

NYTimes

SEP 13 1973 Barry Goldwater

Are There Any Leaders Left to Take Us Top?

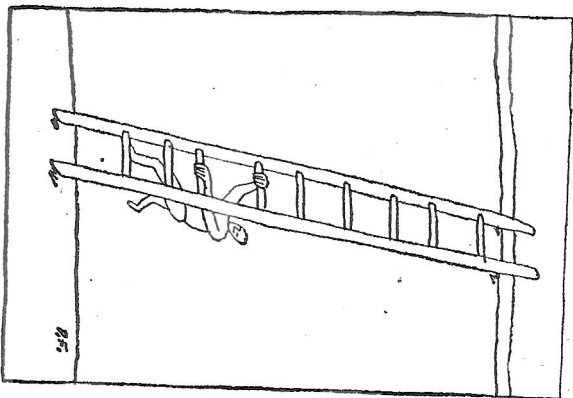
WASHINGTON — The Watergate scandal and the climate it has created will have political repercussions—perhaps far-reaching in future elections, but I seriously doubt if they will be confined to the Republican party. Rather, the reverberations of scandal and corruption will shoot through both major parties and create real trouble for incumbents, especially those who might have been subjected to earlier charges of campaign irregularities.

What began with the revelation of Watergate has spread far and wide throughout politics. Dozens of grand juries are at work throughout the country investigating charges against scores of officeholders and public officials both Republican and Democrat.

It may come as a surprise to some interested citizens that the scandals and rumors of scandals are not confined to Washington and do not swirl only around the White House and Federal agencies such as the F.B.I., the C.I.A. and the Justice Department.

Actually, investigation of charges against public officials and politicians has become almost a 1973 fad in prosecuting circles. The situation has led at least one nationally syndicated columnist, Pulitzer Prize-winner William S. White, to question publicly whether the enthusiasm for investigating has not become so widespread and indiscriminate that it has become a serious interference with the Government's business.

This certainly has been the case in Washington, where one national problem after another has been piled up onto a backlog which Federal officials lack sufficient time to deal with. In places like the Pentagon—which houses the officials entrusted with the defense and the national security—activity virtually ground to a halt at one point due to a lack of decision



Douglas Florian

by a besieged White House on a long list of vital vacancies in the top level of the military service.

Sorely needed action went unattended also in many other departments and bureaus which could not get proper direction from the higher-ups in government. Needless to say, re-organization of the Federal departments—one of President Nixon's major postelection projects—went by the board while the men who normally would have handled it were busy hiring lawyers and mapping their own defenses against charges growing out of Watergate.

All of this is bound to have an adverse political effect throughout the nation and especially in areas where the neglect of action caused the most hardship and confusion. Of course, the Administration under attack was Republican. In future election campaigns,

Democrat candidates and officials can be expected to make the most of this fact.

But, scandal or not, President Nixon still gets high marks for his first-term accomplishments. Watergate, in my considered opinion, has not entirely erased the memories of a war ended, prisoners of war returned to their loved ones, a visit to the Great Wall of China, a summit meeting in Moscow and moves toward détente with Russia. Great progress has been made in the direction of a stable peace and a lessening of tension among the great nuclear powers. These events made deep, lasting impressions on many concerned Americans, some of which will undoubtedly outlast and perhaps even obscure the irregularities of the Watergate scandal.

I am certainly not saying that the prolonged scandal growing out of the 1972 election will not be felt and will not work against the Republican party generally. But I am saying our party has not been wounded so seriously that it cannot still win an election. In fact, this very fact was proved conclusively just recently in Maryland, where young, conservative, Republican Robert Bauman won a special election to fill a sudden vacancy.

And in every part of the country where I have traveled on political errands such as speechmaking and fundraising, I have encountered nothing but enthusiastic crowds determined to win in 1974 and 1976.

Of course there is no way that the Presidential contest in 1976 can escape the onus of Watergate and related and similar irregularities. I say unequivocally that had not Vice President Agnew been subjected to a smear campaign based on a still-inconclusive investigation by the United States At-

torney in Baltimore, he would have been the overwhelming choice of the Republican convention for the Presidential nomination. But should he be damaged irrevocably through either indictment or inconclusive disposition of the charges brought against him, I would expect the Republican candidate three years from now to be either former Texas Gov. John Connally, present California Gov. Ronald Reagan, or present New York Gov. Nelson Rockefeller.

Because of Watergate, the Republican party in particular will be forced to come up with a candidate for the White House who will qualify beyond all doubt as a political "Mr. Clean." Let me hasten to point out that the names I have mentioned are merely among the best guesses I hold at this moment. It very easily could develop that a newcomer to national politics, say somebody like Senator Howard Baker of Tennessee, might conceivably run off with the top honor.

Politically speaking, the situation right now is in an immense state of flux in both major parties. For example, Senator Kennedy, who two years ago looked like a leadpipe cinch to run off with the Democrat nomination, is now questionable. He has been badly damaged by Watergate, which renewed discussion once again of the Senator's ill-fated accident on Chapagaidick Island. Thus the Democrats who want to make the most of their opportunities to capitalize on a "Mr. Clean" image will find Teddy Kennedy a hard product to sell.

The days ahead will prove interesting in more ways than one, and in more political parties than one.

This is the last in a series of articles by Senator Barry Goldwater, Republican of Arizona.