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Witness Defends Spying in Campaign

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WASHINGTON, July 27—John D. Ehrlichman sternly defended today the Nixon campaign's practice of spying on opposition political candidates, saying that politicians had an "affirmative obligation" to investigate and expose the drinking habits and personal morals of other candidates.

Senator Lowell P. Weicker was at first astonished, then indignant.

"Do you mean to tell me and this committee," he asked, "that you consider private investigators going into sexual habits, drinking habits, domestic problems and personal social activities as a proper subject for investigation during the course of a political campaign?"

Mr. Ehrlichman, looking across yards of table-tops at

the Senate Watergate committee hearings, the glaring television lights above Senator Weicker's head shining into his eyes, replied that he did.

"You can go over here in the gallery and watch a member totter onto the floor in a condition of at least partial inebriation," said Mr. Ehrlichman, President Nixon's former chief domestic adviser.

"I think that it is important for the American people to know," he continued. "And if the only way it can be brought out is through his opponent in a political campaign, then I think that opponent has an affirmative obligation to bring that forward."

Senator Weicker leaned forward in his seat, his hulking, 6-foot-6 frame resting on his elbows, using both hands for emphasis.

"Do you really want to bring

the political system of the United States, of our campaigns, down to the level of what you are talking about right now?" The Senator asked.

Mr. Ehrlichman did not answer the question directly.

Time and again during the 15-minute exchange, Mr. Ehrlichman, a teetotaler, returned to the subject of drinking, without mentioning any names. At one point he declared:

"Someone with a serious
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drinking habit is of doubtful fitness for the kind of heavy duty that you bear, for instance, or that any Senator bears in the Senate of the United States. That is certainly a material question that has to be raised in a political campaign, at least so it seems to me."

'Very Basic Issue'

The newspapers have an unwritten rule against exposing the shady side of politicians' personal lives, Mr. Ehrlichman asserted, and so it was left to the politicians' opponents to keep their constituencies informed.

"Obviously, you and I are at loggerheads on a very basic issue here," Mr. Weicker responded. "I am quite satisfied that our systems, our institu-

tions, are perfectly capable of passing decent judgments, fair judgments, hard judgments on political figures, public officials without covert operations."

Senator Weicker, a Connecticut Republican, said that he had run in eight campaigns—two primaries and six races against Democrats. Never, he said, did he spy on his opponents' private lives, and, so far as he knew, his opponents did not spy on his.

Mr. Ehrlichman, a bit testily, declared, "Well, I conceive of it this way, Senator. I know that, in your situation, your life-style is undoubtedly impeccable, and there wouldn't be anything of issue like that."

"I am not an angel," the Senator remarked.

"I thought you were," Mr. Ehrlichman shot back.

"Believe me, I am not," Mr. Weicker said. "I worry about your seeking people on the landscape here, and I have a greater worry now before you here."

Question on Policeman

What brought up the debate was Mr. Weicker's question about why Mr. Ehrlichman had hired Anthony J. Ulasewicz, a former New York City policeman who served as an undercover agent for the White House and the Nixon campaign.

Mr. Ulasewicz told the committee last week that he had been hired to look into politicians' personal lives, especially their drinking habits and sexual practices.

The only specific politician he mentioned was Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Democrat of Massachusetts, whom he said he trailed after the Senator's accident on Chappaquiddick Island in 1969. At one point, Mr. Kennedy was followed on a trip to Hawaii, but the spies could turn up no derogatory information.

Political experts said that they knew of no case in the 1972 campaign when the Nixon forces publicized seamy activities of Democrats.

Mr. Ehrlichman kept returning to the point that incumbent candidates had an advantage and that politicians running against them had to expose the incumbents' foibles.

"May I point out that according to your theory the President was an incumbent?" Senator Weicker said.

"I think an incumbent Presi-

dent has an enormous advantage," Mr. Ehrlichman replied.

"He not only had an enormous advantage," Mr. Weicker remarked, "apparently he went around and had this type of information handed to him which added to the advantage he had. I would say that made him rather unbeatable."

"We have two different concepts of politics in this country meeting head-on," Mr. Weicker told the former Nixon aide. Mr. Ehrlichman's concept, the Senator said, was that elections should be settled on the basis of the candidates' private lives. And then Mr. Weicker added, "You stick to your version, and I'll stick to mine."



John D. Ehrlichman being counseled by attorney, John J. Wilson, at Watergate hearing
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