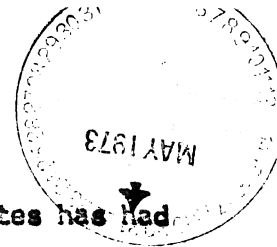


It seems to Me

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For nearly all of its almost two hundred years of history, the United States has had need of a word symbolic of the paradox that is the survival of an honor system constantly beset by abuses.

Now, it has that world Symbol. Watergate.

The symbol, watergate, so applied, from now on may be used to describe the vast array of violations of the honor system and the exploitation of the freedoms of choice in the conduct of official affairs.

Before the current official scandal in Washington reaches what might be considered a conclusion, it probably will have run through every conceivable exploitation of the advantages and privileges of public office. The extent to which the situation may run through and out of the political arena and into official business, and possibly into very sensitive areas, begins to become frightening. That which for a while appeared to be simply one set of politicians trying a political trick on another has become much more serious with implications that in high places high stakes are for sale at high prices.

However, it seems to me, it is all the big ring version of what has gone on in American Politics and in the official circles for 10, these many years. Each and every community at some time or another...and in some communities more often than in most... has had these examples of political trickery parlayed into official skulduggery that finally comes out as one of the elements of the high cost of government in these United States.

Evansville, and Vanderburgh county have not been without their situations which now might wear that symbolic title: Watergate.

The state of Indiana also has had its episodes of political deceit and official corruption.

State-wise, Indiana has had to live down such political scandals as the McCray administration the Ed Jackson and Ku Klux Klan super government debacle. Even the innovative Paul V. McNutt administration, thrust into power by the then powerful American Legion of World War One veterans lacked the essence of great virtues

These instances on Indiana political history are cited because they were obvious. It does not necessarily follow that all other state regimes in the past 50 years were virtuous; they enjoyed another aspect of the political phenomenon: An effective public relations situation with press only lightly questioning integrity.

In Evansville and Vanderburgh county there have been a number of political episodes of deep, dark purple.

The image of "the greatest mayor the city of Evansville ever had," is not necessarily without blemish. That official was Benjamin Bosse, who was credited with having done more for Evansville than any other mayor to that time. He was a builder and a doer and among the things he had built were miles of smooth asphalt streets that replaced the old cobble stones and some cases only muddy lanes. For a third term Benjamin Bosse was fighting for his political life. His police department had become involved in illegal liquor business and scores of his henchmen were called before the federal grand jury; his chief of police was sent to prison. Hounding his heels was the Evansville Courier. Political connections helped relieve him of suspicion of involvement in the bootlegging scandal, and he threw the Courier off his track simply by buying the newspaper. and how did he manage that? Henry Marshall publisher of the Lafayette Journal Courier was a political associate in state democrat party affairs. Henry W. Marshall also was the Indiana representative of Trinidad Lake Asphalt, the material with which miles of Evansville streets had been paved. He bought the Courier - for Ben Bosse, Benjamin Bosse had his watergate: he managed to escape for a while. Barely elected to a third term, he died less than four months after taking office.

The next episode in Evansville and Vanderburgh county political corruption occurred in the mid and late '20's when the Klan became the dominant politics power in the state, establishing a type of super government. The Klan virtually took over the republican party, elected Ed Jackson governor, controlled local communities, such as Evansville and Vanderburgh county in which one Joe Huffington was the head man. The Klan corrupted officials, intimidated the public, punished enemies and even controlled through trickery and deceit one of the newspapers of Evansville.

Indiana and Vanderburgh County survived the Klan era and the Democrat party, which inherited the public support by default, took over. It was the beginning of the depression. a cashier in the West Side Bank, which had been a financial institution headed by Benjamin Bosse and which served his multifarious business enterprises, was tapped as the democrat candidate for mayor. Bill Dress, a Lincoln-esque individual with a pronounced German accent that endeared him to the Evansville population, largely of German ancestry, was a virtual shoo in...what with the support of the Courier and the recruiting of the hordes of Evansville people whose only sustenance came from WPA...the original poverty war agency.

Bill Dress as mayor assembled a democrat organization...or it was assembled for him, and for two successive terms his administration enjoyed such accolades as the acquisition of industries such as the Chrysler Corporation and the Briggs manufacturing company and the full cooperative encouragement of Serval, Inc.,.

The West Side Bank had gone under in the depression, Benjamin Bosse was dead. His widow, Mrs. Anna Bosse retained the Bosse estate, the principal asset of which...if not the only asset was the Evansville Courier. At West Side Bank president George Bittler had gone and Mrs. Bosse was left without an advisor...but hardly. Charles B. Enlow, president of National City Bank, which had survived the bank crisis with great integrity and prestige, thanks effective connections with Federal Reserve, made himself available.

From then on the Dress administration was off and running, and except for a one term interlude Bill Dress continued as mayor and those interests which thrust him into the office and made him look good while he was there flourished.

It was at about the time of that interlude that Republican Manson Reichert fulfilled a boast that he would cut the wires from Third and Main to Third and Walnut...the inference the connection between C.B. Enlow's bank office and City Hall...and he did. For one thing Manson Reichert kicked out a school board that had reported to Mr. Enlow and appointed one of his own. There followed tremendous school system rumpus during which, with the Courier the Agitator, students were induced to strike, the superintendent, one Ralph Irons, refused to resign and the schools for months foundered

superintendents and a chaotic circumstance. Young Attorney Herb Roberts and some others persuaded Irons to resign, and a new school regime...which is another story...resulted.

Meantime, with Reichert's political star rapidly descending, there came on the scene a young attorney with political footwork so fast that the old prose were put into a tail spin. Charles J. Eichel knew and developed more political tricks than the old pros, and that included the powerful group know as the Big Six, ever immagined. He got himself elected county chairman and for an interval he controlled the county government.

The Establishment, with Richert eventually defeated, reestablished party stability and public support and Bill Dress served a part of a third term before he died of the cancer with which most feared he afflisted when they insited he lead the ticket because of his previously established prestige. When Dress died a group of henchmen who had been around him inherited the office, the power and the authority. So deeply buried under public scorn was that regime that one Vance Hartke, inherited the democrat party, lock stock and barrel, without a struggle.

Meantime...an up and comming young democrat, who had served the party well as plan commission executive and patronage clerk in the Dress-Dickmann administration became sheriff and parlayed that advantage to the longest regime any Mayor ever enjoyed. Frank McDonald more nearly achieved complete control over both city of Evansville and Vanderburgh county party and public office affairs than any other man in history.. Frank McDonald ran the show in every sense of the word. He had no henchmen, no underlings, no sattelites in position at anytime to cause whim either political or official trouble.

The remainder of the story in Evansville political history is recent ad know to virtually everyone.

Republican Russell Lloyd now is the man in authority as mayor of the city. He is looking toward other horizons, which come into view through the possible consolidation of city and county governments.

Mayor Lloyd has had some recent untoward, shall we say, experiences. He Has been obliged to realize that he does have some henchmen about him, he does have some individuals

at elbow nearness who are not always aware of the fact that whatever the episode, or the incident, or the experience, it is the mayor who will have to answer to the public. To what extent he trusts them, or to what extent he may be under obligation, could be, and some time may be interesting.

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Big Watergate in Wash . . . . . e word symbol for abuse of the American system. The ingredients are extreme political trickery, abuse of position and privilege by henchmen, inference of involvement of the chief official and collusion to cover up both political deception and official corruption. Big Watergate now means extreme political roguishness and bartering of public interests for campaign funds, a name for Both party treasury and private pockets.

Locally Watergate has meant connivance and collusion with henchmen and satellites presuming, assuming, imposing.

Benjamin Bosse Connived his way out of difficulties by political maneuvering and the stifling of criticism by pulling strings. A newspaper was compromised and a community intimidated by a parasitical element that destroyed a political party. Advantages through conditions that involved the depression era degrading of unfortunate victims figured in the establishment of a powerful political regime. A political career was destroyed by the powerful forces it challenged and an unscrupulous attempt at political control succeeded, if only temporarily, because of the impotence of the more conservative and "regular" elements.

In all the watergates, both big and small, it seems to me there is one ingredient: that the offenders are brought to account, not by the established authority, the official procedures, but by other politicians. In other words, a black kettle is called so by a black pot.

There always have been, even in the local communities, Watergate...until now they have not had a word for it.