

The Watergate Caper Harold Weisberg 8/21/72

John Ehrlichman was on almost half of the CBS TV morning news this a.m. Toward the end he was asked in the Time report that the bugs had been in for some time, were being removed and had been listened to by personnel of the committee to re-elect the President. He said "I don't know". Asked if it were not true that separate from the FBI's there had not been a number of investigation and he confirmed. Asked how long he can continue to say "I don't know" he switched to the criminal aspects, leaving it unanswered. But when pressed about the involvement of the White House he said no federal or White House employee had been involved. Again, no mention of Hunt.

Now this is not the same as saying that no person in authority had been involved.

Whether or not the bugs were being removed, there is no doubt of the involvement of the White House. I suppose this will attempt to be answered by saying that Hunt's involvement was when he was not consulting, when he was working for the Mullen agency.

Without seeing the Time story, opinion is without real basis. They may have the real facts, and we are dealing with people with fraudulent concepts of reality. However, I still see no point in removing bugs nor any need for this excessive manpower in any kind of bugging, putting on or taking out. Pat Collins of the Star and Bernstein and Woodward of the Post both agreed with this last week, can't figure either the removal of the manpower.

The news parts (not CBS interview) of the CBS hourlong news and the 10 minutes plus of Today's at 8 a.m. made no mention of this new story. It was on WTOP radio (all-news) between 8:15 and 8:30 a.m. They quoted Times as identifying the unit involved not as security, the repeated and exclusive Republican identification, but as security and intelligence. And they used clips of yesterday's Dole (unimportant incident inflated by Demos) and MacGregor (no important officials involved) TV talk show appearances.

What MacGregor seems to be preparing for is the identification of officials, with Liddy and Hunt the more obvious, plus the defense/pretense that they are NOT "important". Kleindienst was quoted as having told the DA to "let the chips fall where they may". As between a Republican AG and his appointed Republican DA in a city that has no local government, this might be interpreted as meaning "not at our door."

Coverage: 30 minutes on inde all-news WAVA no story, no mention. They use UPI and independent radio news services. Post has no story. (Interestingly, the pro-Nixon Evans-Novaack column has a strong condemnation of policy handling and blames it on Colson and named lawyers and Mitchell policy, all criticized.) VBS net new 9 a.m. had mention of Time story but most replay Ehrlichman defense from TV net news. WTOP at end net news headline Kleindienst announcement of imminent grand-jury action. Later in 1/4 hr this was enlargement of "let chips fall" but station added that the "security-intelligence" Repub. was organized by the White House crew that was checking on leaks to media, meaning Colson-Hunt. This would seem to justify the forecast that Hunt will fall for Colson and that one of the reasons for the public-relation stupidity of delaying to too close to election may have been required to arrange for fall guy for White House axman. Post's two-days-at-right ignoring of this story strange when the first was one fit for light by-line treatment and the second pins it on White House and they must recognize that indictments are near.