

*William Raspberry*

## A Familiar Disease, a Scary Cure

Sen. Barry M. Goldwater (R-Ariz.) may not acknowledge it, but he seems to be wrestling with the same question that is troubling so many Americans: What do you do about Richard Nixon when you're convinced that he's bad for the country and equally convinced that he won't resign?

Goldwater's answer—and the people's answer so far—seems to be: Nothing. Better the familiar disease of scandal than the scary cure of impeachment.

This apparent conclusion is providing all the comfort a buffeted Richard Nixon is likely to have in the foreseeable future.

The people want the President out of office, all right. A recent Louis Harris poll showed 47 per cent of the people felt the President should resign, while only 42 per cent said he shouldn't.

Two things about that poll. It came right after the conclusion of "Operation Candor," and it came a full week before electronics experts disclosed that what Gen. Alexander Haig called "sinister forces" apparently did their erasure job deliberately and repeatedly.

But if growing numbers of people think Mr. Nixon should resign, significantly fewer believe he should be impeached. Senator Goldwater seems similarly torn.

Since last April, when he urged the administration to "get rid of the smell" of Watergate, he has been strong in support of the President—involvement in the Watergate scandals and their cover-up.

"I might not support him if it turns out he knew all about (the cover-up) and kept his mouth shut," he told *The Christian Science Monitor* in an April interview. "But I don't think he knows about it."

*"If Mr. Nixon can hardly protect himself now, with the power of the presidency at his disposal, what protection could he have if he should resign?"*

It was on that assumption that Goldwater kept urging Mr. Nixon to come forward and tell what he knew, confident that the man could establish his innocence if only he would.

In a June 17 CBS Special Report interview with Dan Rather, Goldwater was somewhat less insistent on the fact of innocence. He told Rather that he didn't think the President should resign or be impeached. "Now, I might not take that position if it could be proven without any question that he's lying. But I don't think he's lied. I don't think it can be proved even if he did lie. And I think the danger to the country would be so great . . . I don't think it would be worthwhile risking it."

While he was saying all these things, Goldwater also was saying that he believed Richard Nixon would resign if he became so enmeshed in scandal that his continuance in office would be bad for the country.

"Resignation (in such a case) would be the cheapest, easiest and quickest way," he told Rather.

But if that was a hint, the President didn't take it. And small wonder. Richard Nixon may be concerned about America, but he is also concerned about Richard Nixon.

If he can hardly protect himself now, with the power of the presidency at his disposal, what protection could he have if he should resign? Even if he were lucky enough to stay out of jail, a

la Agnew, he still would have to pay his lawyers out of his own pocket instead of ours—assuming he could find competent lawyers to take his case.

So Barry Goldwater, having reluctantly concluded that the President is not going to resign under any foreseeable circumstances, has changed tactics. The outspoken conservative, who as recently as November thought the President had "reached an all-time low from which he may not recover," now is sensing a "recovery" and urging Nixon critics to get off the President's back.

Goldwater first prayed for the President's innocence, with resignation for the good of the country as second choice. Now, apparently having given up on both, he is asking the people to behave as though nothing happened, impeachment being too traumatic a thing to contemplate.

There is, of course, another way to achieve what Goldwater — and at least 47 per cent of the people — seem to want. Let the House Judiciary Committee knuckle down to its impeachment inquiry, let it show that it means business — that it intends to develop the facts and push for results.

For if the President ever sees impeachment as a real likelihood, it's a good bet he will choose to resign — whether for the good of the country or for the good of Richard M. Nixon.