

## Sparing America the Anguish

By Walter J. Hickel

ANCHORAGE, Alaska—When you destroy hope, you destroy a nation. Yet more and more of our people are hopeless. And in their hopelessness they are turning inward. This is a real danger. We all know where a nation can go, as Germany did, if it follows the hollow eyes of hate.

The issue at stake is not one Administration or a period of a few years, but the destiny of a nation.

After the Watergate break-in was revealed, the American people were satisfied to let the process of justice proceed at its own pace. Americans are the most forgiving people on earth. But it's a mistake to take their kindness for weakness.

When the closest men to the President were forced to resign and came under indictment, the nation plunged into an environment of suspicion—suspicion of government, suspicion of business, suspicion of the speculators and wheat dealers.

We were given a ray of hope when Elliott Richardson was confirmed as Attorney General and he named a special Watergate prosecutor. We didn't want to "get" anybody. We wanted the truth. We wanted the mess cleaned up. We wanted to get on with the business of this nation.

But then, last month, when the prosecutor was fired, Richardson resigned, and his deputy, William Ruckelshaus, put his job on the line and lost it, America erupted. There was a national cry for impeachment of the President.

Beyond the primary issues of the delay or obstruction of justice, there were two tragedies—the tragedy of a nation's leadership that had lost its touch with the people, and the tragedy of alienating good men from Government service.

While in the Cabinet, as early as May 1970, I spoke about the "isolation of thought" that surrounded the President. When the White House itself admitted it had misjudged the mood of America in the firing of the leadership of the Justice Department, this isolation became abundantly clear to all.

When I first questioned the isolation, it was not a question of the rights or wrongs of a man's approach in any moral sense. I was posing the question: Can a man govern in a free society when he has isolated himself from the thoughts or the mood of that free society?

If a man is solitary by nature, he must gather around him outgoing individuals who reach out and have a feel for the nation's mood.

If this had been the case, the Administration would have felt the vibrations of unrest in the country that were ready to be triggered by the forcing out of three credible men.

The second tragedy is that by running good men out of government, you're not going to attract other good men when you need them. The system

will never be better than the men who are drawn to its service.

America and its leadership must not forget that there is still an America of decency, an America of truth, an America of hope.

We can thank God that those who abused their high position didn't succeed unnoticed. It's the difference between a strong wind and a hurricane. Those who farm understand. A strong wind can destroy your crops, but you might not know it for weeks. A hurricane rips them out before your eyes. Watergate was a hurricane.

We know what we have lost. Now we must start again.

First, Vice President-designate Gerald Ford must be confirmed by Congress immediately.

Second, the President must face the specific issues in the minds of the American people and clean up the mess, personally and individually. America will accept no less.

Lastly, if he cannot or will not face these issues, he may be forced to the realization that the only solution to keep hope alive and the Government credible is resignation.

After any great crisis, people become closer. Units become stronger—the family, the community, the city, the state.

America was built on heart and vision by men who believed that an enlightened human being is the most precious thing on earth. That vision is still alive, like the light of the eye of a child, with all its hope, truth and decency.

We still have a calling for greatness.

*Walter J. Hickel was Secretary of the Interior in the first Nixon Administration.*

More so than any nation, because we are so diversified—a mongrel mix of every race. But the speed at which we attain greatness depends on individual men and women, those in government, those in the media, and all the rank and file who care.

Watergate is the end of a road. And though the road ahead isn't clear, it is there. It will only clear up as we walk it.

By George Meany

WASHINGTON—“We believe that the American people have had enough. More than enough.”

With these words, the one thousand delegates to the tenth constitutional convention of the A.F.L.-C.I.O. called upon Richard Nixon, President of the United States, to resign. If Mr. Nixon did not resign, the convention called upon the House of Representatives “forthwith to initiate impeachment proceedings against him.”

This was not the demand of wild-eyed hippies, radical professors, New-Left politicians or other marginal types whom the new times are passing by.

This was the virtually unanimous demand of men and women representing unions with a combined membership of nearly fourteen million working people. Of the unions not affiliated with the A.F.L.-C.I.O., only the teamsters, I believe, have not followed suit.

We're talking about the backbone of this country.

We're talking about people who

work for a living, who have mortgage payments to meet and kids to put through school. Their taxes support this Government. They don't like to see fat cats using that Government for their own special interests—and in the process nibbling away at the one thing the little guy has going for him in our system: political democracy.

Maybe in the world of big business—among the cornercutters, the expense-account set, the fast-buck boys—there's a certain sympathy for the characters in this Administration who got caught with their pants down. But among our members and their families, it's a different story.

Clearly, there are deep issues of social and economic morality beneath the purely legal or constitutional issues raised by Watergate.

The issue before the people now is not whether Mr. Nixon was personally involved in planning or covering up Watergate—or whether he had a hand in any of the other “White House horrors.” The point is that there aren't supposed to be horrors in the White House, and if there are, only one man, as the President concedes, can be held responsible—the man at the top.

By this standard of judgment, established by the President himself, Mr. Nixon has not only lost but forfeited public confidence in his Presidency. And in our system, a President who is so bereft of public support cannot effectively govern.

The Presidency, after all, is not a prize bestowed by the courts on the most honest citizen in the land, or the smartest. It is a political prize in the best sense of the word. That is, it is bestowed on a man first by his party and then by the electorate as an expression of confidence in him and support for his policies.

No such confidence or support is commanded today by Richard Nixon. On the contrary, a poll shows that 60 per cent of the people disapprove of the way he is handling his job—about the same percentage that voted for him in 1972.

There may have been many reasons why 61 per cent of the electorate voted for Mr. Nixon. Of that number, a goodly percentage were undoubtedly expressing a preference for the conservative-Republican policies he has carried out. I suspect a larger number were not voting for Mr. Nixon but against his opponent.

But whatever the reasons, nobody was voting for what this Administration has actually delivered: the degradation of the Presidency and the cor-

washed out. His Presidency is simply no longer viable. That is why he should resign—and spare the nation the anguish of impeachment.

*George Meany is president of the A.F.L.-C.I.O.*

ruption of politics on a scale unprecedented in the history of the Republic.

This country will be two hundred years old on July 4, 1976. Mr. Nixon could give America a generous birthday gift by not being in office on that day.

Mr. Nixon's mandate has been