P.S. to the NEWS
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THE LESSON OF NIXON

Richard Nixon is the prime example of what has been known for years as "the problem of the Republican incumbent who turns liberal after he is elected." This strange transformation can take place at any level of government, from President to State Legislator. A man who is apparently a traditional Republican is elected to office by dint of the diligence, the dollars, and the dedication of hard-working volunteers and contributors who believe in the candidate and his promises. After he is elected, he makes a sharp turn to the left. He reneges on his promises and adopts the liberal policies of foreign giveaways, bigger deficits, extravagant domestic handouts, and other government controls on the free market.

This is precisely what happened to Richard Nixon. Elected in 1968 on a staunchly conservative platform, he promptly betrayed his campaign promises to restore military superiority, to oppose trade with Communist countries, to avoid price and wage control, and to cut Federal spending. He lied to conservatives and appointed only liberals and internationalists to office.

Beginning in the spring of 1971, conservative Republicans began holding small meetings to consider how to cope with the problem of the Republican incumbent named Nixon. They did not, of course, suspect the multiple Watergate-related offenses, but they clearly saw his defects of character, of policy, of appointments, and of administration, that brought Watergate about.

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Conservatives argued that the Republican Party should keep faith with the voters along the lines of Theodore Roosevelt's dictum: "Our loyalty is due solely to the Republic; it is unpatriotic not to tell the truth about the President or anyone else."

Unfortunately, these conservatives who wanted to put Party principles above Richard Nixon lost out to another school of thought which argued that, for the sake of Party unity and victory at the polls, an incumbent should not be opposed in primary or convention. These pragmatists urged Republicans to close ranks behind Nixon because "He's the lesser of two evils" and "We must consider the alternative."

In 1972 knowledgeable conservatives supported Republican Congressman John Ashbrook of Ohio, who ran for the presidential nomination on Nixon's unused 1968 Republican Platform. But Republican officeholders and big financial contributors put their money and support on Nixon whom they thought was sure to win. The monopolistic and high-handed tactics of CREEP (the Committee to Reelect the President) preempted all the money for Nixon.

Those who chose pragmatism over principle have now seen their house come tumbling down. If there is a lesson to be learned from Nixon's disaster, it is that, even in this materialistic world, it doesn't pay for a political party to sell its soul and a century-long tradition of honorable principles for the money and power of an incumbent just because he is sure to win.

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