

The Prosecutors' Views on Nixon



Jack Anderson

IF THE Watergate prosecutors had their way, the anticipated indictment of the White House conspirators (1) would indicate President Nixon helped to cover up the illegal operations of his subordinates and (2) would suggest that his possible involvement should be investigated further.

The prosecutors have raised the presidential question in a careful, confidential memorandum, which discusses the options for dealing with evidence against the President. The final decision will be up to special prosecutor Archibald Cox, who is now in charge of the case.

As we reported on May 25, Assistant Attorney General Henry Petersen previously had reminded the prosecutors that the President was not on trial. This attitude from above had an inhibiting effect upon the prosecutors, although Petersen assured us he had not intended it.

★ ★ ★
SECRET, sworn testimony has produced absolutely no evidence that the President was implicated in the Watergate burglary and bugging. But sources close to the investigation tell us the prosecutors can no longer pretend that he was innocent of the cover-up.

By his own account, President Nixon tried to set up an antisubversive operation, headed by the late FBI director J. Edgar Hoover, to deal with "grave" security threats. When Hoover would have no part of this, the plan was abandoned.

But, subsequently, the President established his own para-police unit, known as "The Plumbers," inside the White House. Two of the plumbers, G. Gordon Liddy and E. Howard Hunt, broke into the offices of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist in Los Angeles in September 1971.

The same pair also masterminded the Watergate burglary, which culminated in their arrest the following June. The President immediately instructed aides H. R. Haldeman and John Ehrlichman "to insure" that the Watergate investigation didn't expose "the activities of the White House investigative unit."

★ ★ ★
THE PROSECUTORS believe Mr. Nixon's motive was more to hide the undercover activities of The Plumbers who had his blessing than to protect the water-buggers who did not. But the Watergate investigation threatened to uncover the Liddy-Hunt operation, which would lead straight to The Plumbers team.

Haldeman and Ehrlichman would have had difficulty protecting The Plumbers without also covering the Watergate tracks. The available evidence indicates they made little attempt to separate the two Liddy-Hunt projects.

The President's claim of "national security," in the prosecutors' opinion, is weak. Little attempt was made, in all the clandestine White House operations, to separate political security from national security.

See same column, as carried by Frederick (Md) Post 4 Jun 73 and note attached.