

The Halted Wiretap

The Watergate scandal, besides embracing new evidence of corruption, has begun to take in some of the loose ends of old corruption. The pattern is forming fast.

Some old disclosures of the interlock of The Teamsters, The Mafia, and high politics, are falling into place along with some new information.

We shall hear more about the Watergate link to Old Cuba, where the Mafia ran the gambling. And perhaps some re-runs of Teamster links to curiously disastrous Nevada gambling links to big politics.

The New York Times is in with the latest Teamsters-Mafia story, and with assertions about a veil drawn around it by President Nixon's top law officials, Attorney General Richard Kleindienst and Assistant Attorney General Henry E. Petersen — the latter a hot candidate for the job of FBI Director.

The Times quotes "government sources" and also an FBI affidavit, suggesting there are sources within the Bureau that are in a state of outrage at what goes on and are ready to fight.

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IT'S A WEST COAST story, this latest one, and it is another variation of an old Teamsters game called "plunder the welfare funds."

The Times says an FBI wiretap operation in Southern California had begun to "help strip the cover" from the scheme, that the FBI operatives there wanted permission to continue the tap, when Kleindienst and Petersen whistled them off.

The deal itself is the standard maze. A new health plan was to be set up. A Mafia front — so described by the Times' sources — was to get a kickback on a \$1 billion-a-year flow of funds. The cut talked about was 10 percent, with the California mob getting 7 percent and the Chicago mob cutting itself in for 3 percent.

There was other talk, the Times' informants said, about such details as "up front" money, and who was to get what when the melon was sliced.

The decision to remove the wiretap came one month before Charles W. Colson, special counsel to President Nixon, quit that job to join the Washington law firm which Teamsters president Frank Fitzsimmons

chose to handle the Teamsters legal account.

By odd coincidence, the latest report of Teamster-Mafia fund manipulation came as Jimmy Hoffa, whom President Nixon sprang from the pen, announced his decision to run for the presidency of the Detroit local. Hoffa, among other remarks for the occasion, noted that union negotiations for "fringe benefits" tend to take priority these days.

It's the "fringes" of course which go toward making up those huge pension and welfare funds the various interests have found so profitable.

Many segments of the press, including this one have had occasion to put pieces of this story before the public. Only now, though, with Watergate as the center, has it begun to cohere.

An independent truckers' magazine, Overdrive, ought to be mentioned somewhere along the line. That publication for many months past has been printing one Teamsters expose after another, naming names, places and amounts, to an echoing silence. It is possible that the Overdrive articles will now find their place in the official chronicle of corruption which is being compiled.

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THE TIMES STORY of the newest Teamsters-Mafia deal also names names, places and amounts. Information from the FBI sources has been pieced out with information from the authorities of Orange and San Diego Counties.

We have a character named Lon Rosanova, described as an envoy of the Chicago crime syndicate, meeting with Fitzsimmons at La Costa, a Teamster-financed resort in San Diego County, just before Fitzsimmons takes off in the President's plane and flies back to Washington with Nixon. The Orange County D.A.'s office hears informants quoting Rosanova's boasts about payoffs.

People are talking. Information is coming to light. There are indications that FBI men won't hold still for being silenced while their Bureau is subverted.

Already enough scandal has emerged to unseat a government operating under a parliamentary system. The test before us seems to be whether our own form of representative democracy can clean house as effectively.