

NYTimes

Letters to the Editor

Our 'Government in Spite of the People'

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To the Editor:

We have received regular assurances that "the system" works and that eventually the guilty will be punished and the innocent will go free. "The system" does not appear to be working at all.

Justice now appears to consist of the admission of a crime (publicly if possible), receiving some sort of immunity and then going about your business. Where are the indictments, the trials, the jury system that is supposed to protect us from criminals? We have heard months of public testimony to the effect that the President's re-election committee and friends have performed some obviously illegal and other questionable acts. The Watergate committee has heard volumes of testimony on illegal campaign practices, extortion, illegal wiretapping, possible destruction of evidence, etc. What happens now?

It is not the President's credibility that is at stake any longer; it is the credibility of the entire legal system of the United States. We have seen the ex-Vice President accused of accepting kickbacks while in office; he is fined and set free. Can anyone possibly interpret this as equal justice under the law?

I fear for "the system," and I tremble when I hear people tell me how well it's working. The wheels of justice seem to have ground to a complete halt.

The President is correct: We must not wallow in Watergate. We must pursue the matter of Watergate to its logical and legal conclusions, for if we do not, we will see a society in which justice can be turned on and off at the will of only one man. While

the opinion polls now indicate that a majority of the American people believe that the President's credibility is damaged, the same people probably feel that everyday justice does not apply to men in high office. We are not even talking about "white-collar crime" here but rather good old-fashioned blue-collar criminal offenses, such as burglary, extortion, attempting to bribe a sitting judge, destruction of evidence, etc. If "the system" works, let us see some evidence. The new system seems to consist of passing the buck.

The most flagrant (to date) transgression of the system is the image of the pursued President firing his pursuer under the transparent ruse that he (Cox) would not accept a one-sided compromise or agree to stop his investigation. The President's explanation not only flies in the face of anyone's understanding of justice but in the face of logic as well.

Perhaps the only reason the President remains in office is that Congress has forsaken the system as well and, split along partisan lines, goes about its business while the President feeds our legislators lies and corned-beef hash and tells them he's not a crook.

This is an awful and frightening sight from here. We see our country being turned from a government of the people to a government in spite of the people, and yet the opposition to this Government has been so successfully shunted aside and fragmented that we are virtually powerless to oppose it.

This is not "the system" I know; this is tyranny:

RICHARD ELLIS
New York, Nov. 27, 1973