

What He Really Meant

By Anthony Lewis

WASHINGTON

Mr. Speaker, Mr. President, my colleagues in the Congress. We meet here tonight at a time of great challenge...

I am the issue, and I still can carry the fight to the enemy. Just look at you—standing up and cheering. You don't like it, but you have no choice. You can't disentangle the Presidency from the President.

It was five years ago that I took the oath of office as your President. In those five years America has changed...

It has not changed as much as we hoped. By now there should have been no one in our way. We were getting a lock on the bureaucrats—the C.I.A. and the Secret Service did what we wanted. The networks were pretty well intimidated, and we would have put the publishers through the wringer. The universities? We already had M.I.T. on the enemies list, and the others would have got the message. Congress? You were pushovers. And then those blank-blanking bunglers at Watergate blew us up.

We have begun moving power back from Washington to the states and communities and, most important to the people of America...

They will get some money; that's revenue sharing. But let me tell you, the real power is going to stay where it is, in the White House. Because, gentlemen, I'm going to go right on deciding the issues of economics and war and peace for this country. I'll decide about gasoline and jobs. I'll decide what countries to bomb—and you won't even know, because I'll decide what information to let you have. I'm in charge of national security, and I define it.

Personal privacy is a cardinal principle of American liberty. Today data banks, credit records, electronic snooping have left Americans deeply concerned about the privacy they cherish. The time has come for a major initiative...

Hasn't one of you down there got the courage to laugh out loud? Isn't that too cynical even for you, Hugh Scott? Remember, I'm the man who made wiretapping a household word on his own White House staff. I'm the man who ordered Federal agencies to open mail and break into homes and eavesdrop on conversations, and the hell with the law. We'll send you a bill on data banks all right, but it's not going to keep me from doing what I want to do.

I would like to add a personal word with regard to an issue that has been of great concern to all Americans over the past year. I refer, of course, to the so-called Watergate affair...

You would like me to apologize,

ABROAD AT HOME

wouldn't you? To say at least that I was negligent? To take responsibility for the crimes? To cut loose from Haldeman and Ehrlichman? To admit the moral disaster and promise a change? But I agree with what Ron Ziegler said: "Contrition is bull."

As you know, I have provided a great deal of material to the special prosecutor voluntarily...

I fought those subpoenas through two courts. I would have gone on to the Supreme Court if I hadn't been afraid of losing. And I'd be fighting them still if I could. I never would have given them anything incriminating if that Cox hadn't blown it all up and excited the public. And Jaworski is just as bad. He had the nerve the other day to say that the White House had "never once volunteered anything" by way of evidence.

One year of Watergate is enough. I believe the time has come to bring the investigations of this matter to an end...

I fought Ervin, I fought Cox, I fought the civil suits, and I've made them pay with time for every fact they got. Now all I have to do is keep delaying, keep arguing in the courts, keep talking about my higher motives in guarding those dirty tapes, keep throwing dust in your eyes with distractions—and then accuse all you enemies of wanting to drag the investigations on.

I recognize the responsibility of the House Judiciary Committee, and I want to indicate on this occasion that I will cooperate with its investigation...

How many of you remember what I said about Watergate last May 9? "All Americans can have confidence in the fact that the new nominee for Attorney General, Elliot Richardson, and the special prosecutor that he will appoint in this case will have the total cooperation of the executive branch of this Government."

There is only one limitation: I will never do anything that weakens the office of the President...

You know what that means, don't you? Your committee is a lynch mob, and it won't get anything out of me that might hurt.

I have no intention whatever of ever walking away from the job that the people elected me to do...

You people in Congress hate me. You always have. I haven't wasted much time on you either. There isn't one of you who's really had my confidence. I don't owe you anything. You'd be happier if I quit now, but you won't dare push me out. You feel too vulnerable yourselves to go through with impeachment. You don't have the guts, and I'll bet on that.