



Elliot L. Richardson: Exemplar of Integrity and Public Service

JAMES P. PFIFFNER

Abstract

This article examines the career and ideas of Elliot Richardson as an exemplar of integrity and public service. The analysis proceeds from an overview of Richardson's career to an examination of his acts as a political appointee and his stance toward career civil servants. It then discusses his confrontation with President Nixon over the Watergate special prosecutor, which ended in his resignation. It concludes by analyzing the ideas about government that underpinned Richardson's public acts.

It is unusual in American public life for one person to have held ten presidential appointments. It is also uncommon for a politician to demonstrate a high level of personal integrity in very visible public ways. Thus, it is doubly unusual for these qualities to be combined in the same person. However, Elliot Lee Richardson was the embodiment of integrity and public service. This essay will examine his career as an exemplar of moral action in public service.¹

In the framework developed by David Hart (1992) and expanded by Terry Cooper (1992), evidence of a moral exemplar can be found in moral episodes and moral processes. Moral episodes can be crises or confrontations marked by situations that must be resolved in a relatively short period with the exercise of moral courage. Moral processes can be moral projects or moral work and are the more routine aspects of conducting a life or a career. They explicitly recognize that to live a moral life in everyday interactions with other people and to perform one's job conscientiously call for moral commitment.

The first section of this essay will examine moral processes in the career of Elliot Richardson, taking up an account of his career and illustrating his character with several incidents in politics and administration. The second section will analyze moral episodes of confrontation and crisis when Richardson dealt with Watergate issues in 1973. In addition to Hart's categories, another section will be devoted to

Richardson's ideas, which, it will be argued, are worthy of examination as a significant dimension of his character and career.

Moral Processes: A Career of Public Service

Elliot Richardson was born in Boston to a family of the eastern establishment and pursued a career in politics and public service. His commitment was to the public good, and he approached it in ever widening spheres of action, from Town Meeting member, to cabinet-level appointments, to international emissary and mediator. The theme of his public life was balance, and in his commitment to balance he was often caught between conflicting forces.

Richardson's ambition was balanced by his commitment to the public interest. His political loyalties were balanced by his hard-headed analysis of the merits of each situation. The duties of his political positions were balanced by a profound

respect for the institutions of government and the career public servants with whom he worked. His pursuit of the public interest was balanced by his unfailing respect for others, including political adversaries and subordinates. His career of action in the public realm was balanced by a serious thinker's rigorous analysis of the philosophical roots of public action. This section

Richardson's ambition was balanced by his commitment to the public interest. His political loyalties were balanced by his hard-headed analysis of the merits of each situation.

illustrates Richardson's character by examining first his career as a public servant, second how he acted in his political positions, and third his behavior toward the career services.

Career Overview

Richardson began his work life with experiences that prepared him for his later series of public offices. After attending college during the early years of World War II, he joined the U.S. Army, undergoing basic training as a medic at Camp Pickett, Virginia, in the summer of 1942. As a first lieutenant, he landed in Normandy on D-Day (June 6, 1944) and went ashore at Utah Beach. During the invasion, a soldier in Richardson's unit stepped on a land mine that blew off his foot and was lying in a field of barbed wire. As platoon leader, Richardson felt that it was his duty to go get the man. "He was in agonizing pain. Somebody had to get him. I stepped carefully across the barbed wire, picked up the wounded soldier, and retraced my steps. All I could do was put down one foot after the other, hoping each time that nothing would go off" (Richardson 1976, 38). The physical courage exhibited in war was to be echoed in political courage later in his career. For his service with the 4th Infantry Division, Richard was awarded the Bronze Star, two Purple Hearts, and the Légion d'Honneur.

Although his military experience and family background might have led him into the study of medicine—his father, three uncles, both grandfathers, and a great-grandfather were all doctors—Richardson said that medicine "seemed too much like a book I had read before" (Barnes 2000). Therefore, he set upon a career in public life

and headed for law school. However, the summer before law school he took a job in a factory welding steel spools and socket wrenches. He had the night shift and worked from 7:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. five nights a week. While he was acutely aware that for him "the job would end with the beginning of law school," he knew that it would not for most of his co-workers (Richardson 1976, 233). This experience gave him a perspective on working life in America that would be reflected in his service in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare later in his career.

After graduating from Harvard Law School with the class of 1947, Richardson clerked for Judge Learned Hand (1947–1948) and then for Justice Felix Frankfurter of the Supreme Court (1948–1949). He turned down a job offered him by Secretary of State Dean Acheson in order to pursue a career in politics back in Massachusetts (Gormley 1997, 86). Joining a private law firm, he started at the bottom of the political ladder in 1950 by running for Town Meeting member in Precinct 10 of Brookline, Massachusetts. In 1952, he became a full-time field organizer for the Massachusetts Republican State Committee, after which he went to Washington to work for Massachusetts Senator Leveret Saltonstall as a legislative aide. By the end of his career, he had participated in seven statewide campaigns in Massachusetts (Richardson 1976, 89).

At the beginning of his second term, President Eisenhower appointed Richardson assistant secretary for legislation in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, and in the spring of 1958, as acting secretary, he attended his first cabinet meetings. In 1959, Richardson left the Eisenhower administration to become U.S. attorney in Massachusetts, where he was involved in fighting corruption and took particular pride in convicting tax evaders. Within several years he was forced to resign by the Kennedy administration, not for any performance reason but because Kennedy wanted his own man in the position (Richardson 1976, 99–100; Gormley 1997, 232). Returning to Massachusetts electoral politics, he lost the Republican nomination for attorney general to Edward Brooke, later to be senator from Massachusetts. Two years later John Volpe, campaigning for the governorship of Massachusetts, asked Richardson to join him as his running mate, and together they won the election. However, the duties of lieutenant governor were not challenging enough for Richardson. He resigned in 1966 in order to run and win the race for attorney general of Massachusetts.

In 1969, Richardson returned to the national government when Richard Nixon appointed him undersecretary of state, in which position he impressed the Nixon White House. In 1970, when Nixon became dissatisfied with the performance of his old friend Robert Finch at Health, Education, and Welfare, he decided to move Richardson from State to replace him. As secretary of health, education, and welfare, Richardson undertook a major study of the many Great Society programs that had been created in the department since his service in the 1950s, and planned a reorganization that would rationalize its many functions (Richardson 1976, 160). After the 1972 election, Nixon decided to shake up his cabinet, and in early 1973 he appointed Richardson secretary of defense (Pfiffner 1996, 43). In May, only three months later, Nixon moved him to the Department of Justice, where he needed a person of unquestioned integrity. Richardson held the job for only five months before he resigned in the Saturday Night Massacre, discussed below.

After leaving the Nixon administration, Richardson went to the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington to reflect on Watergate, his career, and the American

constitutional system. The result was *The Creative Balance*, published in 1976. Early in his term, President Ford called Richardson back to service as ambassador to the Court of St. James (i.e., Britain) and later in 1975 appointed him secretary of commerce. After his executive branch service, Richardson was appointed by President Carter to be ambassador at large and special representative to the UN Conference on the Law of the Sea, and by President George H. W. Bush to be his special envoy for multilateral assistance to the Philippines. In all, Richardson held ten presidential appointments, four of them as cabinet secretary—more than any other American.²

Richardson's career can be seen as a career of moral processes. That is, he continued to act in the public sphere in positions in which he could contribute to the public good. It is relevant that after returning from military service and going to law school, he began at the bottom—as a field organizer and a legislative aide. In this sense, he “paid his dues,” and he continued to work his way through a series of increasingly influential public offices. In contrast to many American politicians, neither great wealth nor political connections gave him a free ride. Beginning one's career at the top—for example, running for Senator without previous public service—is not morally suspect, but working one's way up through the system as Richardson did was a long, slow moral process that laid a strong foundation for his later public service at the highest levels.

Yet, at the same time, this was the career of a very ambitious man, and Americans are ambivalent about ambition. On the one hand, political ambition is often seen as merely self-serving and characteristic of one who will cut corners and bend ethical rules in pursuit of higher office. On the other hand, the country depends on wise political leadership, and all of our most revered presidents and other political leaders have been very ambitious in their careers. In order to accomplish great things, or even the public good, one must be ambitious. The question is whether one is willing to gain political advantage at the cost of one's integrity. Here David Hart's distinction between fame and mere celebrity is relevant. Fame, “correctly understood,” is “the recognition and admiration of virtuous others, both in the present and the future, that one is of good character and has done work that is both honorable and worth doing” (Hart 1992, 16). In Richardson's case, ambition was tempered by personal integrity and his desire for fame grew from his commitment to the public interest.

Therefore, it is revealing that Richardson lost his bid to be senator from Massachusetts in the 1984 Republican primary. In 1984, Ronald Reagan was running for reelection, and conservatives dominated the Republican Party. Reagan's fiscal policies and the recession of 1981 had left the country with deficits of more than \$100 billion and a national debt that had doubled since 1980 (Pfiffner 1996, 94–110). While Richardson was in favor of cutting federal spending to deal with the deficits, he also was convinced that revenues (taxes) had to be increased in order to pay for what the nation wanted in public services. His opponent covered the air waves with charges that Richardson wanted to raise taxes. “All I could say in self-defense was, ‘I don't *want* to raise taxes, but we've got to deal with the deficit!’” (Richardson 1996, 209). Like Walter Mondale, who also felt that the deficit had to be dealt with, Richardson lost in 1984. This was a case in which Richardson was willing to sacrifice his own ambition in order to advocate what he was convinced was a sound fiscal policy for the country.

The Political Realm

Richardson's acts in his various political and governmental roles were based in his firm ideas about the role of politics in the United States. He felt that the calling of government was a noble one because it is only through politics that human beings can live in peace and achieve goals that are unattainable through their individual efforts. If the economy is to flourish, public works must be undertaken to provide the necessary infrastructure; when capitalism is successful in creating wealth, the government must enforce contracts and rein in its excesses through regulation. If individual rights are to be protected, governments must establish them and enforce them.

In a democratic republic, politics is necessary in order to make the difficult choices among competing claims and values. Interests must be brokered and value disagreements must be mediated if a polity is to live in peace. Thus, the role of the politician is a noble one, but the politician is caught in the middle.

Despite never getting credit for courage or independence, the best of the breed call things as they see them anyway and accept the abuse as all in the day's work. The worst turn into vacillating calibrators of fluctuating public opinion. But even the good ones feel themselves under increasing pressure to serve up the simplistic solutions we so insistently demand. (Richardson 1996, 69)

The pressures of politics at high levels of the U.S. government are particularly intense and are reflected in the actions of political appointees of the president. During four cabinet appointments and two sub-cabinet appointments, Richardson often demonstrated his willingness to make public policy choices "on the merits." This phrase of legal parlance is meant to convey that when faced with a public policy problem, the facts of the situation ought to prevail rather than which powerful interests favor one outcome or another (Richardson 1996, 141). Deciding on the merits and balancing conflicting obligations is moral work that can be illustrated with several incidents in Richardson's career (Hart 1992, 24).

In the spring of 1958, when Richardson was acting secretary of health, education, and welfare, the Food and Drug Administration needed new laboratory space and had rejected the lowest bid on a proposal to convert an old warehouse for that purpose. The FDA argued that the conversion would be too expensive and the building could not be kept clean enough for laboratory purposes. The problem was that the Republican Party chairman of the state of Georgia owned the warehouse, and several Republican senators (and the Democratic representative from Atlanta) put pressure on Richardson to overrule the FDA and force it to take the warehouse. After a careful analysis of the case, Richardson concluded that the FDA was correct in its analysis. He put his reasoning for backing the FDA decision into a memorandum and sent it to the politicians who had contacted him (Richardson 1996, 15). While they did not attempt any immediate retribution, Richardson was willing to take political heat from powerful members of his own party in order to make the best decision on the merits.

Later, at Health, Education, and Welfare, Colbert King wrote a memorandum arguing that the National Institutes of Health were neglecting research on sickle cell anemia, a genetic disease that primarily affects African Americans. Richardson was convinced by the analysis. In a small but significant moral project, he ordered the

NIH bureaucracy to design a program, and persuaded President Nixon to provide funding in his budget. Funding for sickle cell research went from \$70,000 to \$10,000,000, largely because of Richardson's efforts (King 2000, A25).

In the executive branch, there are constant pressures to take actions at the behest of powerful political actors. These pressures often come from the Hill when a member of Congress wants special treatment for a constituent, and they are taken seriously in the bureaucracy. Richardson's perspective on these demands from the Hill was that a request to expedite action on a meritorious application was a legitimate courtesy to a member of Congress. However, to violate an established standard for the application of the law or policy was "beyond the pale" (Richardson 1996, 202). Richardson's rule of thumb on the propriety of an inquiry from a political source about a bureaucratic decision was: "whether, on the one hand, it seeks simply to make certain that the unique circumstances of an individual situation are being considered fairly and sympathetically, or whether, on the other hand, it attempts to distort the merits in order to reward a friend, punish an enemy, or gain some unfair political advantage" (Richardson 1976, 27).

In 1976 when Richardson was secretary of commerce and President Ford was running for reelection, Congress passed a job-creation bill intended to stimulate the economy. The Commerce Department was in charge of making grants to communities that qualified for the needs-based grants based on levels of poverty and unemployment in the jurisdiction. One day, President Ford personally called Richardson to ask that his hometown of Grand Rapids, Michigan, be given one of the grants. Richardson told Ford that Grand Rapids did not meet the criteria and he could not violate the established standards (Richardson 1996, 203). Most cabinet secretaries in an election year would have been sorely tempted to be responsive to a direct request from the president who had appointed them, but Richardson was willing to risk Ford's disfavor and his potential replacement in a second term. (This assessment of Richardson's courage might be somewhat modified by the understanding that Gerald Ford was a man of such decency it is unlikely he would have punished Richardson for doing his job honestly. Still, Ford *did* ask.)

In the fall of 1973, as attorney general, Richardson had to face a particularly difficult balancing dilemma: whether to prosecute Vice President Spiro Agnew for his crimes or to forgo prosecution in exchange for a guilty plea to a limited indictment. The situation was acute because the Watergate investigation was under way with the possibility of presidential impeachment and removal from office. If at the same time Agnew was in the middle of a protracted court battle, the country's leadership might be uncertain, with dangerous national security implications. If the offices of president and vice president became vacant, the Democratic speaker of the House, Carl Albert, was next in line to succeed to the presidency.

Richardson had to balance the needs of justice with the delicate circumstances of the situation. On the one hand, Agnew had the right to a full trial, and the American people had the right to have a full airing of the evidence for the crimes with which the vice president had been accused. On the other hand, Agnew was likely to fight the charges vigorously, which could take many months of legal battles. If Nixon were impeached, the country faced a situation in which a person who was being prosecuted for several felonies might succeed to the presidency. In the end, Richardson chose a compromise that was less than optimal but the best that could be negotiated

in the circumstances, given Agnew's leverage due to his willingness to fight the charges in court. On October 10, 1973, Agnew was allowed to plead *nolo contendere* to one count of tax evasion, and the government's charges for the rest of his crimes were made public (Richardson 1976, 102).

In this moral episode, Richardson had to act with great circumspection in order to arrive at a compromise that was in the public interest and avoided a potential constitutional crisis. In his actions in the Agnew case, Richardson exhibited his concern for the presidency as an institution. He did not want the presidency to be tainted by a man with Agnew's criminal record (Rohr 1998).

Richardson and the Career Services: The Administrative Realm

Richardson's respect for others was reflected in his attitude toward the career services of the government, and this respect was part of the moral work of his career. Even though Richardson was a political appointee in all of his executive branch positions, he was acutely sensitive to the crucial role public administrators play in implementing policy. While policy choices are legitimately the realm of presidential appointees (within the limits set by law), career civil servants work in the institutions that carry out policies, and in Richardson's judgment, political appointees need "the expertise, institutional memory, and candid advice of their career colleagues" (Richardson 1996, 88).

He saw the role of career executives as "preventing their political masters from making other than deliberate mistakes" (Richardson 1996, 85). Nevertheless, career civil servants at the top in the United States are understandably gun-shy of making suggestions to political appointees who all too often do not have the respect for their judgments that Richardson did. Richardson recounts his experience at the State Department in the Nixon administration when dealing with "these reticent professionals": "I soon learned . . . that a lifted eyebrow, a suppressed smile, or a quick glance toward a colleague should be taken as my cue to ask a question. When I did, I invariably got an answer that supplied useful information, shed light on a relevant policy consideration, or brought to bear relevant experience" (Richardson 1996, 92).

Richardson's attitude toward the career services stemmed from his fundamental value of respect for others and his ability to see things from the perspective of other people. So Richardson was critical of the reflexive distrust of the career services ("bureaucrat bashing") that characterized many politicians in the 1970s and 1980s, particularly Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan. Richardson understood the self-limiting role of most civil servants.

They do not see themselves as performing a policymaking role. . . . They limit themselves instead to doing their jobs day to day competently but unobtrusively. . . . When approached with distrust, they respond with reservation and sometimes with hostility, and the loser is the public interest. A successful relationship between political appointees and career public servants depends upon effective cooperation between political managers who know what they want to accomplish and experienced bureaucrats who know how to get things done. (Richardson 1996, 91)

Richardson's attitude toward the career services stemmed from his fundamental value of respect for others and his ability to see things from the perspective of other people.

It is this perspective that Richardson brought to his role on the National Commission on the Public Service (the Volcker Commission), which thoroughly studied the state of the federal public service and issued a series of recommendations in 1989. Among various recommendations dealing with recruitment, pay, and professional development in the public service, the task force that Richardson headed made a number of recommendations for improving the relationship between political appointees and career civil servants (Richardson and Pfiffner 1999).

One of the few proposals that was not received warmly when presented to President Bush was the one to reduce the number of appointees in executive branch positions from about 3,000 to about 2,000. The reasoning behind the proposal was that the increasing number of political appointees and their deeper penetration into the bureaucracy put less experienced people in charge of vital programs, reduced the career prospects of civil servants, and deprived the government of valuable experience and leadership. Richardson argued that in recent years positions several layers down from cabinet secretary (e.g., deputy assistant secretary) were often filled with minimally qualified political appointees. "People who have devoted a lifetime or significant part of it to expertise in their field are entitled to be listened to with respect . . . many presidential appointees make the gross mistake of not sufficiently respecting the people they are dealing with . . . and get themselves into trouble as a result" (Pfiffner 1996, 80).

In the above work settings, Richardson acted as a moral leader with respect to his subordinates by setting a moral example. With respect to his superiors, he acted as a moral worker in balancing his loyalty to them with what was the right thing to do in the situation. Thus Richardson, in the moral work of his day-to-day actions and in minor moral episodes, provided the foundation for a major crisis in his career and one of the turning points in the Nixon presidency, the Saturday Night Massacre.

Moral Episodes and Crisis: Watergate and the Saturday Night Massacre

Elliot Richardson ended up as one of the few heroes of Watergate, primarily because of his resignation in the face of an order from President Nixon to fire Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox. This episode constituted a moral crisis brought about by Richardson's confrontation with Nixon. However, Richardson's resignation in protest was not foreordained or inevitable. For most of his service as attorney general, Richardson did not believe Nixon was guilty of a cover-up, and he did his best to mediate the dispute over the tapes between Cox and Nixon in order to arrive at a non-confrontational resolution. His resignation was the culmination of a series of decisions by Nixon, Cox, and Richardson, some of which resulted in confrontations. Richardson's actions throughout the series of events demonstrate uncommon integrity, courage, and sense of the public interest.

Appointment as Attorney General

After the resignations of John Mitchell and Richard Kleindienst, President Nixon needed a person in the position of attorney general who would restore confidence in the office and the administration. The Watergate break-in of June 1972 had resulted in the conviction of the immediate burglars, but James McCord, chief of security for the Committee for the Reelection of the President, had written a letter to Judge

Sirica hinting that White House officials might be involved. The Senate opened hearings, and when Nixon decided to ask his top aides, H. R. Haldeman and John Ehrlichman, to resign, he also decided to ask Richardson to move from his position as secretary of defense (after only 100 days) to head the Justice Department.

Richardson was by no means eager to take the job. He welcomed the challenge of managing the Defense Department in the crucial phase of winding down the U.S. involvement in Vietnam. In a sense, it was a “step down” for him, given the size and role of the Department of Defense (Gormley 1997, 233, 321). In addition, the position of attorney general held “real danger and risk” for Richardson (Gormley 1997, 247). In his judgment, the White House was treating the Watergate problem with too much arrogance, even though the president was probably not guilty of what the Democrats suspected (Gormley 1997, 247). After being told of the president’s intention to appoint him, Richardson agreed with his wife, Anne, that he should decline the assignment (Richardson 1976, 4).

On April 29, 1973, after asking Haldeman and Ehrlichman to resign, Nixon summoned Richardson to Camp David to make him the offer. After an initial demurrer, Nixon insisted and said that he “needed” Richardson for the position, and he acceded to the president’s wishes. At the same time, Nixon said that Richardson would have full control of the Watergate investigation and suggested the appointment of a special prosecutor. Most important, he looked Richardson “straight in the eye” and said that he had not known anything about White House involvement in the Watergate cover-up until his own investigation in March of 1973. “Anybody who is guilty must be prosecuted, no matter who it hurts.”

“Above all,” he told Richardson, “protect the Presidency—not the President if he’s done anything wrong” (Richardson 1976, 5). Publicly, Nixon said in his April 30, 1973, announcement that Richardson would have “absolute authority to make all decisions bearing upon the prosecution of the Watergate case and related matters” (Nixon 1978, 909).

Given the outcome of Richardson’s service as attorney general and Nixon’s later disgust for Richardson, it is relevant to note Nixon’s earlier attitude toward him. In June of 1970, when Nixon decided that Robert Finch had to be replaced as secretary of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Richardson had the edge over another candidate, in H.R. Haldeman’s words, “because more [sic] our man, but then we love him at State” (Haldeman 1994, 172). In 1971 Nixon told Haldeman that Richardson would “be an outstanding Chief Justice,” that he was a “middle-of-the-road guy” and “would be a towering, historic Chief Justice” (Haldeman 1994, 370). He also told John Ehrlichman to tell Richardson that he was “a prime candidate for the Court in 1971” (Ehrlichman 1982, 115). These early expressions of confidence were important because they explain some of the loyalty that Richardson felt toward Nixon, in addition to his appointment to three secretarial and one deputy secretary positions. However, the hints of a Supreme Court appointment also spoke to Richardson’s ambition. For a lawyer who had graduated near the top of his class at Harvard and had clerked for Learned Hand and Felix Frankfurter, the possibility of a Supreme Court appointment must

Nixon wanted Richardson at Justice because he wanted a “team player” . . . with the appearance of absolute integrity. . . . However, he got more than he had bargained for. Richardson had more than the appearance of integrity; he had the real thing.

have been a dream job to cap his career. Thus Richardson's later decision to reject the president's appeals is that much more impressive.

Nixon wanted Richardson at Justice because he wanted a "team player," but he crucially needed someone with the appearance of absolute integrity to restore confidence in the administration and the Watergate investigation. However, he got more than he had bargained for. Richardson had more than the *appearance* of integrity; he had the real thing.

Choosing Archibald Cox as Special Prosecutor

After accepting Nixon's invitation to be attorney general, Richardson's next crucial decision was the appointment of a special prosecutor, which Nixon had left in his hands. While still secretary of defense and preparing for his Senate confirmation hearings, Richardson and his aides drew up a list of 250 potential candidates. Richardson narrowed the list to the top eight, and, notably, Archibald Cox was not on the list. Richardson then proceeded to offer the position to seven legal experts, mostly judges, including one whom Nixon himself had proposed (Gormley 1997, 234). After seven turndowns, Richardson turned to his old professor from Harvard, Archibald Cox. Cox had little prosecutorial experience, but Richardson felt that his probity, integrity, and intelligence would make up for the deficit. Despite the fact that Cox had served with the Kennedy administration as solicitor general and was identified as a Democrat, Richardson saw his approach to the law as non-partisan and apolitical: "I knew him to be a man of unshakable integrity" (Richardson 1996, 37).

Nevertheless, Richardson's confidence in Cox did not impress those in the White House who saw him as a partisan Democrat and part of the Kennedy clan that wanted Edward Kennedy to run for president in 1976. They saw more clearly than Richardson that Cox's duties would be inimical to the president's defense. In his memoirs, Nixon wrote: "If Richardson had searched specifically for the man whom I would have least trusted to conduct so politically sensitive an investigation in an unbiased way, he could have hardly have done better than choose Archibald Cox" (Nixon 1978, 910).³ Richardson did not understand how Nixon could see Cox as partisan. "Try as I might, I could not convince Nixon or his staff that Archie would rather cut off his right arm than take any action not fully supported by the law and the facts. Had Nixon known how stubbornly Cox dealt with the Kennedys when he disagreed with their judgment in the sit-in and reapportionment cases, Nixon would have understood what I meant" (Richardson 1997, xi).

Although the Nixon White House viewed Cox with suspicion, Richardson still had to get confirmed by the Senate, which was controlled by Democrats who were afraid that Richardson, as a loyal Nixon appointee, would hamstring Cox and prevent him from uncovering the dastardly deeds they were convinced lay at the bottom of Watergate. The Democrats demanded that Richardson ensure complete independence for Cox, and twenty-eight senators signed a letter to that effect. Richardson refused their demands. He would delegate "full authority" for Cox to conduct the investigation, but in his role as attorney general he would retain "ultimate accountability" for Cox. But he promised that he would exercise the authority to remove Cox only for "extraordinary improprieties" (Richardson 1976, 37).

Thus Richardson demonstrated careful judgment, courage, and balance as he risked alienating his patron in the White House for being too hard on the administration

while at the same time risking Senate rejection for being too soft on the administration. Both the Senate and President Nixon had to take Richardson's word that he would act honorably as attorney general. Before Richardson was sworn into office in May 1973, Nixon announced, "The truth about Watergate should be brought out in an orderly way. . . . In this effort he [Richardson] has my full support." He added, "I took no part in, nor was I aware of, any subsequent efforts that may have been made to cover up Watergate" (Gormley 1997, 244).

Cox Demands the Tapes; Richardson Is Caught in the Middle

The next stage of the confrontation was precipitated when Cox (on July 23, 1973) issued a subpoena for nine of the tapes relevant to the Watergate investigation, and Judge John Sirica (on August 30) ordered the White House to comply. The White House felt that the investigation was becoming much broader than a narrow search for the perpetrators of the initial break-in, and, in any case, that the tapes, as confidential communication to the president, were protected by executive privilege. Richardson, in a statement that reflected his adopted role of mediator, said that both the president's position and Cox's demand had merit.

Having hired Cox, and as his hierarchical superior, Richardson would ordinarily have expected to be fully informed and had the authority to make key decisions in the case. However, in keeping with his promise to the Senate committee and his conviction that the case had to be independently handled, he recused himself from part of the authority the head of the Department of Justice normally would have exercised. The attorney general would also typically be one of the major legal advisers to the president, but Richardson was not included in the president's circle of Watergate advisers. Nixon and White House staffers clearly did not trust him, especially after Cox began his investigation. But the Cox team of lawyers was also distrustful of Richardson because they felt that he might be too close to the White House and too protective of Nixon (Gormley 1997, 297–299). Thus, Richardson had chosen a difficult role for himself in which he could please neither side. As he saw it, his role was to be "lawyer for the situation" rather than an advocate for either party to the dispute (Gormley 1997, 299).

In this case, Richardson was trying to be an "honest broker" in the sense that he did not think that Nixon was guilty and had several times urged him to give the tapes to Cox to get beyond the scandal (Gormley 1997, 299). However, Richardson respected Cox's determination to get all necessary evidence for his investigation. He faithfully presented the president's position to Cox but did not pressure him to accede to the president's wishes. Richardson and Cox trusted each other and respected each other's position. When Richardson told Cox of a complaint about the investigation, Cox "assumed that Elliot was thinking 'Archie will do me the credit of knowing that all I'm doing is passing on what I have to pass on, and that he will understand that and make up his own mind without feeling that I'm pressuring him'" (Gormley 1997, 299).

Richardson was caught up in a skein of conflicting loyalties and obligations. He was subject to the tug of loyalty to a president who had appointed him to four high-level executive positions and whom he admired in the realm of foreign policy. He was the attorney general, yet he had promised Cox independence, and the Senate had made that independence a condition of the confirmation of his nomination. He

felt that Cox was acting honorably, yet he did not believe that Nixon was personally guilty of any crimes. Richardson's challenge was to honor each of his conflicting obligations and to discern the balance that would serve the public interest.⁴

Cox offered the White House a compromise in which he would get verbatim transcripts of the tapes after they were edited for non-relevant material by a neutral third party, but it was rejected (Gormley, 1997, 311–312). The White House then came up with a compromise proposal in which Cox would get summaries of the relevant portions of the tapes that were certified accurate by Senator John Stennis. Richardson thought this a reasonable proposal, but Cox felt that he needed verbatim transcripts rather than summaries. When Richardson was not able to forge a compromise, the stage for the final showdown was set.

The Saturday Night Massacre

With Cox's persistent demand for the tapes, the White House saw him as a threat to the presidency and national security at a time of international tension. Therefore, they decided to stick with the Stennis proposal and demand that Cox accept it or be fired. Cox insisted that he would not accept summaries of the conversations and would not agree in advance to forgo the pursuit of other tapes in the future if they became important to his investigation. So on October 19 President Nixon released to the press a letter to Richardson instructing him to direct Cox "to make no further attempts by judicial process to obtain tapes, notes, or memoranda of Presidential conversations" (Gormley, 1997, 342). The White House then issued a news release stating that it had made a reasonable demand of Cox, setting up the president's order that Richardson fire him. Cox refused to comply with the White House demand and refused to resign. This put Richardson in a particularly difficult position because of his loyalty to Nixon as well as his ambition.

The administration wanted to get rid of Cox but knew that Richardson had promised the Senate that he would not fire him except for "extraordinary improprieties" and had added that he might resign in protest and undermine the legitimacy of their position. As Nixon recalled, "Richardson's resignation was something we wanted to avoid at all costs" (Nixon, 1978, 930). When Alexander Haig, Nixon's chief of staff, called Richardson and ordered him to fire Cox, Richardson insisted on talking with the president. They knew that Richardson felt political loyalty to Nixon and was ambitious. Not being a team player might hurt his future in the Republican Party. According to William Ruckelshaus, who as deputy attorney general, also resigned, Richardson "was subject to the most intense political pressure imaginable. His political star was rising, and the men who could most affect his future had committed acts that forced him as attorney general to investigate them personally. Yet the fact that both the president and the vice president were members of Elliot's party never affected his judgment" (Ruckelshaus 2000). Richardson's character, developed through years of moral work, served him well in this moral episode.

Before Richardson went into the Oval Office, Haig told Richardson that the president thought highly of him, that he might be made ambassador to the Court of St. James, and even that there might be a place for him on the national Republican ticket in 1976 (Gormley 1997, 355). At their meeting, Nixon explicitly argued that Richardson, if he resigned, would undermine the position of the United States with respect to national security. Nixon said that U.S. forces were on alert because of the

Yom Kippur War and the Soviets might try to take advantage of Nixon's domestic weakness if Richardson resigned.

Nevertheless, Richardson's position was that he had no choice. According to his personal notes made on October 19, Richardson felt: "Since I appointed Cox on the understanding that I would fire him only for 'extraordinary improprieties' on his part, and since I cannot find him guilty of any such improprieties, I cannot stay if he goes" (Gormley 1997, 346). When he explained his position to Nixon, the president said: "I'm sorry that you insist on putting your personal commitments ahead of the public interest." Richardson's reply was: "Mr. President, I can only say that I believe my resignation *is* in the public interest" (Richardson 1976, 44).

Thus, Richardson decided to risk his future in the Republican Party in order to keep the commitments he had made—there almost certainly would be no Supreme Court appointment or presidential nomination. Despite the probability that many would see his actions as heroic, he knew he would incur the wrath of President Nixon and his supporters at a time when it was still not clear that the president had been involved in the Watergate cover-up.

After Richardson's resignation, Nixon concluded that he had made a mistake in selecting him for the Justice Department position: "The first major mistake was the appointment of Richardson as Attorney General. Richardson's weakness, which came to light during the Cox firing, should have been apparent" (Nixon 1978, 1004). In Nixon's estimation of Richardson's character: "Establishment types like Richardson simply won't stand with us when chips are down and they have to choose between their political ambitions and standing by the President who made it possible for them to hold the high positions from which they were now resigning" (Nixon 1978, 969). But this moral episode showed that Richardson's concern for "the very integrity of the governmental process" was more important to him than his personal loyalty to Nixon (Weisband and Frank 1975, 14).

What Nixon saw in retrospect as Richardson's weakness, that is, his willingness to follow his conscience regardless of personal loyalty or risk, was the reason Nixon chose him in the first place. The administration had needed someone with unquestioned integrity to restore public confidence in the Justice Department and in itself. However, when Richardson was asked to violate that integrity out of loyalty to Nixon, they found out that there was a reason for Richardson's reputation for integrity; he really had it.

When he explained his position to Nixon, the president said: "I'm sorry that you insist on putting your personal commitments ahead of the public interest." Richardson's reply was: "Mr. President, I can only say that I believe my resignation is in the public interest."

Moral Ideas: From First Principles to Public Action

While the moral processes of sustained integrity throughout a career and the moral crises of confrontation can illustrate character, it is the contention of this essay that ideas can also be an indicator of integrity of character in an exemplar of public service. Just as exemplary actions can inspire imitation, so can well-explicated ideas evoke responsible action in others. Carefully formed ideas about human nature,

governance, and public service can be a guide or inspiration to others and highlight our mutual obligations and responsibility for our own governance. Thus, Richardson's ideas are worthy of examination in this context. Although ideas alone can be a source of inspiration and guide to action, in Elliot Richardson's case his ideas did not stand alone—they also provided the underpinning justification for his actions as a public servant. Colloquially, Richardson not only “talked the talk” of integrity, he “walked the walk” of exemplary service and good citizenship. We will now discuss some of his ideas about human nature, governing principles, and public service.

First Principles of Governance

Richardson's two books, *The Creative Balance* (1976) and *Reflections of a Radical Moderate* (1996), lay out his ideas about public policy and government, but he is careful to ground his ideas about governance in the fundamental nature of human existence.⁵ In a chapter entitled “A Place in the Sun,” Richardson argues that our

Richardson not only “talked the talk” of integrity, he “walked the walk” of exemplary service and good citizenship.

obligations to each other stem from our individual uniqueness. “From the uniqueness and common humanity of each human being follows the inherent significance of all human beings. All of us have equal claims to respect.

... Indeed, the need for a sense of worth is as integral to our existence as food, sex, or scratching an itch” (Richardson 1996, 29). This fundamental need to be recognized and appreciated leads to our need for social interaction and cooperative achievement.

The ideas of social action and government follow from this first premise. The “state,” or government, according to this way of thinking, does not have a legitimate existence apart from the people who create it. Thus, the state “is only a label for the arrangements by which we the people delegate to some among us responsibility for things that concern us in common” (Richardson 1996, 188). Richardson considered the significance of the American Revolution, as articulated in the Declaration of Independence, to be the end of the assumption that sovereignty can have different purposes than the well-being of the individuals who constitute a polity. He thus distinguishes the philosophical revolution of the Declaration from the war for the independence of the colonies from Britain (Richardson 1976, xiv).

Our mutual obligations call for our participation in the office of citizen, the highest office in a democracy. One of our duties as citizens is to stand up for our own rights. “By insisting on his own rights, one citizen vindicates the rights of all his fellow citizens. And by voluntarily yielding on occasion to the rights of others, the citizen contributes to building a civilized community” (Richardson 1976, xvi). In his positive view of the possibilities of collective action, Richardson explicitly rejects theories of politics based on cynicism: “the view that all human behavior is reducible to self-seeking motives” (Richardson 1996, 189).

The satisfaction of serving others, in a personal or public capacity, flows from the basic interdependence of human beings. Richardson argues that each individual is in fact inseparable from fellow human beings. “The ‘self’ does not—cannot—exist in isolation . . . no person's identity can be defined in all its essential uniqueness except in terms of others. . . . To be a complete person is to be a part of others, and to share a part of them” (Richardson 1976, 350).

From these premises flow civil obligations, which are moral rather than merely legal. For example, "In the case of civil rights, the law can enforce their observance, but not their respect. Where there is true respect for other people—the awareness that each is a unique, sacrosanct individual, equal in dignity to every other human being—there is an awareness of obligation which is higher and more sensitive than any requirement of the law" (Richardson 1976, 365). Similarly, Richardson's definition of evil encompasses many of the atrocities of the twentieth century. "Evil is the willful disregard for other people that leads to treating them as less than human, as lacking in significance, or as unworthy of respect" (Richardson 1996, 44).

Partisan Politics and Policy

The general premises and conclusions about human nature and government outlined above underpinned Richardson's more concrete and practical approach to public policy. His partisan roots were in New England's moderate Republicanism, which in the mid-twentieth century constituted an important component of the Republican Party. Richardson was a conservative in the Eisenhower tradition: internationalist in perspective, fiscally conservative, and wanting to temper rather than roll back the social policies of the New Deal. He quoted Lincoln on the purposes of government from his Republican perspective: "The legitimate object of government is to do for a community of people whatever they need to have done but cannot do at all or cannot do so well for themselves in their separate and individual capacities" (Richardson 1996, 245). Richardson concluded that what the people can do for themselves should not be the government's business, and he generally favored a reduced role for the federal government.

Thus in 1970, when he returned to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, this time as secretary, one of his primary objectives was to pare down and rationalize the plethora of programs that had sprung up during the Great Society years of Lyndon Johnson and to curb the role of the federal government. Critical of "the gravitational pull which for decades has been attracting power toward the center," Richardson

favored "selective decentralization." "By dispersing power, decentralization will diminish our vulnerability to its abuse" (Richardson 1976, 195).

However, Richardson's brand of Republicanism was eclipsed in the later twentieth century. Its demise began with Barry Goldwater's capture of the Republican nomination for president in 1964 and became complete with Ronald Reagan's two terms as president. Richardson did not embrace the new "social" conservatism of the Republican Party. He was critical of Newt Gingrich's Contract With America in the 1994 congressional election campaign, particularly the proposed cutbacks in programs for the poor. "Since when has it been conservative for Americans to turn their backs on the poor? They are not the faceless 'masses' that Marx talked about. They are not an alien 'lower class.' They are people like us. They are our neighbors" (Richardson 1996, 244). Thus, Richardson felt that we have an obligation to help the poor, but that welfare programs should be accurately targeted, tightly managed, and decentralized as far as possible.

Richardson was a conservative in the Eisenhower tradition: internationalist in perspective, fiscally conservative, and wanting to temper rather than roll back the social policies of the New Deal.

His Republicanism was centered on the notion of moderation and the importance of the centralizing tendencies in American politics. "This various and volatile nation of ours has survived because, under stress, the center has held. We have been able to outlast men of passionate intensity because—perhaps only because—the best retained conviction" (Richardson 1996). This commitment to the political center and moderation is the reasoning behind the seemingly oxymoronic title of his book, *Reflections of a Radical Moderate*. In explaining his "radical" commitment to moderation, Richardson states:

I believe profoundly in the ultimate value of human dignity and equality. I therefore believe as well in such essential contributors to these ends as fairness, tolerance, and mutual respect. In seeking to be fair, tolerant, and respectful I need to call upon all the empathy, understanding, rationality, skepticism, balance, and objectivity I can muster. These are the attributes of moderation. For me, moderation is not a fighting faith but a faith worth fighting for. My commitment to it is passionate, uncompromising, and deep-rooted—hence, radical. (Richardson 1996, xv)

Richardson praised Judge Learned Hand's commitment to skepticism and the value of doubt. From Hand's statement that "the spirit of liberty is the spirit which is not too sure that it is right," Richardson draws the conclusion that "Certainty is the straitjacket of liberty; to dress a truth in authority is to stultify freedom of thought" (Richardson 1995, 3). Thus it was not surprising that in 1987 Richardson was critical of attempts by the Republican Party, through its National Committee chairman, Frank J. Fahrenkopf, to capitalize on the popularity of Oliver North to raise funds. Richardson argued that North

stands convicted out of his own mouth of conspiring to deceive and to evade accountability to the duly constituted authorities of the executive branch and the Congress, as well as the American people. He admits lying as a means to an end whose priority over legislative constraints he presumed to judge for himself. The fact that the NSC staff members could assume such a role is frightening in itself. That it should be condoned and, indeed, extolled by leading officials of the Republican Party is deeply dismaying. (Dewer 1987, A2)

By the late 1980s, the mainstream of the Republican Party no longer embraced the values of the moderate Republicans of Richardson's generation.

Conclusion

The tone of the preceding analysis has been positive, but no person is perfect, and Richardson surely had his faults. However, he recognized this, and he was fond of saying, "we all have the defects of our qualities." By this he meant that if we are particularly strong in one area of virtue, we often have faults that flow from our strengths. One of Richardson's strengths was his confidence in his own rectitude—he thought things through carefully and acted with confidence once he made a decision. While this is in some ways admirable, it can also be interpreted as smugness, self-righteousness, or arrogance. Richardson's self-confidence in his decision to resign was seen by Nixon and his aides as self-righteousness and arrogance because he put his personal reputation ahead of his loyalty to the administration.

Associated with his confidence in his carefully considered judgments was a

corresponding difficulty in understanding how others might not see things his way. An example of this was his inability to understand how President Nixon and other Republicans could view his appointment of Archibald Cox as a deliberate move against Nixon. As Richardson remarked apropos of his Cox appointment, "It's a characteristic of us upright Yankees that we tend to be oblivious to other people's worries of appearances that might affect perceptions of integrity" (Gormley 1997, 242).

Richardson was also criticized for being a remnant of an earlier era and blind to the political realities of the 1980s, since he was unwilling to do what was necessary to get elected to the Senate in 1984 (*The New Republic* 1984). Of course, his unwillingness to do "whatever it takes" can also be seen as an essential part of his integrity. He was ambitious, but as noted above, his ambition was moderated by his sense of integrity. He was genteel in manner and might have seemed aloof, but not to those who actually dealt with him in person. For his personal interactions with people faithfully reflected his philosophical convictions; he was unfailingly gracious and courteous to others regardless of their status.

At the personal level, there always seemed to be a twinkle in Richardson's eye, and his subtle sense of humor always lingered just below the surface. He was a whole

At the personal level, there always seemed to be a twinkle in Richardson's eye, and his subtle sense of humor always lingered just below the surface.

person and did not confine his humaneness to his professional life. As Richard Darman, his long-time associate and later director of the Office of Manpower and the Budget, said, "As a husband, parent, grandparent, godparent, friend, neighbor, caregiver, community servant, conservationist, educator, mediator, advisor, and advocate of worthy causes—in every one of these private roles, he met the same extraordinary standard as in the public sphere" (Darman 2000).

The term "honorable" in the case of Elliot Richardson had a substantive as well as a titular meaning. In describing a public servant whom he respected, Richardson might well have been describing himself when he wrote: "He was too astute to bamboozle, too strong to push, too courageous to intimidate, too patient to outlast, and too unassuming to flatter" (Richardson 1996, 207).

Elliot Richardson lived until the last hours of the twentieth century. Throughout his career, he embodied the values of integrity, public service, and civic duty. His public actions exemplified the ideals of America, and he projected those ideals throughout the country and the world. He left us with this thought with which he ended his last book: "Every American who cares about this country—every one of us who is proud of what it has achieved and looks forward to what it may yet attain—shares responsibility for keeping its values alive" (Richardson 1996, 270).

At his crowded memorial service at the National Cathedral in Washington, the orchestra played Aaron Copland's "Fanfare for the Common Man." Although Elliot Richardson was anything but common, he firmly believed in the fundamental equality of all human beings, and thus the music was a fitting comment on his life.

NOTES

1. In the interest of full disclosure, the author worked with Elliot Richardson in the late 1980s on the National Commission on the Public Service and was co-author of several articles with him. Because of my personal acquaintance with Richardson, I am

inclined to view his career positively. However, what I lack in objectivity and detachment I hope will be compensated for in personal experience and familiarity with the subject.

2. His presidential appointments in chronological order were: assistant secretary for legislation at Health, Education, and Welfare, 1957 (Eisenhower); U.S. attorney for Massachusetts, 1959 (Eisenhower); undersecretary of state, 1969 (Nixon); secretary of health, education, and welfare, 1970 (Nixon); secretary of defense, 1973 (Nixon); attorney general, 1973 (Nixon); ambassador to the Court of St. James, 1975 (Ford); secretary of commerce, 1975 (Ford); ambassador at large and U.S. representative to the UN Conference on the Law of the Sea, 1977 (Carter); special representative for multilateral assistance to the Philippines, 1989 (Bush). He was elected lieutenant governor of Massachusetts (1964) and attorney general of Massachusetts (1966). He was awarded the Medal of Freedom by President Clinton in 1998.

3. Despite Nixon's conviction that Cox was out to get him, Cox did not begin with the intention of bringing the president down. "I do know that I was not anxious to find Richard Nixon was responsible for the break-in, for a cover-up, or for any other wrongdoing. . . . I was looking to get to the bottom of it" (Gormley 1997, 251). Cox was later distressed when he had to confront Nixon over access to the tapes. "I can't fight with the President of the United States. I was brought up to honor and respect the President of the United States" (Gormley 1997, 346).

4. Richardson was later criticized in a Harvard case study of Watergate for becoming too close to both sides of the dispute and thus compromising his own disinterestedness. The case study faulted Richardson for having friends on both sides of the dispute and stated that his "major error" was "allowing such a confusing and potentially misleading bundle of obligations to stack up around his office. Had he been a little more dedicated to purity of democratic process, he would have taken more care to preserve distance among himself, the White House, and the office of special prosecutor" (Ziering 1990, 145). However, to Richardson, it was this very closeness to both sides that allowed him to attempt to achieve a compromise resolution. That he failed does not mean that he was wrong to try. He was operating under the assumption that Nixon was telling the truth and was not guilty of the crimes of which he was being accused.

5. Although Richardson did not approach political philosophy from a scholar's perspective, he used many classics of political philosophy and contemporary political theory in his writing. His intellectual curiosity never ceased. During a lunch with the author two months before his death, he described a book about nineteenth-century Japanese military strategy. He then said, "If I had known that I was going to die this afternoon at 2 p.m., I would still have kept reading that book."

REFERENCES

- Barnes, Bart. 2000. "Elliot Richardson Dies at 79." *Washington Post*, January, 1, A17.
- Cooper, Terry L. 1992. "Conclusion: Reflecting on Exemplars of Virtue." In *Exemplary Public Administrators*, ed. Terry L. Cooper and N. Dale Wright. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Darman, Richard. 2000. "A Tribute in Remembrance of Elliot Richardson." Delivered at the National Cathedral, Washington, DC, January 15. Transcript in the author's possession.
- Dewer, Helen. 1987. "Two Republicans Protest Use of North Name to Raise Funds." *Washington Post*, August 27, A2.
- Ehrlichman, John. 1982. *Witness to Power*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Gormley, Ken. 1997. *Archibald Cox: Conscience of a Nation*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley.
- Haldeman, H. R. 1994. *The Haldeman Diaries*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.
- Hart, David K. 1992. "The Moral Exemplar in an Organizational Society." In *Exem-*

- plary *Public Administrators*, ed. Terry L. Cooper and N. Dale Wright, 9–29. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- King, Colbert I. 2000. “The Legacy of Elliot Richardson.” *Washington Post*, January 15, A25.
- The New Republic*. 1984. In Notebook, 9. October 8.
- Nixon, Richard. 1978. *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*. New York: Grosset & Dunlop.
- Pfiffner, James P. 1996. *The Strategic Presidency*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.
- . 2000. *The Modern Presidency*. New York: St. Martin’s Press.
- Richardson, Elliot L. 1976. *The Creative Balance*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.
- . 1995. “The Spirit of Liberty Is Skeptical.” *Boston University Law Review* 75 (January): 321.
- . 1996. *Reflections of a Radical Moderate*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- . 1997. Foreword to *Archibald Cox: Conscience of a Nation*, by Ken Gormley, ix–xii. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley.
- Richardson, Elliot L., and James P. Pfiffner. 1999. “Politics and Performance: Strengthening the Executive Leadership System.” In *The Managerial Presidency*, ed. James P. Pfiffner. College Station: Texas A&M University Press.
- Rohr, John A. 1998. *Public Service, Ethics, and Constitutional Protection*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.
- Ruckelshaus, William D. 2000. “Elliot Richardson’s Choices.” *Washington Post*, January 5, A21.
- Weisband, Edward, and Thomas M. Frank. 1975. *Resignation in Protest*. New York: Grossman.
- Ziering, Mark. 1990. “The Saturday Night Massacre.” In *Ethics in Government: The Moral Challenge of Public Leadership*, ed. Mark H. Moore and Malcolm K. Sparrow. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James P. Pfiffner is a professor in the School of Public Policy at George Mason University. His areas of expertise include the presidency, American national government, and public management. His ten books on the presidency and public management include *The Strategic Presidency* (1996), *The Modern Presidency* (2000), *The Future of Merit*, edited with Douglas Brook (2000), and *The Character Issue in the Modern Presidency* (forthcoming). He worked with the National Commission on the Public Service (the Volcker Commission) from 1987 to 1989 and was project director for the Commission Task Force headed by Elliot Richardson.

