

A \$350,000 Campaign Puzzle



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SECRET grand jury testimony reveals that H. R. Haldeman, the White House major domo, ordered \$350,000 in \$20, \$50 and \$100 bills locked in a White House safe during the 1972 campaign.

After the election, the cash was delivered surreptitiously to a campaign aide, with Haldeman's approval, in an apparent violation of the new campaign disclosure law.

This is the sworn testimony of Haldeman's loyal former assistant, Gordon Strachan, who picked up the money the day before the disclosure law went into effect. He received it from Hugh Sloan, the campaign treasurer, but returned it to Fred Larue, a campaign aide, at his Watergate apartment.

It took Strachan 45 minutes, he testified, to count all the cash. Yet no receipt was asked and none was given. He quoted Larue as saying merely: "I'll take care of this."

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THE MONEY was supposed to be used, explained Strachan, for polling. He acknowledged that the President's campaign committee was already conducting "a very, very extensive polling operation." Yet \$350,000 was taken away from the committee and stashed in the White House, he said, "in case we needed to get even more polling."

"Who told you to go to Mr. Larue and give him the money?" asked Seymour Glanzer, an assistant U.S attorney.

"I decided that myself," said Strachan.

"Did you discuss this incident with anybody afterwards?" pressed Glanzer.

"Yes, I told Mr. Haldeman afterwards that I had given the money to Mr. Larue."

"What did he say to you?"

"Fine," Strachan quoted Haldeman as saying.

"Does the . . . Committee to Re-elect the President conduct its business in Mr. Larue's apartment?" demanded the prosecutor.

"No," said Strachan. "It was a matter of courtesy. He's a senior official. He asked me to drop it by after work . . ."

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DO YOU HAVE any idea why Mr. Larue asked you to return this money to his apartment, where actually you could just walk across 17th street?" asked the grand jury foreman.

"No, I do not," said the witness.

"I mean I find it somewhat dangerous for a person to be carrying this amount of money in Washington in the evening," said the foreman, "when it would have been much easier and handier just to walk across 17th street."

"I agree and I was nervous doing it, but I did it," shrugged Strachan.

"Did it occur to you at the time," broke in another juror, "that it was not the proper way to do it?"

"Well, 'proper is no —" stammered Strachan.

"Is 'proper' an obsolete word these days?" snapped the juror."

"No," said Strachan. "Whether it was proper or improper, I was asked to return the money. I returned the money and he asked me to deliver it to him at his home, and I did that."