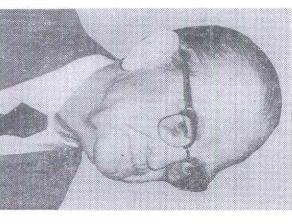
# The Lavelle case: Something that sticks out here

tion for the Advancement of Colored man of the year by the National Associa-Mississippi is not likely to be elected to investigate the strange case of Gen Feople, but he may be the ideal person in the defense budget. Pentagon and the boundoggles are buried can where the bodies are buried in the member of the Armed Services Commitactive and effective for so long as a patriarchs who commands exceptional sonal integrity and one of those Southern the senator a man of unquestioned perbombing of North Vietnam. Not only is John P. Lavelle and the unauthorized tee that he knows as well as any man respect in the Senate; he also has been WASHINGTON - Sen. John Stennis of

Gen. Creighton W. Abrams as Army refused to commit himself to approval of and clear as a fire siren that Stennis has It is therefore a warning signal as loud



Knows where the bodies are buried Sen. Stennis

chief of staff, and that he remarked the other day that "there is just something how (General Lavelle) could, on his own that sticks out here . . . I just do not see ... have launched out on plans like

## Something 'sticks out'

to have been outraged by it; they now sions of the Lavelle affair are not yet law-abiding power. Although the dimenmilitary, and the nation's position as a out here." It is the damage done to miliin American history. must be added to the endless casualty clear, all three of these concepts appear list of this longest and most dubious war tary discipline, civilian control of the Indeed, there is something "that sticks

periors-specifically, Abrams and the scribed officially as "protective reacproved of the secret raids that were dechairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, vindicated in his contention that his su-Adm. Thomas H. Moorer-knew and ap-That is so whether or not Lavelle is

breakdown of discipline, one tending to annually. Some punishment! only to Lavelle, who at that was allowed proper raids were launched and then two more months while many other im-Chiefs said had been improper and unaufrom Washington for a raid the Joint Moreover, as Stennis noted, at least once disrupt its diplomatic undertakings. bring the nation into disrepute and to that would be at the least a grievous proved to have been acting on his own to retire at a virtually tax-free \$25,000 thorized-but nothing else was done for Lavelle and Abrams were "corrected" If they did not know, and Lavelle is

# More than breakdown

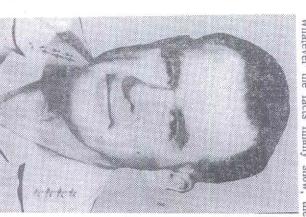
of, or encouraging, the secret raids something more than a mere breakdown But if Lavelle's superiors were aware

### Tom Wicker

of military discipline-bad as that is-is sabotage, or at least in defiance of, nasuggested. There seem to be two possitional policy. bilities. One is a military conspiracy to

could play such a deceptive game, but may seem extraordinary to suppose that notorious for sticking their necks outextraordinary deceptions by American the administration or any of its officials the armed forces, or to some of them. It known to the supposed civilian master of the history of this war is replete with the whole episode might have been The other is that-generals not being

Whatever the facts finally show, the



Acted on his own? Gen. Lavelle

raids of last winter and spring show all not bombing the Red River dike system in North Vietnam. The unauthorized when they say that American planes are tration should be accepted at face value the question why either the civillan or the military spokesmen of this administoo well that these spokesmen could ei-

cial American statements. They knew violation of the so-called "understandright along that those "protective reacsuggests that Hanoi has even less reason stopped the bombing in 1968 tion" raids were no such thing, and in than the American people to trust offither be misinforming or misinformed. ing" by which president Johnson had Even more clearly, the Lavelle affair

#### The moral rot

it is being handled in this country. If one-certainly not the White House or the Pentagon-seems exercised over the their support, and other than for some what happens to any ordinary person bery. If his military superiors were im-plicated with him, the most sweeping to have been severely punished; but he Lavelle were solely responsible, he ought matter. members of the Senate committee, no falling over one another to pledge him for the highest Army post, senators are the line; but Abrams is being nominated penalties ought to be invoked all along convicted of, say, assault or armed robwas not, certainly not by comparison to The worst of all this may be the way

motely worth the values and the honor anything to be gained in Indochina recan anyone contend that there ever was the nation has lost in this corrupting war continues to foul institutions and processes — let alone men — of which Americans once were justly proud. How Thus, the moral rot of the Vietnam

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