

Nixon Approved Political Espionage

By Jack Anderson

Washington is buzzing about President Nixon's possible role in the Watergate case. Did he authorize the political espionage and sabotage? Was he aware of the break-in and bugging of Democratic Party headquarters? What is he trying to hide by ordering subordinates not to answer Senate questions about Watergate?

The President tried to answer the whispers last week by letting Senate Republican leader Hugh Scott pass on to the press a private remark. "Hugh," the GOP leader quoted the President as telling him, "I have nothing to hide. The White House has nothing to hide. I repeat, we have nothing to hide."

Our own White House sources say the President certainly did not authorize anyone to send a burglary-bugging team into the Democratic lair. But they acknowledge that he approved the overall espionage-sabotage operation.

Nixon grew up in the Murray Chotiner school of politics. "Find out everything there is to know about the opposition candidate," Chotiner used to tell his political charges. "Some protest we don't want to run that kind of campaign. They say they want to run a

constructive campaign and point out the merits of our own candidacy. I say to you in all sincerity, that if you do not deflate the opposition candidate before your own campaign gets started, the odds are you are going to be doomed to defeat."

Sources who sat in on the President's political strategy session last year say he still took the Chotiner approach. He spoke vigorously of his early political frays as "rock-'em, sock-'em campaign." He believed that in politics as in war, the best plan was an offensive.

A former member of the Nixon Cabinet told us about watching the President go through the pantomime of plunging an imaginary knife into an opponent. "After you get the knife in," said the President gleefully, "you twist it." And he twisted his wrist to demonstrate.

Our sources say the President ordered an espionage-sabotage effort in 1971 after Maine's Sen. Ed Muskie, then the Democratic front runner, began to pass him in the presidential polls. The original purpose, they say, was to undercut Muskie. Another early objective was to push Alabama's Gov. George Wallace and South Dakota's Sen. George

McGovern, who the President believed would be the easiest Democrats for him to beat.

The instructions setting up the espionage-sabotage mission, say our sources, were issued through the President's chief of staff, H.R. Haldeman. He had direct authority over Dwight Chapin, the President's appointments secretary, who routed money to Mr. Nixon's personal attorney, Herbert Kalmbach, to help finance the sabotage campaign. Kalmbach admitted to FBI agents that he had paid up to \$40,000 to Donald Segretti who allegedly headed up the sabotage effort.

We would like to believe the President has "Nothing to hide." We have been almost eager to blame the whole sordid mess upon his underlings. But we can no longer ignore the President's personal responsibility for the developments that led up to the Watergate law violations.

Another Lie?

The embattled L. Patrick Gray III, seeking Senate confirmation to become permanent FBI director, testified that White House counsel John W. Dean III "probably lied" to FBI agents when he claimed not to know whether

Watergate figure E. Howard Hunt had a White House office.

For three days earlier, Dean had ordered two of his deputies to search Hunt's office in Room 338 of the White House annex known as the old Executive Office Building.

Now Rep. Phillip Burton (D-Calif.) has uncovered evidence that Dean "probably lied" to Comptroller General Elmer Staats about the number of foreign service officers working for the White House. While claiming to cut back his White House staff, President Nixon has secretly employed people whose names are listed on the payrolls of other government agencies.

The General Accounting Office, seeking the true size of the White House staff, requested a list of people detailed to the White House from other government departments. On January 15, Dean furnished a list which included only three foreign service officers.

Burton painstakingly went through the State Department's "Foreign Service List" and found seven other foreign service officers assigned to the White House in October, 1972. Of these, six were still working at the White House last month.