

Where's the Truth In the ITT Case?

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Jack Anderson

THE SENATE inquiry started by Richard Kleindienst to remove the cloud over his head has now ended. But the cloud, instead of dissolving, has burgeoned into a major weather system that is likely to darken Republican skies until November.

Kleindienst's nomination to be Attorney General may survive the scandal over his secret dealings with ITT on antitrust matters, which he insisted publicly were "handled and negotiated exclusively" by his subordinates.

But President Nixon's credibility as the white knight of "law and order" clearly has not survived. If he is confirmed as Attorney General, Kleindienst will only remind the public of the squalid ITT affair.

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THE KLEINDIENST hearings were the longest confirmation proceeding in history, but they left the Senate Judiciary Committee no closer to the truth at the end than at the beginning.

The main reason is that the record was polluted with more perjury than any similar Senate inquiry has heard. Witness after witness gave flatly contradictory testimony.

The ITT commitment to the Republican convention was, by various accounts, \$100,000, \$200,000, \$400,000 and \$600,000. Dita Beard, the ITT lobbyist, admitted to us she wrote a memo to her boss linking the commitment to the antitrust cases. Later she said she wrote some of the

memo but not the most damaging parts.

Mrs. Beard said she hand-delivered her memo to her boss, William Merriam. But he testified under oath he never got it. Representative Bob Wilson (Rep.-Calif.), said that Merriam had acknowledged receiving the memo. Wilson also said Mrs. Beard admitted writing the entire incriminating memo, not just parts of it. But Wilson reversed himself under oath.

By the time all the testimony had been heard, the only certainty was that a large number of witnesses had lied under oath.

None of this seemed to bother Judiciary Chairman Jim Eastland, who announced the day the hearings started that Kleindienst was clean and rigged the hearings to prove his prejudgment.

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WE GAVE the committee the original Dita Beard memo as evidence. The next thing we knew, it had been secretly delivered to Kleindienst's executive assistant. He passed it to the FBI for analysis, but it was subsequently slipped to ITT.

This backdoor maneuver indicated better than the sworn testimony the incestuous relationship between Justice and ITT. Throughout the hearings, Eastland held repeated secret meetings with White House and Justice Department officials.

Richard Kleindienst called for the hearings to clear his name. When they began, there was not a single committee member against him. But the hearings ended over the protest of half the committee.