

Intv of Rep. Robert W. Kastenmeier (D-Wisc), a member of the House Judiciary Committee.

Set was not tuned in until last part of intv of Kastenmeier, who apparently was invited on short notice for brief intv, after which the program continued with the guests already scheduled, Kenneth Rush and L. Robert Seidman, who discussed the economy.

K. .... it comes at a time when people are still making up their minds.

Q. Well, Mr. Kastenmeier, are you suggesting that the question that has been uppermost during Watergate's two-year tenure - that is, is any man above the law - is now being answered, Yes, one man is?

K. Yes, I'm afraid that is the result of the President's pardon this morning. As I say, many of us will raise questions about this, now and in the future.

Q. What do you think the effect of Mr. Ford's action will have on history and its verdict as to why Richard Nixon left the Presidency?

K. Well, it leaves it all pending, inconclusive. The President avoided an ultimate judgment, in terms of impeachment, by resigning, and now he avoids coming to confront the criminal justice system in terms of a judgment of his peers. And so any final judgment, it seems to me, is pre-empted by the President's action this morning.

Q. Mr. Kastenmeier, do you not agree with the President in a sense, the idea of justice being tempered with mercy, that Mr. Nixon might have a hard time getting his due process, and that there might be a great divisiveness growing in the country if legal action against him were to run on for years?

K. That is of course possible, as it was for many others connected with Mr. Nixon and his administration in terms of getting justice. But it seems to me the ultimate question is not the fate of Mr. Nixon but American public policy, the service of the public interest and our system of laws. This, it seems to me, is a greater ideal in terms of service of - in the Republic.

Q. I'd like to return to the point you raised about the other trials, the other convictions, the men who were involved in Watergate and related crimes, in addition to the question of Mr. Nixon's involvement. You said that there would be questions about them. What do you think should be done? Should those people now be pardoned, should those indictments now be dropped, out of a sense of fairness?

K. I can't say that, because they were duly convicted by their peers under our system, and I don't think that one wrong necessarily entitles them to be excused, although one must observe that last week John Dean started a long sentence for crimes for which apparently we're ~~going to~~ excusing Mr. Nixon.

Q. Well, I think it can also be said, can it not, that the President, the former President, is a unique person in a unique position. Are you really certain that the country might believe, if Mr. Nixon is pardoned, that the criminal justice system has broken down? I mean, how many times in the future do you think we're going to be confronted with a situation where a President of the United States might have to go to the dock?

K. Rarely, I hope. But I do think that our system of justice, our sense of justice, does demand an accountability which we've been denied in this case.

Q. Mr. Kastenmeier, what effect do you think this act of contrition by former President Nixon in his statement today, which seems to have been drawn up almost in concert with the pardon itself - does that have any answers to the problems you're raising about equal justice?

K. Not really. I agree it was undoubtedly drawn up in response to the action contemplated, but it doesn't solve any ultimate question, legal or otherwise, in terms of Mr. Nixon's stewardship of office.

(End of interview.)