NY Times MAR 20 1973

Feeling C.R.E.E.P.Y.

By Russell Baker

OBSERVER

WASHINGTON, March 19 — Correspondence file:

Committee for the Re-Election of the President, Washington, D. C.

Dear Committee:

I have a sinking feeling, which gets worse with each day's newspaper, that I may be the only person in America who did not contribute $200,000 to the campaign to re-elect the President. Is this correct?

(Signed) Titcomb Barnes.

* * *

Dear Mr. Barnes:

We regret our inability to supply the information you request, but our files have been badly depleted ever since the I.T.T. document shredder broke into our office one weekend when everybody was out of town and shredded all the records it could get its blades on.

If you have reason to believe that you did not give your $200,000, we will gladly accept it at this time. As you may know from reading the papers, we have, fortunately, re-elected the President; however, our need for contributions of $200,000 continues as we feel obliged to return to donors a number of multiple-hundred-thousand-dollar contributions for reasons that cannot be discused in the mails without violating the great constitutional guarantee of executive privilege. (Signed) C.R.E.E.P.

* * *

Dear Committee:

Why should I suffer because you can't keep I.T.T.'s shredders out of your records? Law and order was what I was voting for when I gave my $200,000. And now I find you can't even police your own files.

When I put up the $200,000, you were free enough with promises about how somebody might just possibly find time to look into that little tax problem of mine, but now you act like you've never heard of me. Is that the spirit of Republicanism? What would Abraham Lincoln say?

(Signed) Titcomb Barnes

* * *

Dear Mr. Barnes:

Don't try getting short-tempered with us. To us, sir, $200,000 donors are a dime a dozen. However, if you can show us some record of your contribution, such as a photograph of Maurice Stans counting your gift, we would be delighted to restore a more friendly tone to our correspondence.

(Signed) C.R.E.E.P.

* * *

Dear Committee:

The man who came for my $200,000 was a former Watergate bugger for the C.I.A. A man like that knows all the tricks. He told me he even had

his pay checks laundered in Mexico. You don't think a man that smart was going to let me take his picture? However, I did take a picture of the little black bag in which he carried away my $200,000 in one-dollar bills. See enclosed snapshot.

(Signed) Titcomb Barnes

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Dear Mr. Barnes:

Former high-altitude photo analysts at the Pentagon, men capable of identifying a left-handed plumber in a crowd picture of 30,000 people taken from an altitude of 65,000 feet, say that the black bag in your snapshot appears to be a child's tin lunch box which has been hurriedly rubbed with black shoe polish.

We have also learned that you do indeed have a "little tax problem" with the Internal Revenue Service. Very little.

You have been blustering hollow threats to "go to tax court" rather than pay the additional $63 which your Internal Revenue Service auditor has decided to squeeze out of you in order to meet his collection quota and get a nice promotion at higher salary, which you will help pay through the next tax increase.

What's more, we are informed that virtually all your visible income is salary. Under present tax law, it would take a man 94 years to save enough salary after taxes to give $200,000 to the Committee to Re-Elect the President. You do not write like a 94-year-old man. You write like a young man who pities himself because he does not have $200,000 to give to the Committee. (Signed) C.R.E.E.P.

* * *

Dear Committee:

Suppose I pledge to give my $200,000 when I am 94? Do you think anyone could see his way clear to getting that tax auditor off my back?

(Signed) Titcomb Barnes

This last letter is still unanswered.