

Joseph Alsop

Recollections Of the Adams Scandal

For weeks, the strange case of Vice President Spiro T. Agnew has been handled by Washington's political community on the method of one of Lewis Carroll's nonsense-rhymes. It is the rhyme that begins, on a tone of menace:

*"I'll be judge; I'll be jury,
Cried cunning old Fury."*

In the present atmosphere, this has been not merely natural, but unavoidable. Against the background of the Watergate horror, incredulity is an all but impossible response to serious charges; and silence about such matters, once charges begin to circulate, can hardly be expected either. But one does wonder a bit about the present atmosphere, which rules out waiting for real judges and real juries.

For those with long memories, the contrast with the past is remarkably sharp. In the early stages of President Eisenhower's administration, for example, Sherman Adams was one of the most powerful men in Washington — infinitely more important than the Vice President, who happened to be Richard M. Nixon in those days.

This thin-lipped former governor of New Hampshire, the outward model of old-fashioned New England rectitude, was the absolute boss of the Eisenhower White House. As a military officer, President Eisenhower had the habit of relying immensely heavily on his staff. And Governor Adams ruled the President's staff with an iron hand, until he ran into trouble with Bernard Goldfine. Whereupon, he was promptly fired.

Compared with the Vescos and their like, Goldfine was a truly nostalgic figure. Briefly, he was a successful but eccentric textile manufacturer, whose main hobby was bribing politicians. So far as was ever discovered, Goldfine never got anything particularly tangible in return for his money. He just liked having politicians on his payroll.

In the Eisenhower era, Governor Adams was only supposed to have accepted a vicuna coat and a Persian rug from the compulsively generous Goldfine. Everyone — and particularly everyone in the same Washington political community now imitating cunning old fury — shied away from the very idea that there could be anything worse to say about a man the President of the United States had totally trusted.

Something worse was said, to be sure, by a Boston publisher of that time, John Fox, who declared that Governor Adams had also received large sums in cash from Goldfine. Fox's charge was based on the evidence of Goldfine's secretary, a lady named Mildred Paperman, who had more than a trace of Goldfine's general



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President Eisenhower with his top assistant, Sherman Adams.

oddy. Fox was widely denounced for his malice and levity in making such a charge. Miss Paperman's evidence, which also inculpated two U.S. senators, then moldered in the hands of the Justice Department until after President Kennedy's election in 1960.

Just the other day, or no less than 10 years after the event, columnist Jack Anderson uncovered the odd story of the chapter of accidents that provided the Justice Department with ample proof of Miss Paperman's entire reliability. According to Anderson, the total of cash passed to Adams by Goldfine was above \$300,000; and this is around the figure President Kennedy once mentioned to this reporter.

Both President Kennedy and his Attorney General-brother, Robert Kennedy, were nonetheless reluctant to prosecute an older man whose political career had ended with his dismissal from the Eisenhower White House. They felt, however, that they could not ignore the new evidence against Governor Adams without President Eisenhower's assent. President Eisenhower cheerfully assented to the Kennedy

emissary. And there the story ended until Anderson's enlightening column of a few months ago, except in one significant respect.

Rather uncharacteristically, President Eisenhower had an intense partisan dislike for his successor. Yet when President Kennedy really needed support in the fields of foreign policy or national defense, that help was always forthcoming from President Eisenhower. If you are cynical, you may see a certain connection with the facts above set forth.

All this is worth considering now, because of the difference in the political community's response to the charges of John Fox in those long gone days, and to the troubles of Vice President Agnew in these last weeks. The key to the difference of course lies in quite another difference, between President Eisenhower and President Nixon.

A young congressman from the far West once told this reporter, "When I was a boy, we thought it was wicked not to revere President Eisenhower." Among many people today, the reverse view of the presidency plainly prevails.

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