

Speech material exemplar

The passage below is taken from a televised speech given by the American President Richard Nixon in April 1973.

Nixon is responding to an investigation into Watergate. Watergate was the term used by the media to describe a sequence of events in which employees from Nixon's own political party had burgled the headquarters of his main political opponents. Nixon had authorised the burglary himself (a serious offence for a President) but he skirts carefully around this issue in his speech.

Whatever may have appeared to have been the case before - whatever improper activities may yet be discovered in connexion with this whole sordid affair - I want the American people, I want you, to know beyond the shadow of a doubt that during my term as President, justice will be pursued fairly, fully, and impartially, no matter who is involved. This office is a sacred trust and I am determined to be worthy of that trust.

Who, then, is to blame for what happened in this case?

For specific criminal actions by specific individuals, those who committed those actions must, of course, bear the liability and pay the penalty. For the fact that alleged improper actions took place within the White House or within my campaign organization, the easiest course would be for me to blame those to whom I delegated the responsibility to run the campaign. But that would be a cowardly thing to do. I will not place the blame on subordinates, on people whose zeal exceeded their judgement, and who may have done wrong in a cause they deeply believed to be right. In any organization, the man at the top must bear the responsibility. That responsibility, therefore, belongs here, in this office. I accept it. And I pledge to you tonight, from this office, that I will do everything in my power to ensure that the guilty are brought to justice, and that such abuses are purged from our political processes in the years to come, long after I have left this office.

When I think of this office - of what it means - I think of all the things that I want to accomplish for this nation - of all the things I want to accomplish for you.

On Christmas Eve, during my terrible personal ordeal of the renewed bombing of North Vietnam, which after twelve years of war, finally helped to bring America peace with honor, I wrote out some of the goals for my second term as President. Let me read them to you.

'To make it possible for our children, and for our children's children, to live in a world of peace.

'To make this country be more than ever a land of Opportunity of equal Opportunity, full opportunity for every American.

'To provide jobs for all who can work, and generous help for all who cannot.

'To establish a climate of decency, and civility, in which each person respects the feelings and dignity and the God-given rights of his neighbor.

'To make this a land in which each person can dare to dream, can live his dreams -not in fear, but in hope proud of his community, proud of his country, proud of what America has meant to himself and the world.'

These are great goals. I believe we can, we must work for them. We can achieve them. But we cannot achieve these goals unless we dedicate ourselves to another goal.

We must maintain the integrity of the White House, and that integrity must be real, not transparent. There can be no white-wash in the White House.

We must reform our political process ridding it not only of violations of the law, but also of the ugly mob violence, and other inexcusable campaign tactics that have been too often practised and too readily accepted by one side to the excesses or expected excesses of the other side. Two wrongs do not make a right.

I looked at my own calendar this morning up at Camp David as I was working on this speech. It showed exactly 1,361 days remaining in my term. I want these to be the best days in America's history, because I love America. I deeply believe that America is the hope of the world, and I know that in the quality and wisdom of the leadership America gives lies the only hope for millions of people all over the world, that they can live their lives in peace and freedom. We must be worthy of that hope, in every sense of the word.

Tonight, I ask for your prayers to help me in everything that I do through the days of my Presidency to be worthy of their hopes and of yours. God bless America and God bless each and every one of you.