

JUN 23 1972 ☉

San Francisco Examiner

Friday, June 23, 1972 SFExaminer

A Cowardly and Ugly Bugging Try

ONE OF THE more improbable events of this year's surprise-packed presidential election extravaganza was the seizure at gunpoint last Saturday of five men, caught red-handed and red-faced while attempting to bug the Washington headquarters of the Democratic National Committee.

They were a curious bunch of bunglers indeed. Their backgrounds included various involvements either with the Central Intelligence Agency, anti-Castro activities, or both. One of them was a former White House consultant on "intelligence" and "the flow of narcotics," subsequently employed as a writer by a Washington public relations firm.

Top officials of the Republican Party immediately disclaimed any connection with the aborted caper, and it is not difficult to believe them. Only a real pinhead could have plotted such a comic opera stunt, in which the risks of exposure always far outweighed any possible rewards.

But the fact is that the attempt was made, and made with electronic, burglary and photographic equipment — the last apparently intended to copy contents of file drawers which had been opened. The charge of "political espionage" by Democratic National Chairman Lawrence O'Brien thus seems hardly extravagant.

It is possible the intruders were working on some crackpot scheme of their own. In that case the puzzling question is what they hoped to accomplish. It also is possible they were tools in a really sinister if ill-conceived political plot. In that case the question is who is really guilty?

In either case the integrity of the American political process has been smeared by a cowardly and ugly act. A full investigation and full disclosure of all the facts is imperative, no matter who may become implicated.