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After the Indictments: Unanswered Questions

Now that the indictments have been returned against the five men arrested in the Democratic National Committee Headquarters—and the two ex-White House aides who are alleged to have been their helpers, co-conspirators and cheerleaders—we have heard the clash and clangor of the expected political rhetoric. Sen. Dole has demanded that Sen. McGovern apologize for all the mean things he has said about Mr. Maurice Stans, finance director of the President's re-election campaign and Sen. McGovern has called the whole thing a whitewash. The Attorney General apparently feels that the Justice Department has completed "the most extensive, thorough, and comprehensive investigation since the assassination of President Kennedy." According to reports from around the country, the people seem to feel that the whole thing is either (a) too complicated for them or (b) just another example of how politics is played by both sides.

So, this may be a good time to review the essence of this affair, because it seems to us that whatever else may be said about it, it is not—in essence—all that complicated, and neither is it exactly an every day event. To our knowledge, this is the first time in the history of the Republic that a link is alleged to have been established between a burglary and a bugging and the effort to re-elect a President of the United States. That is the simple nub of the Watergate affair, although it is true that despite the pious cries coming out of the administration and the President's campaign committee in the wake of the indictments, there are still a whole lot of questions which remain to be answered for the public before election day.

Now, let's run through the major facts of the case as they have been made public. First of all, we have known for some time that the Committee for the Re-election of the President collected \$10 million prior to April 7 when disclosure of campaign donors was made mandatory and we know that, having the legal right to do so, the committee chose to keep its list of donors secret. Subsequently, on June 17 we learned that five men with electronic devices had been arrested before dawn in the Democratic Party headquarters. We then learned that one of those men was an employee of both the Republi-

can National Committee and the Nixon campaign committee.

Then came news of some of the financing arrangements. Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward of this newspaper learned that a \$25,000 check, intended as a Nixon campaign contribution ended up in the bank account of one of the men arrested at the Watergate. Sometime later, the public learned that \$89,000 more—intended for the campaign—had also landed in the suspect's bank account and that the money had been "laundered", i.e. made untraceable, by having been passed through a Mexican bank account. Subsequently, we learned that Mr. Stans kept a cash stash of perhaps as much as \$700,000 in his office safe and that somehow the \$114,000 (25+89) had passed through that unaccounted for stash. Later, we learned that just before the April 7 reporting deadline, \$700,000 in cash and securities, stuffed into a suitcase, was rushed in a corporate jet from Texas to the Nixon committee's headquarters.

An interesting highlight to the secret fund and the tie between that fund and the Watergate business came to public view when it was revealed that the donor of the \$25,000 check was a Minneapolis businessman—formerly a prominent Humphrey supporter—whose group later got hasty approval of a federal bank charter.

Then, came the indictments. In addition to the employee of the campaign committee and three apparent freelancers, a White House consultant—recommended for that position by the President's

Special Counsel—and a former high official in the Nixon campaign committee, who was also a former member of the White House staff were also indicted. We have confirmation that the Democrats were both burglarized and bugged. And finally, we have the revelation of an aborted reconnaissance of the McGovern headquarters by the two campaign officials and the White House consultant on May 27.

So there you have the outlines of what the public knows. It all establishes a clear link between the burglary and bugging of the Democrats' headquarters, the Nixon campaign committee and at least part of the secret \$10 million campaign fund. So now Sen. Dole expects apologies, Mr. MacGregor prophesies that the issue will redound to the Presi-

dent's political credit and, Mr. Kleindienst, among others, presumably wants everybody to applaud his department's work and to say no more for fear of prejudicing a fair trial of the seven men who have been indicted.

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Well, we agree that the defendants are entitled to a fair trial and that nobody should do anything to prejudice that. But this is hardly grounds in an election year for silence across the board on a matter that bears heavily on the character and quality of the President's campaign and on the qualifications of men who are working in his name and for his cause. It is idle to suppose that responsibility for the Watergate affair could have ended with the seven men who have been indicted. And it is self-serving and silly to suggest that other aspects of this case, related only indirectly to the Watergate, are not fit subjects for public curiosity. Are we not even to mention authoritative reports that there was a list of top Mitchell lieutenants who had access to the slush fund in Mr. Stans' safe? Or the report that three of the top lieutenants—including G. Gordon Liddy—drew as much as \$300,000 from that fund for unaccounted purposes? Or the report that the list of those with access to the safe plus a ledger giving the names of the donors to the \$10 million secret fund were destroyed just after the burglars were arrested at the Watergate? Or the report that Hugh Sloan, former counsel to the Nixon campaign committee, "left because he . . . didn't want anything to do with it?"

And then there are the central questions. Who gave the \$10 million and what did they think they were getting in return? Who authorized this venture and the transfer of campaign funds to Mr. Barker's account? How much money was laundered through Mexico and for what purposes? Who authorized that? Did any of the Mexican laundry money come from foreign nationals? Who at Nixon campaign headquarters received and used the information obtained by bugging and by burglary and where did they think the information came from—these after all were not naive men? How could Mr. Stans not know what was going on right in his own safe? And, finally, what kind of authority did Mr. Mitchell give to the fellow riders on his ship?

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These are not mean questions. They go, as we have said before, to the heart of the political process and to the peoples' right to know about the people who are offering to govern them for four more years. Mr. Kleindienst's investigation by no means closes the case, for he, and therefore his subordinates, are hardly disinterested parties. Nor can Mr. Stans' indignation, Sen. Dole's anger, Mr. MacGregor's optimism, Mr. Mitchell's invisibility or Mr. Nixon's air of innocent isolation from the whole thing make them go away. *Somebody* engaged in burglary and illegal bugging on behalf of the re-election of the President and the people have a right to know who's responsible. In Mrs. Sloan's purported words, somebody has to "stand up for what is right."