

The Great Lie Shortage



Arthur Hoppe

THE END of the bombing in Cambodia produced a grave crisis in Washington. Hardest hit was the Bureau of Obfuscation (BOO).

Within minutes after the midnight bombing halt, BOO Director Homer T. Pettibone called an emergency meeting of his dedicated top aides.

"Gentlemen," he began grimly, "this nation may face an energy shortage, a meat shortage, a gasoline shortage and a plumbing shortage, but these pale into insignificance compared to the threat we of BOO are confronted with tonight — an apparently insoluble lie shortage.

"For the first time in memory our galland airmen are not bombing anybody anywhere in the world. Do you realize what that means? Why the bombing of Cambodia alone enabled us to produce 3630 certifiable lies about the targets of our B-52s—an enviable record.

"This is even a greater crisis than when we finally turned off the light at the end of the tunnel in Vietnam, which we alone constantly and clearly perceived. We can't even say we aren't bombing enemy hospitals, because we aren't."

Pettibone looked sternly about the room. "The question, gentlemen, with the very survival of BOO imperiled, is what do we lie about now?"

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YOUNG Fred Frisbee eagerly raised his hand. "What about Watergate, Chief?"

"No way, Frisbee," said Pettibone. "With half a dozen Grand Juries, televised Senate hearings and who knows how many thousands of newsmen and local dogcatchers investigating every nook and cranny, Watergate has definitely outlived its usefulness."

"And it was such a gold mine," said Frisbee, nodding sadly. "Wait, I know

How about the purchase of San Clemente? That's been good for a couple of whoppers."

"Not enough time," said Pettibone. "The White House has promised to reveal the truth within 30 days — unless we can come up with a good one sooner."

"We could release another Standard Form 142-A on the economy, Chief," Frisbee suggested tentatively. "You know, 'With Phase (fill in blank) now in full force, inflation is under control and prices...'"

"You ever been tarred and feathered by a housewife, Frisbee?" asked Pettibone.

"Maybe we could say the stock market is as sound as a dollar?" said Frisbee hopefully.

"What kind of lie is that?" inquired Pettibone dryly. "And don't mention that word, 'dollar,' in my hearing again."

"Well, there's our friends at ITT, Chief," said Frisbee. "We've always been able to count on them in the past."

"Yes, where's Dita Beard now that we need her?" said Pettibone sadly. "They're all in hiding. No, gentlemen, I'm afraid this is the end. BOO can no longer lie in peace."

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THERE WAS a bereaved silence about the room. Suddenly, Frisbee's young face flushed. "I've got it!" he cried. "When we issued that record 3630 lies to cover up our bombing attacks in Cambodia, it was because at the time we were officially not bombing Cambodia. Right?"

"So?" said Pettibone, looking puzzled.

"And now, once again, we are officially not bombing Cambodia. Right?"

"By George, Frisbee, you've saved BOO!" exclaimed Pettibone, clapping his young aide on the back. "Get me the Air Force on the phone."