

The Watergate Caper Weisberg 8/24/72

On CBS' TV a.m. news Mike Wallace today had Maurice Stans, presumably interviewed last night. I came in on it after the beginning of the sequence. Stans' reasons for refusing to answer some questions are probative: attorneys' instructions and right of those to be charged. He did say that he had the check in question in his hands less than 3 minutes. Asked if he were going to be indicted, the firmness of his negative and the manner in which he spoke of others, unnamed, can be indicative that he knows who is to be. It is interesting that he said he would be used as a witness against one of the accused.

What is also interesting may relate to outtakes and hence not a basis for analysis. Wallace is normally a good-guy type, pleasant in voice and manner. Here he was aggressive and sounded on the angry side. His face was not on camera. Stans' was. At the end, there was a profile view from the left, not close and not long enough to permit examination of Wallace's face (which means two cameramen at least or an unfiled period while the one cameraman was changing his position from behind Wallace to to his left.

I spoke to Carl Bernstein, who has recently been carrying most of the Post's published work on this story, day before yesterday. He was then busy, but not on any story Lil noted in yesterday's paper, so I presume he is working on angles and aspects not yet reported (and the Post already has more than enough of this). My hunch would be that it centers around the oft-delayed GAO report. There is further reported delay. This leads me to a point I reached long ago with Bob Woodward in discussing this, the GAO detachment when there is a Republican administration. Woodward said that GAO is an arm of Congress and would, in his view, take a middle course. No possibility that this is true remains for the basis of a full report on at least some aspects has existed for a long time. The one area is possible dispute need not delay the report, could be in or handled separately.

The one real purpose served by all of this is Republican protection in two areas at least: delay in the trial, which will soon mean without possibility of doubt until after the election; and providing more time for the cooking of books and the fixing of witnesses. As a matter of the realities of life, there now is no possibility of a before-~~trial~~ election trial because there are enough pre-trial motions that can be filed to delay until long after election and enough lawyers to file them. Complicating it is the character and past of the chief judge of federal district court in Washington, a Nixon hack named Sirica, a political, reactionary judge of questionable competence in addition. I have seen him in court and he has the reputation of being an administration hack. Nixon made him chief judge and was reported to have been responsible for his appointment to the bench during the Ike administration.

However, they may be other needs for time. Some kind of arrangement is going to have to be made with those who will take the rap in this. At least one, probably more, lawyers will worry about more than jail-disbarment. Others will worry about the time they spend in jail and why they should when others go free and are involved. So, the behind-the-scenes Republican problems are neither few nor easily solved.

I think the pretendedly serious Republican interpretation of the law to mean that it requires filing of what was collected April 7 is not really serious but is one of a series of maneuvers designed to delay and give the appearance of legitimacy to the dispute. There seems to be no reasonable doubt about interpretation. This is necessary to shield against that violation, of course, but there are so many more and serious violations, extending even to the form of the filing, that the public use of this and the GAO's contentment with it (as well as that of the papers) make the whole affair dubious and I think validate the most serious questions about the vigilance and vigor of the GAO.

Meanwhile, today's Post says some of the money was traced to Texas Republican committees and to oil interests, one connected in turn with the lawyer Ogarric in Mexico. It says this money went from Texas to Washington to Mexico. Then to Barker. Reminds me, the only person Stans denied knowing with Wallace is Barker. No question asked about Hunt, McCord, etc. Post today has two sums deposited to security and intelligence services, \$50,000 and \$100,000, which finally cover the \$25,000 and \$89,000 already reported. But this means that almost all of it went through Barker, which I can't imagine unless he were a cutoff for, say Hunt and/or Colson, perhaps Mardian, hatiner. At this point is any suspicion unwarranted? But such sums could not seriously be expected to be under the control of a Barker.