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BLOUNT

## Editorials

# Puzzling Switch In Cambodia Plan

A CURIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE related to President Nixon's surprising decision to send American combat troops into Cambodia is puzzling members of Congress and disturbing students of the current Washington scene.

It concerns emphatic testimony given to a House subcommittee by Secretary of State William P. Rogers a week before the decision to go into Cambodia was announced.

"We have no incentive to escalate," he said. "Our whole incentive is to de-escalate. We recognize that if we escalate, and if we get involved in Cambodia with our ground troops, that our whole program is defeated . . ."

THE ODDITY OF such a declaration at such a time is enhanced by his additional statement: "I have said to the Senate committee, and I say to you and other committees as much as possible, that if we are inclined, if we find that we think our troops are necessary — and I am not talking about any sizable use of troops — we could consult with Congress to the fullest extent possible."

It is a matter of history that Congress was not consulted, or even given advance notice of this substantial use of ground troops. It is a matter of widespread opinion that Secretary Rogers is neither a fool nor a liar, and would not have attempted to deceive Congress or to speak out so vehemently against the imminent decision had he known it was so much as in the making.

THUS THE MYSTERY DEEPENS. Secretary Rogers is, with the President and three others, a member of the National Security Council from which decisions of this nature and gravity usually emanate. It is to be expected, also, that a Secretary of State would be privy to such an abrupt shift in Administration policy and to the discussions that presumably preceded it.

Lacking any official explanation for this extraordinary situation, Washington's onlookers see in it either a credibility gap or a communications gap, preponderantly the latter.

That too is the favored interpretation given the astounding pronouncement of another Cabinet officer, Postmaster General Winton M. Blount. On a day when college campuses across the Nation were boiling in protest, when the Cambodian venture was creating deep cleavages in both Houses of Congress, when the public appeared more agitated and more polarized than ever, he delivered a speech in which he told the Economic Club of Detroit that the Administration is "well along in the task of restoring a society shaken and shattered by discord and violence."