

Boatman
11/7/73

Under the Watergate Rug

One earlier view of the Watergate affair was that even if it couldn't be clarified before the presidential election, the facts would eventually all come out in court. The view is fast turning out to have been too innocent as the probability increases that the story, by its smell one of the dirtiest in the history of national-level politics, will never be fully known, or the names of its principal movers ever quite pinned down.

With five of seven defendants in the current case already having pleaded guilty to conspiracy, burglary and illegal wiretapping and eavesdropping, and the course of

the case henceforward in doubt, the likelihood that its essentials will be revealed decreases steadily. Judge John J. Sirica has posed those essential questions. Speaking to four of the defendants he asked: "For what purpose did you four men go into the Watergate? Who hired you? If there are other people—that is, higher-ups in the Republican party, the Democratic party or any other party—I want to know it. What was the motive? Where did this money come from? Who was the money man?" To one of them particularly he said: "I want you to start from the beginning and tell me how you got into the conspiracy."

The defendants did not answer, except for a couple of the now-familiar vague statements of devotion to the cause of freeing Cuba from communism—whatever that may by any stretch of the imagination have to do with it. They did not have to answer. They had already pleaded guilty as charged, and the charges did not encompass these larger matters; and they were not under oath. If the whole thing comes down to no more than this sort of business, the persons actually responsible will have been slipped past; but the smell will linger, and it will linger most strongly in the vicinity of the White House.