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NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

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STATEMENT BY SENATOR BOB DOLE ON THE WATERGATE

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- I believe the resignations of Robert Haldeman and John Ehrlichman today, as well as the resignations of John Dean and Richard Kleindienst, are steps in the right direction in an effort to clear up the confusion surrounding the Watergate affair. I have said for some time, going back to last July and August, that those who were involved in the Watergate affair should be punished in accordance with the law. Of course, I am not in any way at this point trying to indicate the innocence or guilt of any of those who resigned today. I am suggesting that today's announcement was a necessary action.

Let me emphasize again that we must recognize that Watergate was not an effort by the Republican Party. Indeed, it's quite the opposite. Clearly, what happened in the campaign of 1972 was that important elements of it were left to political amateurs who were new to politics and contemptuous of established political practice. I can not judge the guilt or innocence of these men, nor do I care to, but I can judge their political acumen as I did on frequent occasions during the campaign period. And simply, they had none.

It was a lesson that was learned by both sides in the campaign -- both sides left too much to amateurs, to non-politicians.

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That not only doomed the McGovern candidacy before it even got started, but it almost led to the final death of the Democrat party. Amateurs, who had no roots in the party structure and no allegiance to its organizations took over its institutions, captured its convention and then led its candidate to ignominious defeat.

The Republican Party suffered much the same kind of treatment at the hands of just a few willful men who having achieved the power to run the campaign, had none of the experience it took to do so.

They shut out the voice of the party regulars who are in the business precisely of gauging the political mood and tenor of the country.

Their arrogance and overzealousness -- but most of all their isolation -- was their downfall.

But the events of today have been a large step in the direction of clearing the air. I am quite confident of the President's fervent desire to do that. It will not be easy for him. It will not be pleasant for the American people. But once it is done, then we can get about the business of government once again, unencumbered by this preoccupation with the Watergate case, which has so distracted the attentions of Americans in and out of government.

I look forward to getting this whole sordid affair behind us as soon as possible so that the President's administration can make a new beginning along the promising directions ; it had been moving in both foreign and domestic affairs.