

Simple Watergate 'Caper' Sends Ripples Over U.S.

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WASHINGTON, April 26 — Two days after the break-in at the Democratic headquarters in the Watergate complex, Ronald L. Ziegler, President Nixon's press secretary, called it "a third-rate burglary attempt."

"This is something," he said, "that should not fall into the political process."

Mr. Ziegler has now declared all such past statements "inoperative," and the Watergate case, seeming to grow bigger every day under the pressure of the courts, the press and Congress, has indeed touched the political process of the United States.

What started out as a simple burglary — many Republicans called it a "caper" and laughed about it — now appears to be shaking the ladder that leads to the Presidency and to power in this country.

The Watergate break-in it was discovered last June 17. By August, Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst was saying the case was simple burglary and wiretapping, not involving the conduct of Government officials.

The indictments returned Sept. 15 reflected that view. The seven men charged included adventurers, former Central Intelligence Agency men and a former Federal Bureau of Investigation agent.

There were no White House officials, no major political associates of the President.

Original Charges

The charges against them dealt with burglary, possession of wiretapping equipment, conspiracy to wiretap and disclosure of wiretapped conversations.

Now the names associated with the broadening investigation are not unknown adventurers but high Government officials—men who stand among the President's closest advisers and friends.

The investigation has moved several levels above simple acts of burglary and wiretapping.

Now the grand jury is considering charges such as obstruction of justice, perjury, violation of campaign spending laws, and violation of laws against interfering with a political campaign.

Although no charges have yet

been brought in the second round of investigations, the kinds of areas the grand jury may be exploring are known.

Were John N. Mitchell, the former Attorney General, and H. R. Haldeman, assistant to the President, involved in any way in covering up the Watergate affair or covering up other events of political sabotage?

Did the \$100 bills that were used so extensively in the dealings with the Watergate burglars come from campaign contributions?

Did men like L. Patrick Gray 3d, acting director of the F.B.I., destroy documents related to the case?

Connections to Case

What was the connection with the case of other Presidential aides and campaign leaders such as Jeb Stuart Magruder, Hugh W. Sloan Jr., Maurice H. Stans, John W. Dean 3d, John D. Erlichman, Herbert W. Kalmbach and Gordon C. Strachan?

Did those who testified in the first grand jury investigation lie?

Lying under oath is perjury, punishable by a \$2,000 fine or five years in prison. Encouraging someone else to lie is "subornation" or jury, with the same penalty.

Producing a spurious document before a grand jury is called "false declaration" and calls for a \$10,000 fine and five years in prison.

An active cover-up to prevent investigation of the case could come under obstruction of justice laws. These prohibit influencing, obstructing or impeding the "due administration of justice" and carry a penalty of \$5,000 in fines and five years in prison.

Under the Federal Election Campaign Act, it is a separate offense to fail to record an item of campaign expense or an item of campaign income. The law provides a fine of \$1,000 and a year in prison for each offense.

Under the Voting Rights Act, it is illegal to interfere with campaigning for an elective office and punishable by a \$1,000 fine and a year in prison.

Any of these crimes, done in concert with other persons, might include a conspiracy indictment.

Such conspiracy laws turn on

whether there are "overt acts" that lead to the commission of a crime or the potential commission of a crime.

"If two or more persons conspire either to commit any offense against the United States or to defraud the United States or any agency thereof in any manner or for any purpose and one or more of such persons do any act to effect the object of the conspiracy, each shall be fined not more than \$10,000 or imprisoned more than five years or both," says the conspiracy section under Title 18 of the United States Code.