



ALL THE KING'S MEN

"WHEN A MAN ASSUMES LEADERSHIP, HE FORFEITS THE RIGHT TO MERCY."

GENNARO ANGIULO, BOSTON MAFIA BOSS

The Tower Report tiptoes around the central question: Should the President be impeached? If he has committed "high crimes and misdemeanors" as President, the Constitution specifies that he should be impeached. If his conduct is the result of physical or mental incapacity, he should be removed in accord with the 25th Amendment, which details the procedures to be followed when "the President is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office."

"I know of no law that says a President is exempt from duties that devolve upon other citizens," Senator Sam Ervin said during Watergate. "The White House people are not nobility and royalty. They will give sworn testimony or be arrested." Richard Nixon evaded impeachment only by resigning and he made a deal with his successor to pardon him. If a President and his men can break laws they find inconvenient, what restraint is there for anyone else who wishes to skirt the law for personal benefit? Why should anyone respect the law? Nixon and Reagan have both presided over administrations that are repressively law and order, but only in regard to working people, other races and the poor. High society crime is lightly punished. Presidential crime is treated as if it did not occur. "... Wherever there is an interest and power to do wrong, wrong will generally be done," James Madison wrote.

The Tower Commission chose to portray the President as a man who does not know what he is doing. So for the short run he is not being charged with breaking the law. The emphasis is on his physical capacity to remain in office (his men wish to remove his brain out of public view): Humpty Dumpty's broken remains are being put back together. Reagan is surviving at the expense of his historical reputation. Richard Nixon is already known to posterity as a crook (his denial, "I am not a crook," remains his most famous statement). Reagan, who even in movies, wished to be miscast as a hero, has chosen the ridicule of history, a bumbler, an inept well-meaning man over his head. He has sought in politics the heroic roles he was denied in movies, and for a number of years he seemed to bear out his pretense. In the aftermath of the Iran-Contra affair ("Contra-interruptus" is a candidate for a Watergate-like name), it is being realized that the film producers who refused his bid for John Wayneism knew their actor.

— MICHAEL PAUL McCUSKER

A COMPANY OF FOOLERS

We are now witnessing the rapid undoing of Reagan and his administration. Our President has worked himself into a cul-de-sac in which he has proven beyond doubt that he is either incompetent or a liar. Which is better, or worse? It doesn't really matter. I feel no sympathy for him, though. Hey, it's show biz. Sometimes you bomb. It was a good paying gig while it lasted.

What's sad is the apparent fact that many of us in this nation are so addicted to illusion and magic that we constantly beg to be fooled — by the T.V. Guy, who always seems to have all the answers to our problems: "Buy this, buy ME!" and we do. We even elected an actor — a trained professional stage illusionist — whose purpose in life is to be paid for fooling us into thinking he's somebody he's not; to "play daddy" and tell us that everything's being taken care of.

Unfortunately, we common citizens seldom perceive superpower politics as a "soap opera" put on for our benefit by governments to justify taking an increasingly large chunk of our hard earned cash each year. Washington tells us the Russians are evil and will get us if we don't have a lot of things with which to blow them up; and surely Moscow tells the Soviet people the same thing about us. It's stupid.

But now several stage props have fallen over on the Reagan set, and we can clearly see that all along there was really nothing there. The rocks aren't real, the storefront was just a braced-up piece of painted plywood, and the tree was really only half a tree. We are like Dorothy and her friends, who discover the Wizard of Oz is really just a frightened old man, hiding behind an impressive prop.

It was all just an illusion, a little trick played on us by that old rascal Ron and his company of foolers.

Who will the people elect next... Nixon again?

— PAUL BARRETT

Paul Barrett lives in Astoria.