

The Saboteurs of Swim

Nobody got very excited when Paul Raymond Juhala wrote a letter to the President last year bitterly complaining that he had been turned down for a loan from the Farmers Home Administration; the complaint was rather routine. Then Juhala escalated. Last March he sent a second hostile letter to Nixon, this time demanding \$2,000,000 in exchange for certain information about bombs at Air Force bases. Federal agents grew more interested and began to investigate him. He was committed for a short time to a mental hospital in Michigan. When a bomb went off at Kincheloe Air Force Base in Michigan last month, the feds decided that Juhala was just as dangerous as he said he was.

Juhala, in fact, admitted that he had set off the bomb. Arrested for destroying Government property, he also owned up to another piece of sabotage. At his direction the Air Force and local authorities drained an 800,000-gal. storage tank on the fuel farm at K.I. Sawyer base in Michigan. Security men found 20 sticks of dynamite just where Juhala had indicated. Had it gone off in the tank, it would have ignited a death-dealing fireball half a mile in diameter.

Worried. Juhala's bizarre attempts at sabotage are the latest in a series of attacks on Air Force bases in the U.S. that have authorities puzzled and worried. Saboteurs first struck last May when they cut the electrical conduits and hydraulic lines of three C-130 Lockheed Hercules transports at Willow Grove Naval Air Station, Pa. It took 3,000 man-hours to repair the aircraft at a cost of \$50,000.

In July, the same kind of damage was done to a pair of F-111 fighter-bombers at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev. The sabotage was discovered when a preflight electronic check-out indicated trouble. Then, in August, four RF-4 Phantom jets at Bergstrom Air Force Base, Texas, were more ineptly sabotaged. Electrical plugs under the cockpit instrument panels were pulled out—a fact that was instantly perceived when the panel lights failed to go on.

No great damage has been done to date, and no one has been hurt. While the Air Force has tightened security at its bases, it is still reluctant to say that these isolated acts add up to a trend. From all appearances, Juhala was acting alone in Michigan, taking private revenge for fancied governmental insults. The motive in the case of the other acts of sabotage remains a mystery. A Weatherman type group called Citizens Committee to Interdict War Materials (CCIWM, pronounced Swim) claims responsibility for the damage and has been duly infiltrated by volunteers working for the feds. But it has not yet written to the President to explain itself.

Is Nobody Indignant Any More?

EVEN allowing for the partisan scaldmongering in which all candidates traffic, the nation's political air seems especially contaminated this year—thick with the taint of special favors, dirty money, interparty espionage, intimations of official power in the service of corporate friends. Nothing has yet been proved exactly, but the cloud hangs over Washington like an inversion. When Martha Mitchell fled to New York, taking her husband with her, she spoke a bit Delphically about "all those dirty things that go on." Democratic polemicists suggest that the capital was not nearly so dirty until John Mitchell and Richard Nixon arrived.

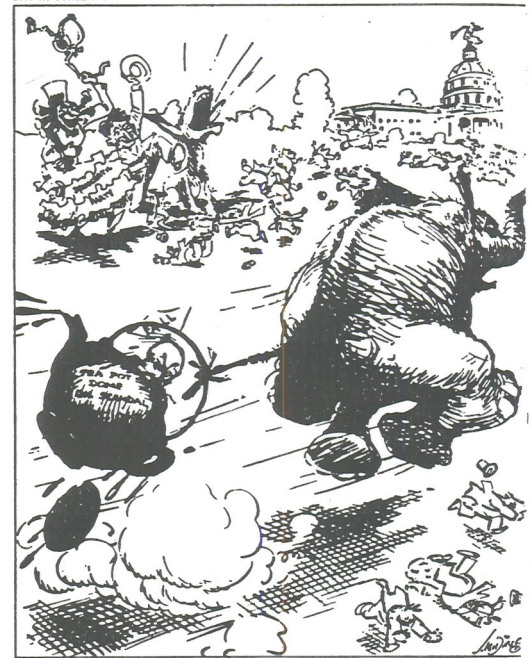
The series of revelations has been remarkable. It began surfacing in the public consciousness with the contributions of dairy farmers to Nixon's campaign fund and their good luck with price rulings in the Department of Agriculture. Then came, among other items, the ITT affair and the Watergate bugging. Nothing here but us chickens, the White House insists, all locked up behind the high fences of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, running from case to case with explanations of coincidence and business as usual. Sarah McClendon, the redoubtable journalist with the foghorn voice, lobbed one into Nixon's cool and respectable press conference last week, and for a moment the President seemed to have been hit with a brick. Why didn't he "make a clean breast" and explain the Watergate case? she bellowed. Nixon, taking a few seconds to recover, calmly answered that the case was being investigated and legal niceties required that he not comment. But the question lingered. Is it believable that the President of the United States really does not know what his own people were doing? Not very.

What baffles many people who have witnessed similar episodes is why the nation is not up in arms over what may be the first documented case of political espionage in our history. Why is there no public reaction to the general aura of "the deal," as Senator Adlai Stevenson III describes it? Where is indignation? Where is the visceral sense that some fundamental arrangement of the society, some deeper human contracts or standards have been abused?

Maybe, say the experts, McGovern's frontal assault on the scandals will touch a well of slumbering outrage. But his stridency contains its own backlash. His charge that the Nixon Administration is the most corrupt in the Republic's history is dubious. But something is iridescently wrong there. This Administration's record will, one suspects, find its historical place in the rather short line of federal manipulation and political skulduggery, big and small, that

burgeoned with Ulysses Grant. The gold, whisky and railroad manipulations in the unsuspecting Grant's time besmirched his reputation for a century and altered the politics of the day. Teapot Dome, which blew up after the death of Warren Harding, became a textbook case in every hamlet in America. The deepfreezes and minks of Harry Truman's day caused his popularity to plummet to bedrock. And when Bernard Goldfine's rug was found in the living room of Sherman Adams, the White House Iron Man of Dwight Eisenhower's Administration, the national

JAY N. DARLING



CARTOON OF TEAPOT DOME SCANDAL (1924)

outrage reached such a pitch that Adams resigned in something like disgrace. Nixon himself was almost cast off the 1952 Republican ticket because of an \$18,000 campaign fund, and Lyndon Johnson was shadowed for a time by the Bobby Baker scandals.

The current Washington incidents, of course, are not fully comparable with all these cases. The Watergate caper is a murky and complex fight among politicians with which few citizens can identify. As for the wheat deal, the \$10 million fund for Nixon's re-election that his committee refuses to open for account, ITT and the rest—there are as yet no proven law violations.

Whatever one may call the whole business there is vast indifference about it all. Indignation has been lost, says Columnist Joseph Kraft, in a disillusion with people in high places. Kraft quotes a man who says, "To most people [Government corruption is] just one bunch of thieves robbing another bunch of thieves." The *Chicago Daily News's* Pe-

ter Lisagor finds people's moral outrage so depleted after a decade of assault from duplicity about Viet Nam to tax loopholes that it cannot get aroused over a little electronic eavesdropping, or the windfall of a few millions to corporate friends of the Administration. Eight Washington *Post* reporters tramping throughout the country in search of the elusive national mood discovered the Watergate bugging incident buried beneath other concerns. "Each of us," wrote Haynes Johnson, "could go literally for days of interviewing voters without hearing a single voter voluntarily bring up the Watergate issue."

Richard Nixon and his White House have managed to stand above it all, exonerated by a vast majority of the American people. McGovern is running against President Nixon, not against ITT or Continental Grain or Maurice Stans and his overstuffed safe. The American people, for all their wariness, still separate the presidency from the events below. They do not want it to falter or be demeaned even though the men in office arrive there by the questionable trade of politics. All politicians, most people understand, can survive only on vast sums in campaign contributions, sometimes degradingly solicited. So while the sour odors of the Watergate continue to leak out around the edges of the White House, the façade of Richard Nixon stands in the long line of presidential legend, tarnished a bit, but not crumbling. Besides, Americans think of Nixon as a sort of quintessential square, a Billy Graham parishioner. They find it difficult to think that he would try to profit by a fast shuffle.

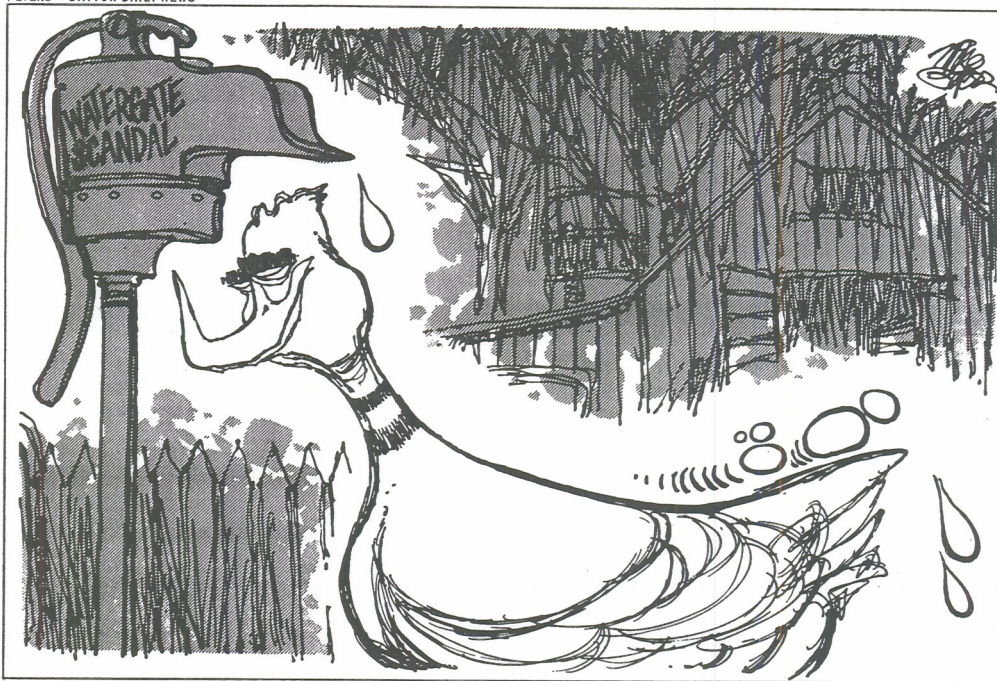
The real issue, of course, is not private venality but a certain easy readiness to put elective power to work for corporate friends. It often has to do less with specific skulduggery than with psychology and atmosphere, a bonhomie of mutual back-scratching. None of this is readily identified or condemned. The public does not seem to be in a damning mood. Here the anger at the press and TV enters the picture. Too long have the messengers brought the bad news. People do not want to listen to it, let alone get sore about it. Daniel Yankelevich, *TIME*'s public opinion sampler, came up with the astounding finding that 75% of the voters of 16 states were "sick and tired" of the constant running down of the nation. A plague on the messengers, never mind the facts.

Some social theorists have in unsuspecting ways foreshadowed the national mood. Last year Potomac Associates of Washington produced a thin blue book on the *Hopes and Fears of the American People*. One conclusion: "The American people are clearly troubled about the state of their country...[They see] failure of our traditional way of doing things and inadequacy of national leadership...Yet the American people display a sense of accomplishment in terms of their personal aspirations and look forward to continuing progress in

the years ahead." There was, then, an inclination for people to turn dramatically inward, where they could contemplate with pleasure their personal achievements and shut out the confusion and growing complexity of national concerns. More recent is Vance Packard's work, *A Nation of Strangers*, which finds that our rootlessness has reduced trust, encouraged irresponsibility and increased indifference toward wrongdoing.

Resignation and indifference become more general. Pollster Louis Harris reports the public skeptical not only about politicians but also about the entire Establishment and the quality of an American way of life that has produced shoddy automobiles and botulism in soup cans. Ralph Nader and others in the consumer movement have insti-

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RECENT VIEW OF NIXON DUCKING THE WATERGATE ISSUE

tutionalized indignation in recent years, with sometimes remarkable success. But somehow the very act of turning this emotion into a movement has taken some of the edge off it.

It may be that indignation is a cyclical thing, rising and receding as part of the nation's larger psychology. Former Illinois Senator Paul Douglas took a generally optimistic view. "My own conclusion," he wrote in *Ethics in Government*, "is that there has been an appreciable longtime improvement in the level of political morals." But he added: "Occasionally, there are relapses and these generally come in the wake of great wars." Thus the muckraking era before World War I brought a tide of indignation, which seemed to collapse in the '20s, perhaps because Prohibition, along with the backwash of war, promoted a certain national cynicism.

Viet Nam may have had a similar effect. Indignation tends to vanish when a people no longer finds itself capable

of surprise. My Lai and Kent State stirred plenty of outrage; yet in perhaps a majority of Americans there was a kind of resignation, even a truculent defensiveness: "What do you expect?" When violence or corruption is widespread instead of exceptional, the gorge will not always rise to the occasion. How many Americans were outraged by revelations that Air Force General John D. Lavelle ordered bombing raids over North Viet Nam in apparent contradiction of orders and stated U.S. policy? Last week the Senate Armed Services Committee merely denied Lavelle one of the extra stars (the Air Force took away another) he would have had on retirement, sending him off with his \$27,000-a-year pension.

Most thoughtful men who have lived with the vagaries of public opin-

ion offer large qualifiers for every conclusion. Maybe indignation lurks in some new place and in some new forum. Perhaps in some strange way the absence of outrage signals a slightly weary realism about how politics and other enterprises really function—a psychological intersection of public and private moralities, a sense that the men in Washington and their friends are only doing what everyone else does, only bigger and better. A little cheating, after all, is a drearily popular habit—from parking tickets to overtime cards to expense accounts. Even some of those quintessential American heroes, the astronauts, turned out to be venal, smuggling their trinkets and stamps aloft to alchemize them into marketable gold. But there is a somewhat depressing loss of innocence in failing to expect more from the nation's public officials. Somewhere in all of this huge indifference, the principle of moral leadership may be sinking without a trace.

■ Hugh Sidey and Lance Morrow