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LO Post

'I Don't Want to Know,' Laird Says of Watergate

Like everyone else, former Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird admits to being "puzzled" by the Watergate Story. Unlike others, there are some things Laird says "I don't want to know."

"I am totally confident the President just would not be involved in any way in this kind of operation," Laird told reporters yesterday, "but if he were, it would be very bad for the country—that kind of disclosure."

"I'm confident the President didn't have any knowledge of this," Laird continued, "but I don't want to put the presidency in a position where it's on trial. A trial of the presidency would be very dangerous, a bad mistake."

A reporter asked the former Wisconsin congressman and longtime associate of the President if he thought this fear was inhibiting the administration from naming a special prosecutor for the political espionage case.

"I don't know," Laird said.

"I'm concerned about that. I don't understand the whole affair. I just don't quite understand how this developed."

Another reporter asked: "Are you saying that if the President were involved, you wouldn't want the truth to come out?"

"I would say that," Laird said, "but I don't believe for one minute that is the case."

Butz Seeks to Close Another Watergate

MEMPHIS, Tenn., May 1 (UPI)—Agricultural Secretary Earl L. Butz made an aerial inspection of the flood-ravaged Mississippi River valley today and later told a national farm meeting:

"What we were really looking for, to avoid further damage downstream, was to close the Watergate."

Butz smiled when his quip drew a roar of laughter from the crowd of 1,000. "One of the great things about America is our sense of humor," he said.