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Unanswered questions in the sinister Watergate case

WASHINGTON—When President Nixon on February 7 signed the law requiring full disclosure of political campaign contributions and expenditures, he said, "By giving the American public full access to the facts of political financing, this legislation will guard against campaign abuses and will work to build public confidence in the integrity of the electoral process."

Seven months later, the unanswered questions in the sinister Watergate case are seriously straining the public's confidence. Instead of giving the public full access to the facts, Nixon and his subordinates are striving to minimize them, obscure them, and divert attention from them. It is not an edifying performance.

Not an amusing caper

The Watergate case is not an amusing caper or a "very bizarre incident" or an indiscretion committed by some "over-zealous" underling. (The quotations are from Nixon's press conference of last week.) Evidence already disclosed indicates that several agents of the Nixon campaign organization were engaged for some considerable period of time last spring in electronic eavesdropping on the offices of the Democratic National Committee and in photographing Democratic mail and other documents.

This political espionage not only makes it possible to obtain information to which one is not entitled but it also lays the basis for entrapment and blackmail. Such espionage is common in police states. It has no precedent in American politics. It is a hideous development which cannot be brushed aside. Brushing it aside is exactly what the

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Nixon campaign organization has desperately been trying to do ever since its agents were arrested early in June. Former Atty. Gen. John N. Mitchell, then chairman of the Committee to Re-elect the President, immediately denied that the committee had any connection with the arrested men. Ronald Ziegler, the White House press spokesman, dismissed them as "third grade burglars" unworthy of his comment.

The sequence of events

Then the following sequence of events occurred. One of the men arrested turned out to be the Nixon committee's security coordinator. Another man involved was shown to have worked until March 29 as a consultant for presidential assistant Charles Colson. Then the sum of \$114,000 was traced from the Nixon campaign fund to the Miami bank account of one of the arrested men.

The attorney for the Nixon finance committee, who until recently had also worked for Colson at the White House, refused to answer the FBI's questions about this money and was fired. Then the treasurer of the committee resigned. Mitchell has also resigned purportedly to placate his wife, Mrs. Mitchell. It might be noted, said in her last interview before her husband's resignation that she wanted him out of the campaign because politics is "dirty business."

Serious irregularities

The General Accounting Office investigated the Nixon campaign fund and disclosed serious irregularities. For exam-

ple, Maurice Stans, the former secretary of Commerce who is the chief fund-raiser for the Nixon campaign kept \$350,000 in cash in a safe in his secretary's office. This money was not credited to the Nixon campaign account until May 25 and is supposed to have been left over from the 1968 campaign.

The GAO has been unable to get to the bottom of this story because it does not have the authority to subpoena witnesses or records. Since its report was published, however, Sen. Dole of Kansas, the Republican National Committee chairman, has been grinding out charges about Democratic party financial irregu-

larities. This is a deliberate technique to churn up as much confusion as possible and encourage the public to think that both parties are equally in the wrong. Such is not the case.

Not college kids

The arrested men involved in the Watergate case are not amateurs or college kids working in their first campaign. They include experienced political lawyers and veteran CIA agents. They were not given \$114,000 just for fun. Who assigned them to this operation? To whom did they turn over the wiretap information and the photocopied documents?

Why did a Minnesota businessman give \$25,000 in cash to a Republican contact man on a Miami golf course and insist on anonymity?

Why did several Texas businessmen funnel \$89,000 to the Nixon campaign through a Mexico City lawyer and insist on anonymity?

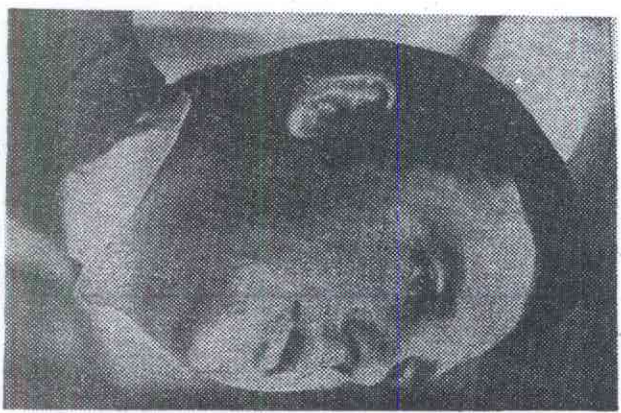
Why did Stans keep \$350,000 in cash in a safe in his secretary's office?

Why is the Nixon campaign organization adamant in its refusal to identify the individuals who gave \$10 million before the new law went into effect on April 6? Who are those individuals? What do they hope to get from the Nixon Administration in the next four years?

Why is Nixon determined to keep the investigation under the control of his own Justice Department? Why does he refuse to appoint an independent prosecutor to conduct this case?

How do repeated evasions and denials "build public confidence in the integrity of the electoral process?"

The questions linger.
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Press Secretary Ziegler
"Third grade burglars?"

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