

President's actions are as dreadful as Nixon's

Written by Chen Chien-fu 陳建夫
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According to the powers invested in the legislature by the Constitution, neither the Legislative Yuan's Discipline Committee nor the Document Request Committee is able to investigate President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) or Premier Jiang Yi-huah (江宜樺) in connection to the constitutional crisis involving the executive, legislative and judicial branches that has been set off by the wiretapping of Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) caucus whip Ker Chien-ming (柯建銘) and the ensuing accusation of improper lobbying.

Forty years ago, in 1973, then-US president Richard Nixon became involved in a scandal when he covered up an illegal break-in of the Democratic National Committee headquarters at the Watergate office complex during his re-election campaign. US media outlets did all they could to expose the truth. As a result, the US Senate established a special committee, planning an impeachment against Nixon. In order to avoid imprisonment, Nixon resigned. He was the first and only US president to have been forced to step down.

In Taiwan, Prosecutor-General Huang Shih-ming (黃世明) bypassed his superiors and reported directly to the Presidential Office that the Special Investigation Division (SID) while wiretapping Ker "accidentally" detected that Legislative Speaker Wang Jin-pyng (王金平) had used his influence improperly to lobby for Ker. Since Ma "hates evil as his deadly foe," he bluntly admitted that Huang reported Wang's case to him. He even hinted that Wang was guilty before any legal proceedings had begun.

While Wang was visiting Malaysia to attend his daughter's wedding, Ma claimed that Wang was no longer suitable for the speakership and that he should tender his resignation. Despite public doubts about the legitimacy of surveillance, Ma said that there was no reason for Ker to worry about the wiretapping if he had not done anything unlawful, a statement that has drawn much criticism at home and abroad.

Pressured by the threat of impeachment, Nixon stepped down due to his cover-up of an illegal break-in of the rival camp's headquarters. As for Ma and Huang, should we not force them to take political responsibility for the improper wiretapping and the harm they did to the Constitution?

Although the public has the right to elect and recall officials, as well as the right to referendum, the legislature is still the most immediate way to monitor and counterbalance the executive

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branch. It even has the power to prevent the president from intervening with the separation of powers in Taiwan.

It is disappointing that the supposedly neutral legislative speaker continued to pledge his loyalty to the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) after the SID discovered his alleged improper lobbying. Wang said that he wishes to remain a KMT member forever and promised to accomplish any mission that the KMT might give him. This voluntary restriction to his own power and submission to authority is a reflection of the fact that the executive branch has bullied the legislative speaker for a long time. Meanwhile, both the speaker and legislators have become accustomed to the constitutional imbalance in the relationship between the executive, legislative and judicial branches.

Forty years ago, the US Congress successfully drove out a popular president from the White House. Today, Taiwanese should give the legislature investigative rights so it can show the unpopular Ma that the view that a person "should not worry about wiretapping if he has not done anything unlawful" is wrong.

Chen Chien-fu is the coordinator of Monitoring Internet Video on Demand, Citizen's Congress Watch.

Translated by Eddy Chang

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