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# 'A Complete Clearing of the Air

## Introduction

WASHINGTON—How much shock, surprise and bad news can a nation absorb and still maintain its position as a world leader? Many concerned Americans are asking questions similar to this and for a very good reason.

As I see it this nation is literally up to its eyebrows in trouble—trouble ranging from an epidemic of scandal in high places, to outlandish and growing material prices, to shortages of food, gasoline, and a thousand other products we have always taken for granted in times of peace.

We are a nation that has been bombarded for months with charges and rumors of charges of wrongdoing in and about the White House. We are a nation that has seen its dollar devalued twice in recent times and still is in deep trouble on the foreign exchanges. We are a nation where interest rates are climbing at such a rate that home building has become virtually nonexistent and home buying is rapidly slowing to a stop.

Our nation has reason to be shocked. We have just come out of a long, costly, frustrating and bloody war. Yet the machinery needed to correct our neglected problems has ground almost to a dead halt. I have mentioned only some of our problems. Even so, I do not want to overlook the problem of ecology and the possibility of what Rachel Carson some years ago warned us could be a "Silent Spring."

The problems today have two things in common. They are gravely serious and almost completely unprecedented. We haven't had in our past the experience it takes to cope adequately with the present situation. Within the memory of modern man, we have not experienced a situation where high crimes have been placed at the very doorstep of the President, and the Vice President finds himself under an official investigation for possible violation of the criminal statutes.

But, here's a point I want to make—and I want to make it just as strongly and proudly as I can. And that is, we are living in a nation that is performing admirably in time of great distress—taking shock and bad news in its stride with gravity and calm. It is a nation, while only two hundred years old, that is displaying a poise and confidence in time of trouble that bespeaks a maturity that has surprised the entire world and served notice on the world that the United States of America intends to remain strong and play its allotted role in the leadership of the Free World.

It is unfortunate that the series of events known as Watergate came right on the heels of our preoccupation with the war in Vietnam. That war left us with many grave and serious problems—problems which require the very closest attention and very best efforts of the people running this Government. And almost immediately after the war ended, their attention, their efforts, and their time became absorbed in another series of negative events, the

Watergate investigation, the disclosure of financial irregularities in campaign financing in 1972, and the efforts of the Republicans to duplicate the finesse and effectiveness the Democrats had achieved years earlier in the political practice known as "dirty tricks" in campaign activities.

What it comes down to is this: a nation which devoted its attention and its best efforts for almost a decade to a war 7,000 miles away immediately had its attention diverted, not to the burning issues of our day, but to a discouraging, nonproductive episode known as Watergate. It is hard to imagine how a nation could give itself two greater handicaps than the Vietnam war and the Watergate scandals. Even so, I believe this nation, approaching its bicentennial, is more than adequate for the job.

## What to Do?

Of late, it seems a whole army of newsmen, commentators, educators, clergymen and politicians have been telling us what lessons we should learn from this series of events known as Watergate.

Some of these arguments are well-taken, others have at least some basis in fact, and many are just plain ridiculous.

I believe the greatest lesson of immediate importance to the American people is the one that teaches us that no President can successfully conduct the business of government while engaged in a running, 24-hour-a-day battle with the news media, the courts and Congress.

By the same token, I feel we have learned from Watergate how impossible it is for a Senate committee to obtain cooperation from the Chief Executive in a matter of crucial national importance by beating him over the head week in and week out in a public forum.

There can be no doubt that attitudes on both sides of the Watergate question have hardened in a way that spells nothing but trouble for Government credibility both at home and abroad. Public dissatisfaction is intense. And I do not believe that it resides entirely with the unfortunately adamant attitude of the White House. In fact my mail shows an increasing amount is being lodged against tactics that many American television viewers regard as unduly harsh, smug, and unfair on the part of the Senate committee.

Now if we are to get on with the business of conducting government in the best interest of the American people, I believe there must be more give and take. No matter how right you believe the executive branch to be or how thoroughly innocent you consider the President to be (and I happen to feel he is completely innocent of charges that he knew about the Watergate break-in ahead of time, or was cognizant of the massive attempt to cover up this episode and its related incidents), the fact remains that a complete clearing of the air is long over-

due if this nation is to start moving in the direction of solving the burning issues which plague its people. And the gravity and depth of those issues dictate going to extraordinary lengths. It may easily be, that, in this instance, we may have to sacrifice one executive's concept of Presidential confidentiality in the nation's interest.

And there is little doubt in my mind that we can at this same time sacrifice further televised hearings—with their monotonous repetition. I am not proposing an end to the Senate investigation, and to matters related to Watergate. But I am suggesting that we call a halt to the daily television spectacle that, by its very nature, holds the United States Government up to criticism and ridicule.

I believe that it is time for the Ervin committee to do its work in executive session and confine its publicity to statements by the chairman and official reports to the Senate. At the same time, I am suggesting that President Nixon release selected portions of the Watergate tapes through whatever device meets with the approval both of the White House and the Congress. I believe this can be done voluntarily without sacrificing the vital principle of separation of powers and without compromising Presidential confidentiality.

It would be helpful also if President Nixon would hold further free-swinging, wide-open televised press conferences and reply to any questions which do not endanger the national security.

The President's press conference of Aug. 22 was a large step in the right direction. I believe it put to rest at least some of the arguments to the effect that Mr. Nixon was so guilty he could not risk a no-holds-barred session with a press corps largely sprinkled with newsmen who personally dislike the President. No one, of course, expected that one session to satisfy all of the President's critics. One of the principals who remains unhappy is Senator Sam Ervin, chairman of the Select Committee created to investigate the Watergate scandal. Chairman Ervin seems to be saying that a group of newsmen without access to the committee's information could not ask the right questions. I believe it might be productive to explore with Senator Ervin and the White House the possibility of a nationally televised debate between the chairman of the select committee and the President of the United States on contested portions of the Watergate testimony. Needless to say, such an occasion would require stringent ground rules worked out in advance by both parties

## Is Long Overdue'

to the debate. This would be an extreme measure, but this is an extreme situation. On one hand, you have the chairman of the powerful investigation committee implying all kinds of wrongdoing on the part of a man elected only months ago by an overwhelming majority of the people. On the other hand, you have an embattled President who is under attack from many directions for the acknowledged irregularities and illegal acts of a whole band of men close to him in the White House and close to the major effort to gain a second term for that President in 1972.

Our nation is understandably off balance. Its people are discouraged and they are puzzled. For a long time I have argued for action on the part of the President to clear the air and get this ugly mess behind him so that he could move ahead and deal with the problems that confront the American people. I believe progress has been made and I believe a great deal more progress could be made if the President were to release selected portions of the Watergate tapes and engage Chairman Sam Ervin in a publicly televised give-and-take session.

Again let me say that I am not suggesting a complete halt to the Senate committee's investigation. I have no objection—in fact, I encourage and applaud—the committee's plans to delve into the murky area of "dirty tricks" in national elections. However, I believe this phase of the Senate inquiry needs expanding. And in this I speak from bitter experience as a candidate for President in 1964. I shan't go into all of the off-beat and unfair methods that were used by officials of the Democratic National Committee and others to sabotage and disrupt and spy upon my meager efforts to defeat President Lyndon Baines Johnson. However, I feel I must insist on one suggestion. If Murray Chotiner, a long-time Nixon political aide, is to be excoriated and investigated for planting a spy named Lucy Goldberg in the McGovern camp in 1972, I believe I have a right to insist that Mr. Richard Tuck, a paid employe of the Democratic National Committee, be called to account for his action in placing a spy on my campaign train as it traveled through Ohio and West Virginia in 1964. Newsmen who covered the event will remember that the spy in question was one Miss Moria O'Conner, who sought and received press credentials on my campaign train in the name of something called the Newman News Service. Miss O'Conner actually distributed derogatory campaign materials in a publication entitled "The Whistle Stop" throughout my campaign

train until she was caught in the act by one of my assistants.

Nothing illustrates the double standard in operation today any better than the Chotiner-Goldberg incident. This time the attractive female spy planted in a Presidential campaign is taken with utmost seriousness. If Lucy did some stealing, it was petty larceny compared to what Miss O'Conner performed for the Democratic National Committee in 1964. But I could remind my readers that the O'Conner episode was treated in all segments of the media as a hilarious prank pulled off by that jolly jokester Tuck. My question is, what differentiates Dick Tuck from Murray Chotiner?

But dirty tricks are only a minor part of this problem. The Watergate affair is serious and has been allowed to go on too long and occupy too much valuable time that could be put to much better governmental and legislative uses. Frankly, I believe it is long past the time when this entire affair, unsavory as it was, should be placed in its proper perspective. We can begin by describing Watergate in its proper terms. The whole affair was deplorable, illegal, un-American, frightening, scandalous, reprehensive, and lest we forget, stupid. Almost any adjective of this kind can apply. But that *does not mean*—and let me repeat—that *does not mean* that America is on the brink of disaster; that our democratic form of government has been destroyed; or that the two-party system has been destroyed.

And it certainly does not mean that we are in the throes of a tragedy greater than the Civil War, the two World Wars, the Korean war, the Vietnam war, or the great Depression of the nineteen-thirties. This is completely self-evident but the claim has nevertheless been made by respected members of the United States Senate.

We have had more than enough ridiculous hyperbole. We have had more recrimination and righteous anger, and indignation from public officials than this country needs.

In my opinion the Watergate guilty—and perhaps some of the nonguilty—have been pilloried enough by the news media and by political spokesmen, commentators and editorial writers. It is time for the process of jurisprudence to take over and bring out legal (as opposed to verbal) indictments upon which the courts can work the kind of justice in which our nation has always prided itself.

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*This is the first of three articles by Senator Barry Goldwater, Republican of Arizona.*