeks without producing any evidence. . . allegations that the President was personally implicated in illegalities or in the obstruction of justice have not been corroborated."

And in a front-page article in that same issue, The London Times concluded that:

"Americans, (have) seen the President face up to the issue with calmness and moderation, with all the dignity they expect of their President."

The measured and thoughtful response of The London Times to Mr. Nixon's remarks stands in stark contrast to the vitriolic outpourings from our domestic media. Contrary to The London Times' hope, Mr. Nixon's "appeal to get on with the urgent business of the nation" has been largely unheard by our media. A decision has clearly been made by the anti-administration press that the nation will not be permitted to turn from Watergate.

Their shrill attacks on the Nixon speech have made it plain for any who may have doubted that the media will not rest until Mr. Nixon is so shamed and disgraced that he will be unable to govern the nation.

The President's quiet dignity before the cameras and the American people clearly sent his media enemies into a collective tantrum. In their frenzy to tear the speech apart they have gone far beyond the bounds of rationality. Their claim that Mr. Nixon's speech was evasive does not accord with what we all heard on our televisions. Mr. Dean says that at their September 15 meeting, he "supposed" that the President knew about the cover-up. *The President spoke directly to this point:*

"On September 15, the day the seven were indicted, I met with John Dean, the White House counsel. He gave me no reason whatever to believe that any others were guilty. I assumed that the indictments of only the seven by the Grand Jury confirmed the reports he had been giving me to that effect . . . (that there were no others involved) throughout the summer."

What more could the President possibly say on this subject? He made clear that Mr. Dean's alleged assumption was incorrect. Mr. Nixon did not and could not have known about the cover-up precisely because Dean had been misleading him all summer into the belief that only the seven burglars were involved in the break-in. The President is corroborated in this matter by any number of witnesses who have so testified; Dean's statement stands as it stood three months ago totally without evidence or corroboration by others.

And yet the media has clearly chosen to believe Dean—a man mired in conspiracy, obstruction of justice and probable embezzlement—rather than accept the word of the President of the United States.

By what rules of honesty or decency are such decisions made? Obviously the media is motivated by other considerations. To them Watergate has become the major battle in the war to destroy the man who is the first President since Harry Truman to publicly challenge their pretensions to fairness and objectivity. *Nixon must be ruined;* and to this end all rules of decency and honesty are abandoned.

THE TAPES

The foremost example of media hypocrisy and inconsistency in the Watergate Affair is their "outrage" at the President's refusal to release his private tapes. *The New York Times* has led the pack in pursuit of this issue, and yet in 1961, *the Times* sang a very different tune. Commenting on the unauthorized release of records of presidential conferences, *the Times* complained:

"The secrecy of one of the highest organs of the U.S. Government has been seriously breached. How can advisors to the President be expected to give advice freely and easily and at all times honestly and with complete integrity if they have to worry about what their arguments will look like in print a few weeks later? What kind of advice can the President expect to get under such circumstances?"

Where *the Times* zealously defended the confidentiality of President Kennedy's conversations, they now demand with equal zeal that President Nixon be denied the right to confer with his aides in comparable privacy. *The Times* and its allies know that the President cannot release excerpts of the tapes. Suppose the President made the September 15 tape public and it proved Mr. Dean to be lying? Would not Dean's lawyers have the right, even the obligation to their client, to demand the release of all the tapes on the grounds that a man cannot be condemned on evidence taken out of context? Thus the release of one section of one tape might well necessitate the release of all tapes in the President's possession, totally destroying for generations to come the principle of executive privilege. The result would be an executive branch so emasculated as to undermine the present balance of powers and create a radically new governmental balance in Washington with all real power vested in the Congress.

Such a situation existed almost continuously in our country from 1868 to 1932, a period during which a chronically weak presidency created a climate of governmental mediocrity and stagnation to which no reasonable man would desire to return. Knowing all this, the media continues to encourage the people to believe that Mr. Nixon's defense of presidential privacy condemns him as guilty of some wrongdoing. Considering *The Times'* past position on this issue, it is difficult to take seriously their denunciations of the President's argument. *Clearly they are not after Mr. Nixon's tapes; they are after Mr. Nixon.*

Following the President's speech and the immediate media barrage, members of the Ervin Committee were interviewed. Only too willing to help the press sow doubt and confusion, Chairman Ervin declared the address to be "a rehash" and renewed his demand for the tapes "if they have not been altered." Senator Montoya declared flatly: "The President knows more than he said."

These two, having failed over a period of three months to make any case whatever against the President still persist in their shameful tactics of groundless accusation, innuendo and smear against the chief executive of our country.

If Mr. Nixon had changed his story between May 22 and August 16, Ervin would doubtless have accused him of deviousness and dishonesty. As it is, the President has declared his innocence once again—and this is called a rehash! Just what did they expect him to say? How could he give "details" of the cover-up if the whole burden of his statement is that he was unaware of it? The truth does not change over a three month period. *Mr. Nixon is innocent. He said so then; he says so now.* There is no evidence to the contrary, Ervin and company notwithstanding. *And this was and is the simple truth.*

These men and their media allies are determined to bury that truth along with Richard Nixon. By endlessly repeating their disingenuous call for the tapes; by repeatedly claiming that "the President has not responded to the charges" when he has already done so three times since April; by piling accusation upon accusation in their frenzy to bring down this man they fear and despise; by relying not on evidence—which they do not have—but on the tactic of the "big lie" which, repeated often and loudly enough, becomes accepted as truth—by all these means, unfair and foul, they seek to bludgeon to death the simple truth.

But, if they succeed, it will be because We, The People, have allowed it, have permitted these vengeful men to turn us from a calm and objective viewing of the evidence, to a blind, emotional acceptance of the baseless yet permeating atmosphere of scandal and guilt which they have so skillfully created.

We urge you to join with us in resisting the merchants of fear and discord and, in President Nixon's words, reaffirm,

"Our dedication to the principles of decency, honor and respect for the institutions that have sustained our nation's progress."

The gross inequity to which our "Appeal for Fairness" is subjected may perhaps be explained in dollars and cents. We paid the Washington Post \$1.89 per agate line, over THREE THOUSAND DOLLARS for this space in an attempt to overcome the enormous free space given toward the defamation of the President and the Presidency. It's like trying to put out a forest fire with a mouthful of water. IS THAT FAIR?

WE, THE PEOPLE, must demonstrate to the world that we have not panicked, that we have not allowed Watergate to destroy our sense of balance and proportion, and, most importantly, that when our President carries out the vital foreign and domestic duties of his high office—as he has continued to do through this crisis—he does so with the support and confidence of the nation behind him. We have grown from a committee of eighteen to over ten thousand nationally within two weeks. GIVE US THE TOOLS AND TOGETHER WE WILL DO THE JOB.

LET US HEAR FROM YOU. THIS IS THE TIME FOR FAIR-MINDED AMERICANS TO SPEAK OUT IN DEFENSE OF THE PRINCIPLES WHICH HAVE BUILT AND SUSTAINED OUR FREE SOCIETY.

NATIONAL CITIZENS' COMMITTEE FOR FAIRNESS TO THE PRESIDENCY:

(Non Profit . . . Non Partisan)

General Chairman
 Rabbi Baruch Korff
 Rehoboth, Mass. 02769

Vice Chairmen
 Olof V. Anderson
 North Kingstown, R.I. Manufacturer
 P. Hoyt Fitch
 Providence, R.I. Insurance Executive

Treasurer
 Joseph E. Fernandes
 Norton, Mass. Business Executive

Secretary
 Thomas Wolfe Pearlman
 Providence, R.I. Attorney-at-Law

Dr. Seymour Siegel
 New York City
 President, Jewish Rights Council

Monsignor Henri Hamel
 New Bedford, Mass.
 Pastor, St. Joseph's Church

Michael S. Kogan
 Little Falls, N.J.
 Editor-in-Chief
 Ideas Magazine

The Rev. Harold Udell
 Taunton State Hospital
 Chaplain

The Rev. Robert C. Kelley
 New York
 Honorary Chaplain
 The Cathedral Church of
 St. John The Divine

Professor Jordan D. Fiore
 Bridgewater State College
 Bridgewater, Mass.
 Chairman, History Dept.

SPONSORS

Gary Zwerchkenbaum
 Poughkeepsie, N.Y.
 Business Executive

Charles J. Worthington
 East Providence, R.I.
 Contractor

Felix Santangelo
 Providence, R.I.
 Retired Cab Driver

Jack Rass
 Long Island City, N.Y.
 Business Executive

John S. Bottomly
 Mills, Mass.
 Attorney-at-Law

L. Montgomery Shepard
 Benton Harbor, Michigan

Henry M. Tyszkowski, M.D.
 East Providence, R.I.

Rabbi Nathan N. Schorr
 New York City
 Chairman, American
 Jewish Association

James W. Lagerfo
 Drew University
 Madison, New Jersey

Miss Helen G. Frick
 Pittsburg, Pennsylvania

Mrs. Edward Cooperstein
 Taunton, Mass.
 Housewife

Mrs. Burrell T. Oughton
 Cardiff, California

Nello Cataldi
 Fiskville, R.I.
 Jeweler

Anthony J. Matera
 Fall River, Mass.
 Union Executive

J. Joseph Shillington
 Clarksville, Missouri

Prof. Ernest van den Haag
 New York City
 Lecturer, Writer
 Psychoanalyst

Since we first appeared in print as the "Ad Hoc Committee" we have grown nationally to more than 1500 men and women and are increasing in number at the rate of 2000 per week, from Maine to California. From time to time we will be compelled to rotate names of sponsors. Our messages have now appeared in twenty-three key cities and we are planning for two hundred. Your dollars and your support will make it possible to restore our image at home and abroad.

We are running two weeks behind in our acknowledgments. Please be patient.

NOTE: For information and authorization to establish a branch of the National Citizens' Committee for Fairness to the Presidency in your community, please write to Attorney Thomas W. Pearlman, 618 Industrial Bank Building, Providence, R.I. 02903

This message is paid for with contributions from readers of the Washington Post.

WP-9-573

Make checks payable to:
 Fairness to The Presidency
 Mail Care of
 United National Bank
 Norton, Mass. 02766

Sir: Enclosed is my contribution
 in the amount of \$
 in support of "AN APPEAL FOR
 FAIRNESS."

() You may use my name in fu-
 ture advertisements.
 () I volunteer to help in my
 community.
 (name)
 (address)
 (phone)