

The Watergate And ITT Scandals



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THE MORE you try to unravel the Watergate scandal, the more strands you find entangled with the ITT scandal. And the more difficult it becomes to distinguish those who violated the law from those who are supposed to uphold the law.

It was almost exactly a year ago, for example, that Attorney General Richard Kleindienst reopened his confirmation hearings in an effort to explain away the ITT scandal. During the stormy hearings, he turned all ITT matters over to his deputy, L. Patrick Gray. Now a year later, Gray is facing his own confirmation hearings to become FBI director.

The key document in the ITT affair was the astonishing memorandum written by ITT lobbyist Dita Beard, which suggested an antitrust settlement was linked to a \$400,000 political commitment from ITT.

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THE MEMO became such an embarrassment that the White House belatedly tried to claim it was a fake. The Washington Post reported that E. Howard Hunt was dispatched to Denver to talk to Mrs. Beard.

His son, Robert Beard, confirmed that a "very eerie" stranger, wearing "a red wig on cockeyed like he put it on in a dark car," called on his mother. Subsequently, Hunt was arrested in connection with the Watergate break-in and a similar wig was found in one of the rooms rented by the Watergate conspirators.

The Washington Post also reported that

Hunt's trip to Denver "was part of an effort . . . to discredit the Dita Beard memo" and led in part to her statement claiming it was a forgery three weeks after she had acknowledged its authenticity.

While the bewigged Hunt was pressing Mrs. Beard for her statement, Senate Judiciary Chairman James Eastland slipped the memo to the Justice Department for an FBI analysis. This was done secretly without the knowledge of the other committee members. The FBI confirmed that the memo was written on Dita Beard's typewriter and that the typewriter ribbon was the same one in use the day the memo was dated.

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BUT MEANWHILE, the document mysteriously turned up in the possession of ITT. Eastland later made clear that he had directed that the document should not leave the FBI's control.

Our sources say, however, that the memo was slipped to ITT by the Justice Department at Pat Gray's direction. When the committee staff at one point attempted to retrieve the document, we are told, they couldn't get it back right away because Gray was stalling to give ITT more time with the document.

ITT had it examined by a couple of dubious "experts," who concluded that it was written later than it was dated and, therefore, was a fake. Thus, Hunt and Gray appear to have been working in tandem to discredit the memo. Hunt has gone to jail for his Watergate work; Gray has been appointed FBI chief.