

## Miasma of the ITT Case

WASHINGTON — If you set yourself to sifting fact from gossip, and evidence from hearsay, you will surely begin to wonder how this Dita Beard-Jack Anderson, ITT-Justice Department, Sheraton Hotels-Republican convention drama ever got such favorable reviews.

Not since the Clifford Irving-Howard Hughes literary fraud has a single chain of claim and counterclaim piled up so rapidly amid so many square feet of confusing newsprint.

REACTIONS SEEM 180-degrees apart. Quite a few seem convinced that they are witnessing the most horrendous scandal since Teapot Dome while others are totally skeptical that anything of substance is in the debris.

Joseph Kraft, one of the most fair-minded of the liberal critics of the Nixon Administration, describes the ITT case as "a miasma of phony issues, artful dodgers, false leads and plain trivia."

He suggests, in effect, that the administration has nothing to fear but fear itself.

Senate Republican Leader Hugh Scott of Indiana claims the Democrats are fiddling "with irrelevancies" while time to pass needed legislation is burning. Senate Democratic Leader Mike Mansfield of Montana claims that there are still unanswered questions.

Did the Justice Department make concessions to the ITT in an antitrust case in return for an ITT loan of \$200,000 or more to San Diego to help finance the Republican National Convention?

Did the administration make a deal with ITT adverse to the government's interests?

Did Atty. Gen.-designate Richard Kleindienst show himself unfit for confirmation by engineering such a settlement?

How these questions should be answered will determine whether this is a case of phony issues or a political scandal of massive proportion.

Two judgments seem justified: The indictments are unproved; the burden of evidence is on the side that the three accusations are untrue.

The only basis for alleging any connection between a loan from Sheraton Hotels, an ITT subsidiary, to the city of San Diego and the Justice Department's antitrust case is a memorandum allegedly written by Dita Beard, an ITT lobbyist. Anderson published this document as authentic.

Then, after Mrs. Beard repudiated it as "a fraud and a hoax," Anderson sought to prove she is now an unreliable witness.

The evidence dealing with the other two questions casts further doubt on the accusation.

If the Republicans were going to run the grave risk of selling out to the ITT to get a loan to help subsidize their national convention, they would certainly have to need the money badly. They don't. That is one of the Democratic complaints — that the administration is afloat with all the campaign money it can ever spend.

FINALLY, if it is to be plausible that the administration might have made concessions to the ITT in the antitrust case, then it would have to be shown that the settlement was unwise and unsound, adverse to the government and favorable to the ITT.

The most objective evidence comes from Solicitor Gen. Erwin Griswold who was appointed to his post by President Johnson and who owes no political debts to the Nixon Administration. He testified that it was a wise and sound settlement, "a victory for the government."