

Testimony on Segretti Hiring Differs

By Jack Anderson

White House chief of staff H. R. Haldeman, according to secret grand jury testimony, approved the hiring of Donald Segretti to be a political saboteur during the 1972 presidential campaign.

But former White House aides Gordon Strachan and Dwight Chapin swore under oath it was their idea to employ Segretti. Assistant U.S. Attorney Seymour Glanzer asked, incredulously, whether the two junior aides had the authority to unleash Segretti on a sabotage campaign "just on your own initiative?"

"Oh yes," replied Strachan, "we talked about that, just the two of us."

"Did you go back," asked Glanzer, "and check with Mr. Haldeman to find out whether it was all right to engage in such (political sabotage)?"

"Yes we did."

"What did he say?"

"He said, yes, go ahead," testified Strachan.

The youthful Strachan also acknowledged that he had put Segretti in touch with G. Gordon Liddy, the Watergate ring-leader. As Strachan recalled the circumstances, Liddy phoned him in agitation to report strange activities in the field. Democratic and Republican candidates alike, Liddy reported, were encountering mysterious foul-ups. He sus-

pected sabotage by a man he described as "about six foot... fairly good-sized."

"That," said Strachan, "does not fit Don Segretti's description. Don is a very small guy."

Liddy-Segretti Link

But small or tall, Liddy demanded to know who the Republican undercover operative was. "I want that information about that individual in the field," Strachan quoted Liddy as insisting.

So, said Strachan, "I gave him Segretti's telephone number. He was quite upset." Then Strachan notified Segretti. "I called Don Segretti and I told him to expect a call from Gordon Liddy, that he was concerned about his activities in the field and that he should answer his questions."

Both Strachan and Chapin insisted that Segretti operated on his own and seldom reported to them. "We thought we could pay him and forget him," explained Strachan.

"Do you mean," asked the grand jury foreman, "you would give him a lump sum and let him go on his own?"

"Yes," replied Strachan, "we wanted to set him up and get him started and not have to worry about him later." They heard from him, Strachan testified, "maybe once every six weeks."

Assistant Attorney General Donald Campbell broke in. "Mr. Strachan . . . let's just

take one month, January of '72. During that month, there were 16 phone calls from Mr. Segretti to the White House. Now this is a little bit more frequently than once every six weeks." Campbell asked whether Strachan had "any explanation."

The former Haldeman aide answered simply "No." Later, he said sorrowfully that hiring Segretti "was a stupid decision, and I sincerely regret it. But I did it. I don't know what else to say. It was dumb, and the press, publications and so forth show it's dumb. But I did it."

Slow Mail

Congressmen investigating the nation's slowpoke postal service are furious over reports that local postmasters have been ordered not to talk about their problems to members of Congress.

Just last month, Postmaster General Elmer T. Klassen assured Congress that no "gag rule" had been imposed prohibiting postal employees from speaking out. On the contrary, Klassen said he had personally urged his employees to be candid with Congress. The news, however, has failed to reach many postmasters.

Rep. Wayne Owens (D-Utah), for example, recently sent letters to some 240 postmasters throughout Utah. Owens, who pledged to keep the names of

the postmasters confidential, simply wanted ideas on how mail deliveries might be speeded up.

More than a month has gone by, and Owens has received only a handful of replies. As one postmaster explained to Owens: "We have been told not to discuss this very thing with our Congressmen or Senators . . . A liaison officer has been selected by the (Post Office) department to do this."

Another postmaster replied simply: "I wouldn't dare to put in print what I think of the service, and don't even quote me saying that."

Owens' complaints have triggered an angry response from Rep. James Hanley (D-N.Y.), chairman of the House Post Office subcommittee. In a "Dear Ted" letter, sent to Klassen last week, Hanley said he found the complaints "especially annoying" because they apparently contradicted Klassen's testimony. Hanley added: "I would be pleased if you would transmit a directive to Postmasters in accord with your testimony."

Owens, meanwhile, has learned that a supervisor walked through a local Utah post office asking mail carriers whether any had voted for Owens in the last election. Those who admitted voting for Owens allegedly were assigned extra deliveries that day.