



The Plumbers' Mystery Grows

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ONE OF THE reasons Watergate goes on and on is that the story of that sinister group, the White House Plumbers, has never been told. In the past few days alone, new revelations of their work have compromised the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Thomas Moorer, and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.

So all of us have to hope that the inquiry which the Senate Armed Services Committee begins this week will get to the bottom of the mystery.

Moorer comes into the picture because the Plumbers unit, which was set up at the White House in 1971 to look into leaks, did in fact uncover one avenue for unauthorized distribution of secret material. That was a line of communication which passed papers generated by Kissinger at the National Security Council to Moorer at the Pentagon.

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MOORER, in an appearance on the "Today" show, acknowledged that he had in fact received papers through that channel in 1971. But he made it seem an insignificant event.

Sources in the military claim that the passing of documents to the Pentagon was not insignificant, but continued over a long period of time, and involved hundreds of papers, some of them meant only for the eyes of the President. The highest ranking military officer in the country, in other words, is being made to seem a liar, unfit for his high post.

Kissinger came into the picture because one of the operating heads of the Plumbers was David Young, a former

staff man on the National Security Council. In testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on his nomination as Secretary of State, Kissinger was asked repeated questions about Young and his work on the Plumbers. In response to one question he said:

"I have no knowledge of any such activities that David Young may have engaged in. I did not know of the 'Plumbers Group,' by that or any other name. Nor did I know that David Young was concerned with internal security matters. . . . I had no contact with David Young either by telephone or in my office or in any other way after he left my staff."

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WHEN STORIES of the passing of documents to Moorer surfaced, Kissinger was questioned by newsmen about the Plumbers. He said that he stood by "my statement to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee." But under questioning it developed that he had known that an investigation had uncovered the irregular line of communication to the Pentagon.

Kissinger at that point cut off questions, pending further investigation by the Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees.

The strange thing is that the demands for a full airing should have to come from the outside. Moorer and Kissinger have the biggest interest in a complete plumbing of the Plumbers. Their reputations are at stake, and their present standing is so high that they should far better absorb a few lumps now than risk a slow, painful involuntary deflation over the weeks and months to come.