

# The Spook, The Itt Kid, Tight Lips:

A Commentary

By Nicholas von Hoffman

Poster

The man on the television screen looked like a Brooklyn gangster coming in to be questioned by the DA. The same sunglasses, the same concealing snap-brimmed straw fedora with the plaid hat band and the same hands cupped over the face so the cameramen couldn't get a recognizable shot.

Who was this mobster? A hood suspected of leaving dead bodies in the back of an abandoned car? A juiceman from the docks, a loan shark, a pimp, a soldier in the army of the Mafiosi? No. None of it. The gentleman being pursued across the screen of the nightly network news shows was one E. Howard Hunt Jr., an ex-CIA agent and more recently a White House consultant, if you would believe it. On the day of his photographic flight he had been called in to answer questions as to what part he may have played in the buglarizing of the Democratic National Committee's office by five men on the Republican payroll.

In the grand tradition of Al (Scarface) Capone, Jake (Greasy Thumb) Guzik and Roger (The Terrible) Touhy, E. Howard (The Spook) Hunt Jr. wasn't talking. The White House mob had decided to tough it out with silence. Only the mob's mouthpiece, Richard (The Itt Kid) Kleindienst is singing and his song is that he's going to investigate the matter and let us know bye and bye.

This is in line with the top boss' policy. Dick (Tight

Lips) Nixon took the same tack in 1958 when it was discovered that President Eisenhower's chief of staff, Sherman Adams, had used his influence with federal regulatory agencies on behalf of a Boston manufacturer from whom he'd accepted \$3,000 in hotel accommodations, an oriental rug and a vicuna coat. In those days of more genteel burglary a number of Republican biggies had said they thought propriety and politics would best be served if Mr. Adams quit. Not Nixon. Tight Lips turned on the people in his own party who were arguing for at least the appearance of honesty by saying, "the trouble with Republicans is that when they get into trouble they start acting like a bunch of cannibals."

The prohibition against the eating of Republican flesh isn't the only difference between this mob and past administrations. Adams had to go before a congressional committee to testify about what he had done. In the preceding administration, when Harry Truman's military aide, Gen. Harry Vaughn, was caught accepting seven food freezers from a cheapie Washington deal fixer, Vaughn also had to go up on the Hill and talk.

Of course back in those days there wasn't so much to talk about. There were scandals enough then, but what's gone on under Nixon is not to be believed. For-

## Look What We've Had Recently

get the minor stuff, forget the old stuff, like Howard Hughes loan to Tight Lips' brother, or Harry Dent, special counsel to the President, sending out letters on White House stationery to help his brother sell houses in his real estate business. Look at what we've had recently: the dairy industry getting shaken down for campaign contributions in return for which milk price supports are raised; a Minnesota businessman kicking in 25 grand to the campaign fund and being expeditiously issued an enormously valuable federal bank charter; an assistant secretary of agriculture negotiating credits so the Russians can buy farm commodities, and then quitting his job to take another one with a grain com-make the sale; hundreds of thousands of dollars slipped pany which then cashes in on the credit arrangements to into blind Mexican bank accounts and then filtered back into the pockets of the mob.

This dough didn't come from the widows of American servicemen trying to bribe their way into the Arlington National cemetery to bury their fallen husbands. It came from large corporations. Should you have forgotten why it pays a big corporation to slip this money under the table, Ohio Congressman Charles Vanik has been researching the effective tax rates some of them pay. Last year for ITT it was 4.9 percent; 3.2 percent

for Texaco; 1.2 percent for Norfolk and Western Railway; 3.3 percent for Consolidated Edison and 18.6 percent for Union Carbide, a figure still way below what millions of families must fork over.

Vanik's researchers show the smaller the corporation the larger the tax it pays. Thus while small companies were averaging about 37 percent in effective taxes, the top 100 were paying about 24 percent, a drop of 2.5 percent since Nixon took office. This competitive advantage, Vanik concludes, allows outfits like ITT to have the cash to finance their conglomerate expansion. The effects of this expansion are such that he writes: "... One hundred and eighty-eight thousand industrial firms with assets under \$10 million today account for less than 2 percent of all industrial sales. In 1970, the 500 largest industrial corporations accounted for 65.4 percent of all industrial sales (and) 75.8 percent of all industrial profits."

All of these scandals, special deals and peculiar privileges can be explained by such nice terms as conflict of interest, bad judgment, influence, pressure groups pushing in a pluralist society and so it all may be in this era of the New Politics. Well the old politics had a word for it too, and the word is graft. There was honest graft and dishonest graft, legal graft and illegal graft, but it all meant paying for what you weren't entitled to, and if Tight Lips doesn't start explaining it soon, McGovern's got himself a new slogan: "Get The Godfather Out Of The White House."