

Burglary Proposal Laid to Hunt

By ANTHONY RIPLEY
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 27 — A burglary venture that it was thought might produce information on Senator Edmund S. Muskie's Presidential campaign was discussed, but never carried out, by E. Howard Hunt Jr. a former Hunt business associate has told The New York Times.

Robert F. Bennett, president of a Washington Public relations firm that once employed Hunt, who is one of the Watergate conspirators, said Hunt in 1971 discussed with him possibly breaking into the safe of a Las Vegas, Nev., publisher in a search for papers that Hunt told him might be "very damaging" to Senator Muskie.

Hunt was a \$100-a-day White House consultant whose exact duties in the 1972 Presidential campaign have never been made clear.

He pleaded guilty in the Watergate break-in case and has been identified in Defense Department documents as possibly having broken into the office of Dr. Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist. Dr. Ellsberg is accused of stealing the Pentagon papers.

Other Assignments

Hunt is also reported to have looked into the background of another potential Democratic Presidential nominee, Senator Edward M. Kennedy, to have worked on "narcotics intelligence" and studied how to prevent leaks of information from the State Department and Defense Department as a member of a group that called themselves "plumbers."

The 54-year-old former Central Intelligence Agency employe who has written 42 books, worked as vice president of the Robert R. Mullen Company and

He Is Said to Have Discussed a Plan Aimed at Muskie

was signed on to work for the White House as a part-time consultant in July, 1971.

Mr. Bennett, president of the company, who is a son of Senator Wallace F. Bennett, Republican of Utah, said that Hunt told him he heard through underground channels that Hank Greenspun, publisher of The Las Vegas Sun, had papers in his safe that would be "very damaging" to Senator Muskie.

He said the safe might also contain papers sought by a Las Vegas company and that the company might be interested in the break-in. Mr. Bennett said he checked it with the company involved and told him "No way."

"You've got to know about Hunt," Mr. Bennett said. "He made things up. He led me to believe he had instructions he didn't have. He said he'd never been near the Watergate that night."

"It was all very curious. Later when I asked Hunt if it came off, he said, 'Oh, no, but Muskie's not going to be the candidate, so it doesn't matter anyway.'"

Did TV Spots

Mr. Bennett said Hunt been working on salary for his company until he began to work part-time for the White House. His work with the company included producing spot television commercials and writing press releases for the Office of Education's Bureau of Education for the Handicapped.

In a sworn deposition made last week, in connection with the Democratic party damage

suit over the Watergate affair, Mr. Bennett said Hunt was paid \$125 a day after he went to work for the White House and was able to spend 17 to 20 days a month on company business. He worked for the White House evenings and weekends for the most part, Mr. Bennett said.

Charles W. Colson, former counsel to the President, has said he recommended hiring Hunt to John D. Ehrlichman, assistant to the President for domestic affairs, following the publication of the secret history of the Vietnam war, which has come to be known as the Pentagon papers.

Sought to Find Leak

Hunt's tasks involved investigating how the Pentagon papers were leaked to The New York Times, Mr. Colson said.

According to a former White House secretary, Kathleen Chenow, Hunt, David Young, Egil Krogh Jr. and G. Gordon Liddy shared a basement office in the old Executive Office Building and spent much of their time trying to plug the leaks of information. She said they called themselves "plumbers."

Liddy was convicted in the Watergate affair. Mr. Young and Mr. Krogh at the time were on Mr. Ehrlichman's staff.

Donald H. Segretti, a young California lawyer who headed a reported political sabotage organization on behalf of the Republican party in the 1972 Democratic primaries, made 19 telephone calls between March and June of that year to Hunt's office at the Mullen Company and two to his home in Rockville, Md.

Mr. Greenspun's office in Las Vegas said he was out of the country and that they had heard of no attempts to burglarize his office.