



June 11, 1973

Dear Mr. President:

In the past ten days or so, almost purely by chance, I have talked to a number of your Senior Staff.

Their comments jibe with one another to such a degree that I believe they are quite reliable. And they give a picture of a situation which is serious.

Knowing how you work, it is possible that you don't know of its degree of seriousness, and that's why I'm writing you.

This is a bad time, I know, facing the Russian visit, economic changes, etc., and I would not raise this subject with you now except that several people seem to be approaching an early decision to resign.

The Laird appointment has much to be said for it. However, the Vice President, Ken Cole and, to a lesser degree, Shultz, Ash and Connally all have taken it as a vote of no confidence. I realize that this was unavoidable, in fact, but the needed reassurances from Al Haig and Laird have not been given, to get these people back on the track.

Laird's press conference was apparently very unsettling for them. He asserted his paramount status, but with no particularity or detail. So now the others say openly that they don't know what their duties and jobs are.

Uncertainty has bred deep discontent in some. Shultz' morale was already low. Others report it is now critical. So is Ken Cole's. I believe he will soon resign.

The crux of the problem is apparently not Laird, but Al Haig. He has moved into substance and policy issues without sufficient background. And those I talked to say Haig has insured that there is no longer any access to the President on domestic issues by anyone except Al.

Laird's coming will doubtless correct some of this access talk, and I'm sure much of the griping and criticism is untrue or unfair but it seems vital that someone quickly gather all of the domestic strings so that all these people are made to feel a part of the operation with a well

defined role and a clear reporting relationship to the others and to you.. Clearly Mel Laird should be the one to do this. But there is a big question whether, in view of his past relations with the others and his past performance, he could pull it off alone with the people he's double-crossed, lied to, cheated, etc. while at DOD. The built-in resistance to him seems very high, at least among some.

I am cataloging all this because I think you may be able to give Laird the credentials to pull this off in one or several meetings involving everyone mentioned, including Haig, and the Vice President, where you make the duty assignments and establish the reporting lines.

If you leave it for Al and Mel to do in your absence, you may lose some of the other people. Perhaps that's not all bad; some problems may go and Mel will have a freer hand. But you will also lose most of your ability to get things done. I can't make a judgment whether that still is at all important. Mel is telling the press he is going to do it with all the good people in the Departments, which makes good copy. I just hope nobody gets to believing it.

I fully appreciate the advantages Laird may bring ~~to~~ in getting Congressional results on your one key issue. But a rash of resignations will surely weaken things more, and I think they can be staved off.

Apparently the lack of White House staff unity is being openly talked about by the staff itself, all over town, by many of the people who should have a proprietary interest in making things seem better than they are.

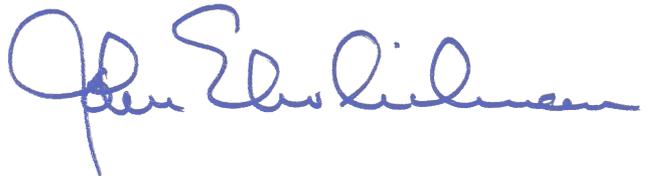
Along that line, another subject is very much on my mind: Elliott Richardson. An independent Special Prosecutor is perhaps a political necessity. But an Attorney General independent of (apparently even adverse to) the President I do not understand. The vice is compounded when Government refuses to defend you and apologizes for you to every reporter he has lunch with. These fellows apparently don't care that you are in the fight of your life, personally. I gather their loyalty is only to the institution of the Presidency. You need a couple of lawyers loyal to you personally because the attack is not just institutional; it is really only an attack on the incumbent.

I appreciate your kind postscript to your letter accepting my resignation. I still have appearances before the Nedzi Committee (CIA) and the Ervin Committee but as soon as our house sells we are going to head back to Seattle. The press atmosphere here is not good for the kids, or for us, for that matter.. We will buy back our old house and then just wait for Mr. Cox and Elliott to make up their minds.

Some wonder if there is really the political courage there not to indict someone who has been convicted by the media. I know of every reason why pure justice can and must be expressed by Mr. Cox and all involved, and that's the standpoint from which I see (and will continue to see) this matter. It's that same old question of the real and the unreal; I believe I really understand the true Power at work in all of this.

You have our support and prayers. Best regards to Pat and the family.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Edward Sullivan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "S".