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Burglary, Bugging, Tapping—and Concealment

There is something to be said for corruption. It stinks. No matter how many lids you try to put on it, the stench will out. And that is what is happening with respect to the financial manipulations and related espionage activities involved in the effort to re-elect Richard Nixon, despite the best efforts of the administration and the Nixon campaign committee to stuff more lids onto the mess.

Without being dreary about it, we know there was burglary at the Democratic Party's headquarters in the Watergate—breaking and entering for the purpose of committing a crime. We know there was bugging equipment on the premises for electronic eavesdropping. We know there was tapping of telephone lines. We know there was \$700,000 stuffed into a suitcase and rushed to the Nixon campaign headquarters just before the deadline for reporting on campaign donations—and we know there was a shift in the position on milk price supports favoring dairy farmers just after receipt of some hefty contributions from associations of dairy farmers. We know there was a slush fund in Mr. Stans' safe. We know that some of the money intended for the President's campaign ended up in the bank account of one of the men arrested at the Democrats' headquarters. We know that some of the President's money was "laundered" by having checks from contributors deposited in a bank in Mexico from which nice, clean cash could then be withdrawn. We know there was a \$10 million secret campaign fund and we know that one \$25,000 donor got a federal bank charter a good deal faster than most people do. And we know, finally, that all this was done on behalf of the effort to re-elect the President of the United States.

But what do we hear from the President, his administration, and his high campaign advisers? First, we hear some scoffing from his campaign chief, Mr. John Mitchell . . . then a resignation . . . then, nothing. Next, from Mr. Maurice Stans, the financial chief of the Nixon campaign, we hear background promises of a perfectly "logical" explanation . . . and then silence except for vague denials when he was cornered in what Mike Wallace called the "dark reaches" of the convention hall in Miami Beach. In the civil suit brought by the Democrats, the Nixon committee and its repre-

sentatives have done everything they could to make sure that the depositions being taken, which might shed some light on the whole affair, be sealed from public view and, indeed, be put off until after the election. In the criminal action, we are told that we can be told very little because of the administration's delicate sensibilities concerning the defendants' civil liberties. This is the same administration which was perfectly prepared to try the brothers Berrigan in the newspapers before any grand jury was ever convened, and this is the same President who found Charles Manson guilty in advance of his trial and intervened to hold out the possibility of clemency for Lt. Calley while his case awaited review. And, now it turns out that the judge in the civil suit—a man who freely admits that he owes his position on the bench to the friendly intervention of the Vice President of the United States—has determined that the depositions cannot be taken until after the trial of the criminal action, an event which probably will not take place until after the election.

Meanwhile, the administration in whose behalf these various acts were being committed urges us

to trust it and its investigations. We are assured that before his fairly precipitous departure, Mr. Mitchell conducted an investigation and that he found that everything was fine. Yet we are given no documentation. We are told that the White House counsel, Mr. John Dean, conducted an investigation in which he assured himself and the President that no one *presently employed* in the administration was involved in the burglaries and the electronic surveillance. But when asked about it on the Public Broadcasting network by Elizabeth Drew, Mr. John Ehrlichman of the White House conceded that Mr. Dean's investigation "didn't go beyond the government"—to the question of Mr. Mitchell's role, for example, or that of Mr. Stans. Mr. Ehrlichman said that the investigation was "satisfactory to us" but that it did not tell who ordered the surveillance and that even after the "satisfactory" investigation, Mr. Ehrlichman didn't know who ordered it.

And then, there is Mr. Kleindienst. He is fairly sure that the investigation into the matter by the FBI is the most thorough conducted since the inves-

tigation into the murder of President Kennedy. Yet, when queried by the same persistent Mrs. Drew about reports that important documents had been destroyed at the Nixon campaign committee just after news of the Watergate break-in, Mr. Kleindienst allowed as how he hadn't known of that. He also seemed vague about the connection of that matter with a criminal investigation until Mrs. Drew suggested that there might be an issue of obstructing justice.

And now comes Henry Peterson, head of the Justice Department's Criminal Division—in charge of the investigation—guessing that “the jail doors will close behind” the suspects before the real motivation for the Watergate break-in is ever discovered.

So, those are the investigations that are supposed to put our minds to rest.

And after that, there is the Republican rhetoric. Mr. MacGregor says that all of this will redound to the President's political credit. Mr. Mitchell, in one of his infrequent lapses into public utterance, has said that he doesn't see how this has hurt the President in the polls—as if it were merely a matter of public opinion rather than an issue that goes to the heart of the integrity of our electoral process and of our elected officials. And Mr. Agnew says in one breath that the Watergate burglary may just have been—yes—a frame-up by the Democrats to embarrass the Republicans and in the next that the Democrats are trying to make the wheat scandal into “another Watergate.”

Well, if this whole thing is so good for the Republicans and if their investigations show them to be as clean as they say, why don't they tell us all? Who ordered the burglary? Who ordered the tapping? Who ordered the bugging? Who had control of Mr. Stans' safe? Who had access to it? Who were the contributors to the \$10 million secret fund and what were they promised? What do the reports to Mr. Mitchell and the report to Mr. Dean really say? What is Mr. Stans' “logical explanation” of the hundreds of thousands of dollars of money laundered in a bank in Mexico? Were the secret fund books destroyed? And if so, who destroyed them?

Why don't they talk to us about these things instead of hurling around charges of “frame-up” without any supporting evidence? Until they do, the suspicion can only grow that their reason for keeping silent is that the whole thing stinks.