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## The President's Honest Response

Washington

**DELATEDLY** — he seems to do so many things belatedly — the President now has responded at some length to two of the most serious charges leveled against him. His explanations as to the “milk deal” and the matter of ITT strike me as honest accounts. Mr. Nixon has helped his case before the people.

In both cases the charge, implicitly, was bribery. This is among the specific offenses for which impeachment can be sought.

It was alleged that in return for a \$427,000 contribution from the milk producers toward his re-election, the President authorized an increase in milk subsidy payments. It was alleged that in return for a \$200,000 offer from an ITT subsidiary toward expenses of a Republican convention in San Diego, Mr. Nixon personally intervened to assure a favorable settlement of ITT's antitrust troubles.

The operative words here are “in return for.” This is the essence of bribery: the quid for the quo. In my own view, at least, the White House statements effectively demolish the accusations. The higher milk subsidies were authorized largely as a consequence of certain political realities; the ITT settlement resulted chiefly from an assessment of certain legal probabilities. The milk contributions and the ITT offer had nothing to do with the decisions that were made.

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**THIS I BELIEVE.** Admittedly, the White House statements do not tidy up every loose end. In the ITT affair, we have yet to receive a satisfactory explanation for a number of inconsistent statements by former Attorneys General John Mitchell and Richard Kleindienst.

In the milk affair, we have yet to be told why the milk producers, in August of 1969, delivered \$100,000 in cash to the President's fund-raising attorney, Herbert W. Kalmbach. Why in cash? Why Kalmbach? Why in August of 1969, three full years before a re-election campaign? How did it happen that the President had “no knowledge of this contribution”?

These doubts cannot overcome the President's own straight-forward account of the events in March and April of 1971. The milk producers, to speak to this matter only, had two things going for them in their effort to win a higher support price: They had a reasonably good case on the merits, and of greater significance, they had powerful friends on Capitol Hill.

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**THE LATTER POINT** was the key point. In any realistic political assessment, it was clear that one way or another, the producers would get the 90 per cent support price they wanted.

They had such potent allies in the House as Speaker Carl Albert and Agriculture Chairman W. R. Poage. In the Senate, their 90 per cent bill bore such names as Humphrey, Muskie, McGovern, Hughes, Bayh, Hartke and Harris — an impressive array, all told, of 28 Democrats and 1 Republican.

If the President didn't act, the Democrats would. So he acted. Any prudent politician, under the same circumstances, would have done the same thing.

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