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So Long, Howard

by Bob Woodward

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[Robert R.]

Like other Washington institutions, the Mullen firm is, to a certain extent, inexactly named. A public relations outfit, some of its work involves preserving privacy.

The firm's president, Robert F. Bennett, who is the son of Sen. Wallace F. Bennett (R-Utah), has acknowledged that he is the organizer of many of the so-called "dummy" campaign committees which collected \$10 million in secret contributions for President Nixon's re-election. The money was collected prior to April 7, when the stricter campaign finance disclosure law took effect, and \$114,000 of it has been traced to the bank account of Bernard L. Barker, a suspect in the Watergate affair.

As Hunt became newsworthy, the Mullen firm found its affairs being publicly related.

□ A Washington lawyer, M. Douglas Caddy, who at one time shared an office with Hunt at the Mullen firm, charged in court last July that he had "intimations" that the Mullen firm did work for the CIA. Bennett replied that Caddy's assertion probably referred to work the firm did in the 1960s for Radio Free Cuba. (It is generally understood that Radio Free Cuba was funded by the CIA; four of the five Watergate suspects have ties with the Free-Cuba, anti-Castro movement in Miami and the CIA.)

□ The firm has a European affiliate, Interprogress, which is "trying to increase trade behind the Iron Curtain," according to Robert Bennett.

□ Mullen has also done public relations work for another mysterious Howard, billionaire Howard Hughes and his tool company, as well as the less exotic General Foods.

As Hunt, the man Bennett described as "the perfect spy because nobody would remember him," began imprinting himself on the public consciousness, the Mullen firm did a fade.

Robert R. Mullen, the 63-year-old chairman of the public relations firm's board of directors, said that Hunt called July 21 to inquire about his status with the firm.*

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Hunt had been suspended several days after the June 17 incident when he dropped from sight and failed to show up for work.

Mullen said he told Hunt that he was "permanently disengaged."

"I'm terribly disappointed that he misused our hospitality. He understood that I had to let him go. He bowed to it. He didn't argue about it," Mullen intoned.

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*See this file 23 Jun 72, NYTimes.