

Baker Eyes CIA Over Watergate

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Sen. Howard H. Baker Jr. (R-Tenn.), the Senate Watergate matinee idol, has been dealing behind the scenes with embattled ex-White House aide Charles W. Colson in a joint effort to implicate the Central Intelligence Agency in the Watergate break-in and cover-up.

Although Colson exercised his Fifth Amendment rights at the Senate hearings, he has collaborated quietly with Baker's top committee aide, Fred Thompson, in the desperate attempt to shift more of the Watergate blame to the CIA.

Colson has also been in touch with the White House on the CIA angle. This has aroused suspicion that the Baker-Colson maneuver may be a White House ploy to divert public attention from President Nixon's own Watergate role.

Sources close to Baker hotly deny that his CIA investigation is a diversionary action. They say he is hard at work on a detailed report, which they promised will be a "bombshell." From hints we have gotten of memos in Baker's possession, "bombshell" is a fair description of what he has discovered.

For months, Baker has dallied with the idea that the CIA really engineered the celebrated break-in at Democratic headquarters for vague "national security" reasons and then pulled

strings to hush it up. But he has never seemed to be able to get his theory to jell.

What finally persuaded him he was right, our sources say, was the admission by the CIA on Jan. 29 that tapes of CIA conversations were destroyed during the Watergate period—after Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.) has specifically requested that they be preserved.

At Baker's instigation, former CIA chief Richard Helms, now ambassador to Iran, was hauled before the committee a week ago under the most secret conditions.

In addition to Baker and Thompson, the session was also attended by Chairman Sam J. Ervin Jr. (D-N.C.), counsel Sam Dash and a few trusted aides. Also present, surprisingly, was Sen. Stuart Symington (D-Mo.), who heads the Senate's hush-hush CIA oversight subcommittee.

For four hours, the chain-smoking Helms was grilled about the CIA's part in the Watergate events. We have learned that the secret transcripts show that Baker's questions were aimed at uncovering a hidden CIA involvement.

Baker seemed convinced, for example, that Helms personally ordered the tapes destroyed. Our sources say that Helms skillfully parried Baker's ques-

tions and did not incriminate the CIA.

Once the hearing was over, Baker and Thompson went to work on the report. It probably will be submitted to Symington's Subcommittee for Security Review.

Baker, meanwhile, is expected to demand that all CIA documents in the Watergate case be declassified. He has claimed privately that these papers will bolster his case. Others who have had access to the documents insist they may raise more questions than they answer.

Footnote: Baker could not be reached. Colson, Thompson and Dash refused to provide any details about the CIA investigation. Thompson, however, said: "Hopefully, the entire picture will be made public. At that time, people can make their own judgments."

Hoover's Privy—Thanks to the foresight of the National Park Service, future generations of Americans will not forget what Herbert Hoover's outhouse looked like.

The Park Service is planning to reconstruct Hoover's boyhood privy, plank by plank, near the cottage where the 31st President was born in West Branch, Iowa. The Hoover Presidential Library and burial site are part of the same compound.

In addition to adding an air of authenticity to the Hoover park, the outhouse will hide an electrical transformer. The privy is supposed to be completed in time for VIP viewing at the centennial celebration of Hoover's birth this August.

Des Moines architect William J. Wagner, who designed most of the buildings in the Hoover park, was commissioned to draw the privy plans.

With respect for historical accuracy, and tongue in cheek, Wagner researched the project and came up with a detailed design for a five-by-six, board-and-batten structure, complete with a peg for a Sears and Roebuck catalogue. The "front elevation" drawing shows a door decorated with the traditional crescent moon.

The two-hole, "lift-up" seat, Wagner noted in his plans, should be constructed of "butternut or elm", as these are "warm feeling" woods. He drew the seat, Wagner told us, from a life-size model, which he found at an old stagecoach stop in Iowa.

Footnote: Wagner, who says he has "a deep personal feeling for Herbert Hoover," designed the former President's privy for no pay. He invited us to Des Moines to "feel his butternut model."

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