

NYTimes  
The Greater Crisis: Gullible Legislators

# Letters to the Editor

NOV 24 1973

To the Editor:

By their eagerness to accept the assurances of Mr. Nixon that he will be able to explain away, to his personal credit and to the satisfaction of the public majority, the scandals of his Administration, Republican Congressmen are displaying a propensity for gullibility.

The relief many of the leaders in his party express at his statements that he has not been involved in any deceptions or any dishonorable political schemes is equivalent to exonerating a suspected felon on his own denials of wrongdoing.

Mr. Nixon's political history contradicts any such conclusions that forthrightness and the national welfare are his guiding concern rather than arrogant political ambition. His character has been clearly manifest by his campaign maneuvers since the beginning of his political career. The lies he told to defeat Jerry Voorhis and to destroy politically Helen Gahagan Douglas; his exploitation of the hysteria stirred up by Joseph McCarthy for his own advantage; his Checkers speech, by which he weaseled out of involvement with a campaign slush fund; the forged letters proved in court (forecasts of the criminal projects later adopted by the Committee to Re-elect the President) used to confuse his opponents in his campaign against Pat Brown in California—all point to Mr. Nixon's primary interest in personal political advancement and not a scrupulous regard for truth.

Considering all the contradictions that have come to light in the Watergate scandal, how is it possible to accept Mr. Nixon's word without skepticism? How can members of Congress, even those who belong to his own party, be reassured by his denials and blandishments?

Congressmen, and professional politicians generally, are self-protectively inclined to dismiss or belittle discreditable events that stain their past probity, but to apply such short-sighted judgments to the President of the United States under the present tragic circumstances is to place sympathy above integrity and party loyalty above national safety.

The incorruptibility of the institution of the Presidency must be reaffirmed, but it cannot be done by shielding a discredited President from the consequences of his misdeeds. To sustain Mr. Nixon in office in order to preserve the Presidency degrades the institution, perverts moral values and diminishes confidence in democracy.

The attitude of many members of Congress was inadvertently well expressed the other day in a speech in defense of Mr. Nixon by Gerald Ford, who referred to the electorate as a mob. By mob did Mr. Ford mean the vocal majority? Who do he and his colleagues in the House of Representatives who failed to protest this insulting epithet, think they represent? Who elected them?

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Santa Fe, N. M., Nov. 15, 1973