



The Editor's Desk

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WE SEE THE WORLD THROUGH BLACK EYES.



Watergate: Roots in history

As the Watergate affair splashes across the American scene, we must look at it in the perspective of its meaning to the American system of government and against the historical background of the man at its center. It is true, as the President has said, that there has been scandal and political espionage in other campaigns and in other administrations. However, in the past these manipulations have been for money, vicuna coats, cows for the Gettysburg farm, money in exchange for position or favors. Never before have such far-reaching criminal acts been committed for the obtaining and perpetuating of power. And never before has such a power grab been made from within the White House.

Watergate is much more than the burglary of a political office. It is a planned attempt to subvert the electoral process of the United States. It was an all-out attempt to keep control of the government of the United States.

Perhaps the President is innocent. Perhaps, as he said, he did not know his closest friends and associates were conspiring against the system he has sworn to protect. Is it possible the news did not reach him? This could not have happened to President Johnson -- or to Kennedy, Truman, Roosevelt, or any other president in recent history. But perhaps Nixon has so isolated himself from not only the American people, but his closest advisors as well, that he does not know what is going on in his own house. If this great a crime could go unnoticed, then Mr. Nixon must certainly be incompetent.

And if the President was not directly involved in the Watergate burglary, the smear campaign, the hidden campaign funds, the precedents setting the atmosphere in which these things took place can be found in Mr. Nixon's own political background.

The Smear Campaign -- Nixon's first election was won with a smear campaign that was carried out against his opponent. These smears have accompanied every election, always allegedly without his knowledge. But is it a coincidence that these tactics seem to follow him? Should we now be shocked to learn that one of his closest associates was arrested for a smear campaign against Senators Muskie and Humphrey and that files have been found in the White House with material to smear the Kennedy family?

The Hidden Money -- Mr. Nixon's secret fund nearly lost him the vice-presidency, but his tearful "Checkers" speech got him off the hook. Should we now be surprised to learn about perhaps \$10 million in secret and illegal campaign funds used in the 1972 elections?

The Ellsberg Case -- Twice since assuming the presidency Mr. Nixon has interfered with the court system. He made damaging comments on the Manson case, and he intervened in the Mai Lai case. Should we be surprised to learn that he ordered a secret investigation of the Ellsberg case that resulted in illegal procedures, and that he offered the trial judge a high government office during the time the case was in trial?

The Grab for Power -- The President has said that he does not need Congress and in recent months has been in a struggle to reduce the power of Congress. He has cheapened the Supreme Court by appointment and attempted appointment of men who are less than highly qualified but who share his political views. Should we be surprised that his followers would go to any means to perpetuate the power they now have regardless of the effects on the future of the nation.

Watergate is one more step on the road to facism. It is an attempt to promote rule by presidential edict rather than rule by the democratic process.

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"Law and Order"... ?



With Ron Hendren

A YOUNG VIEW OF WASHINGTON

GENERALS AND THEIR AIDS: PART II

By Ron Hendren

WASHINGTON--Several weeks ago I reported on the long-standing military tradition of providing general officers with enlisted aides--men who become personal servants to the top brass and their families.

I noted then that the cost to the taxpayer for this boondoggle exceeds \$13 million every year just for the pay and allowances of these aides. (Now the Army admits the total cost is nearly \$22 million.)

Congress is finally challenging the armed forces on the practice, which dates back to the Revolutionary War, and Secretary of the Army Robert Froehke came up to the hill last week to defend his generals.

Froehke told members of the House Defense Appropriations subcommittee that he did not want his chief of staff going home at 5 p.m. to mow the lawn, and asserted that the provision of aides to high-ranking officers "makes sense from a management standpoint."

As I reported earlier, the General Accounting Office has disclosed that enlisted aides, at taxpayer expense, not only mow their bosses' lawns, but wash private cars, walk the dogs, babysit, keep house and tend gardens--and that they do these chores for generals' wives and children as well.

Subcommittee Chairman George Mahon (D-Tex.) suggested to Froehke that Army chief of staff General Creighton Abrams "could hire his own help like the rest of us do." Froehke responded that Army officers do not make enough money to pay for hired help.

Abrams' salary and allowances come to about \$45,000 per year, and in addition he and his family live in free quarters at Ft. Myer. His four stars entitle him to four enlisted aides.

More than 1,700 enlisted soldiers are officially designated as personal aides to generals and admirals at this time. In addition to being of questionable propriety, the practice has alarming racial overtones. As I reported earlier, some 98 per cent of aides in the Navy are Filipinos. In the Marine Corps, 65 per cent are black.

Promotions for these men come far more slowly than for other enlisted personnel. The average Navy man at the rank of E-6 receives a promotion in nine years, while a Navy aide at the same rank is likely to stay there for 18 years.

Letters of complaint have been pouring into the offices of members of Congress since Sen. William Proxmire disclosed the GAO study several weeks ago. Many are from the wives and families of enlisted aides who have had the courage to tell the real story. One letter recounted the story of an aide who was ordered to make the beds of his commander's lazy children.

Now that the hearings have begun, the real picture is coming to the fore, and the practice of providing servants to generals and their families is likely to be revealed for what it is: an unnecessary, repugnant, and costly boondoggle.

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