

11/2/71

Dear Js,

Turned the TV on for some of the local news and there was the shining countenance (I can say no more for it) of Melvin Laird. It reminded me of what I think is a great story I got from a Chicago reporter who visited a couple of weeks ago. He was in DC for a week, where he stayed with friends at least one of whom is a reporter. It is from them he got this beaut.

Laird apparently contracted a Congressional ailment often incubated before Hill service, bent elbow. Going along with it is an inability to carry a heavy load. He was at a party where this or these reporters (I'm unclear-it may be a man and wife team, but the story involves the man reporter) were. Laird was going around beaming, introducing himself to those who paid no attention to him, smiling, offering his hand, and slurring out "I'm Mel Laird".

Reporter: Hello.

Laird: I'm Mel LAIRD.

Rep.: Glad to meet you.

Laird: I'm on the inside.

Rep.; Oh?

Laird: Yeah, I know secrets!

Re.: Real secrets:

Laird: Sure, real secrets (and he then said military or national defense secrets).

Rep.: Don't believe yah!

Laird: I doo too!

Rep.: Prove it. Tell me one.

At this Laird blurted out the time and size of the next troop withdrawal two or three days at least before it was announced.

The reporter used it and had a good scoop. I don't think Hoover is investigating.

This is a reporter a generation younger than us, but he appears to be a teetotaler or one in that ancient tradition. I was a three-bottle man before I cast my first vote.

I believe it, by the way, as does my source. It doesn't have to be true to be a good story, but I have known too many just like that. I know Congressmen I never saw sober, and I drank all night with many who never told any secrets, but had some great political yarns. (Course, maybe I knew the wrong ones, those who couldn't know secrets. But they were good enough company!

There is a moral: don't worry. The country is in sage hands.

Best,