

(NIX AD)
**It's Not
 My
 Department**

By Anthony Lewis

BOSTON, Sept. 16—In foreign policy as in domestic, the great need of the United States today is not a solution to this particular problem or that. It is to restore public confidence in the integrity and the humanity of the American Government.

Those are the terms in which Henry Kissinger's fitness to be Secretary of State should be judged. Does he stand for the values of candor, honor, human sensitivity? We do not need to guess, as we should with many nominations: The record is there.

Less than two months after President Nixon took office, B-52s began secretly bombing Cambodia. In terms of respect for the American Constitution, there could hardly have been a more revealing episode. The orders for cover stories designed to deceive Congress and the public came from the National Security Council, on which Mr. Kissinger was the key aide. President Nixon has said he would do it again if he thought it right to carry on a secret war. There is no reason to believe that Mr. Kissinger differs.

The ground "incursion" into Cambodia followed: one of the worst disasters in the history of American foreign policy, moral and political. It pushed Cambodia into full-scale war and went far toward the destruction of her delicate and peaceful civilization. The Nixon Administration promised to stop tactical bombing of Cambodia after the incursion, but of course the bombing continued—without a hint of authority in American law.

Opinions will naturally differ about the wisdom of the Cambodian adventures. But it is hardly possible to argue

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that they reflected, in the President's chief adviser, qualities of openness and respect for the American constitutional system. The consistent earmarks were in fact secrecy, ruthlessness and a disregard verging on contempt for public and Congressional opinion.

Looking at the Kissinger record, one has to conclude that he has little patience for the often inconvenient requirements of law and tradition in American democracy—indeed that he does not really understand the constitutional system. That impression is fortified by his one notable domestic venture, into wiretapping. When Mr.

Kissinger was asked last May 29 about the tapping of his own assistants and others, he said: "It was legal. It followed regular procedures in relation to specific leaks."

Those statements were not true. There was no clear legal basis for the taps, procedures laid down by law were not followed and to this day no "specific leaks" have been shown to be the basis for inquiry. Perhaps recognizing as much, Mr. Kissinger more recently has fallen back on the line that the responsibility was not his—that he followed the advice of others, such as John Mitchell.

The most distasteful aspect of the tapping story may be what it discloses about Mr. Kissinger's attitude toward his assistants. He has himself been the main source of high-level background information for the press on foreign policy. That is altogether proper, but how sleazy then for Mr. Kissinger to monitor his subordinates' contacts with the press—and piously to say that he did it only for their own good. He has loyalty up but not always down.

If the Senate Foreign Relations Committee had a little self-respect, it would ask some obvious questions about the tapping. Why, for example, were the closest personal advisers of Secretary of State Rogers and Secretary of Defense Laird tapped immediately after the Cambodian incursion began? There was no suggestion of leaks from them: Almost certainly the taps were to check the personal loyalty of their superiors.

But a committee with some pride would have laughed Mr. Kissinger out of the room when he testified, "We cannot conduct foreign policy by deceiving the elected representatives of the people." Mr. Kissinger's real genius is for tickling the vanity of potential critics, and the Senators on the Foreign Relations Committee are vanity incarnate, so intent on displaying themselves that they will not have a counsel to ask intelligent questions. Some members did start on meaningful lines of inquiry, but there was no follow-through. Even reporters favorable to Mr. Kissinger found these foreign relations hearings a depressingly vapid and sugary affair.

When Mr. Kissinger was nominated, he mentioned among other illustrious predecessors Henry L. Stimson and George C. Marshall. What unintended irony! Those two men were revered not for their cleverness but for their honor. They would never have dreamt of spying on a subordinate or ducking personal responsibility or deceiving Congress or avoiding inconvenient demands of the Constitution. In a word, they could be trusted.

Mr. Kissinger's outstanding intelligence will be enough to make many approve of his nomination. Personally, I never could; he has played too large a role in the killing of too many innocent people. But at the least the Senate committee should try to see that Henry Kissinger means it this time when he takes the oath to support the Constitution—and understands what he means.