

Giving Plumbers

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HEADLINE: 'PLUMBERS' SUSPECTED OF BREAK-IN

Headline: CHIEF 'PLUMBER' FACES TEN YEARS IN BURGLARY OF ELLSBERG PSYCHIATRIST

For months, "plumbers" have been getting this kind of publicity — the ones, that is, who belonged to the secret White House unit.

As for genuine plumbers, many are upset.

Especially a former Bronx plumber named George Meany, who once did pipe-work on the Commodore Hotel and the Grand Central terminal in New York.

"I think it is libelous against . . . a very honest, decent profession — the plumbers of this country," said Meany, the president of the AFL-CIO, on a recent segment of "Face the Nation."

Adds Everett Schell, business manager of the Pipe Trades of Southern California:

"Sure, I hear complaints about the name. A lot of journeymen feel it gives them a black eye."

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THE PLUMBING profession is only one of many hit by fallout from Watergate.

Secretaries, public relations and advertising people and private investigators also have felt the impact — but in different ways.

So have some launderers who despair over the constant references to "laundered" campaign contributions (channeled through a Mexican bank to conceal the source).

"It doesn't do us any good, that's for sure," says an official of the International Fabricare Institute.

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SECRETARY magazine, in its "Secretary in the Spot" feature, recently presented the hypothetical case of a secretary who is subpoenaed to testify about her boss.

"Should she keep her boss's confidence and risk possible contempt of court citations or should she tell everything she knows and stand the chance of losing her job?" the magazine asked its 50,000-odd readers.

If the case seemed reminiscent of that of Rose Mary Woods, President Nixon's personal secretary and tape transcriber, the similarity was intentional.

"Recent events emanating from Washington underscore the need for an examination of secretarial loyalty,"

Ruby McBean, a CPS (certified professional secretary), wrote in the magazine.

The response to the hypothetical case was "larger than normal," according to Shirley Englund, editor of Secretary.

Helen Burkin, a Chicago secretary, summed up the feelings of the majority of the respondents when she wrote that the subpoenaed secretary should forget the "old Perry Mason court cases where secretaries always seemed to have a blind, often misguided, loyalty to their bosses . . . (and) to answer truthfully and to the best of her ability . . ."

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THE IMPACT of Watergate also was reflected in a letter in the March 30 issue of P.S. (for private secretaries) magazine.

"My boss's 'dirty tricks' are getting out of hand," a Midwest secretary wrote. She explained that he had asked her to "lose" an envelope to conceal the fact that a construction company's bid had arrived past the deadline for consideration.

"I'm worried someone is going to

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a Bad Name

catch him and me at these wrongdoings," she concluded. "What should I do?"

The answers will be printed in a June issue, at which time all the construction company's nails should be in place. But at least she is re-examining her role.

"I think secretaries are changing," says Irene Stone, an editor for P.S. "Women's Lib has had a lot to do with it. Secretaries are starting to become their own people, to speak for themselves."

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PUBLIC RELATIONS people, like the plumbers, believe they have been victimized through a case of mistaken identity.

"Those men were not P.R. men even though the press sometimes makes it seem that way," declares William Story, executive vice president of the Public Relations Society of America.

"Those men" (the two Watergate figures — former presidential assistant H. R. (Bob) Haldeman and former appointments secretary Dwight Chapin) "were advertising men and they did not take a public relations approach," says Story,

who has fired off letters of protest to the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal.

"In public relations, we provide information, we don't cover it up."

Haldeman and Chapin formerly worked for the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency.

Advertising people, however, don't quite see what all the fuss is about.

"The fact that those men were once in advertising is only coincidental," says James V. O'Gars, editor at large of Advertising Age. "They could have been college professors, chemists, anything."

Asked what impact the indictment of Haldeman and conviction of Chapin had on the industry, president John Crichton of the American Association of Advertising Agencies answers:

"Zero."

On the other hand, Dr. Ken Smith, a professor at the University of Southern California, feels that because of Watergate. Public relations will never again be quite the same.

"I may be the world's greatest optimist but I believe that Watergate may have a positive effect on public relations," he says. "Now the spotlight is on us and we have the chance to show the skills and knowledge required for true public relations — not the Watergate type."

How often is Watergate mentioned in his classroom?

"Oh, not more than ten times per hour," says Smith.

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MILO SPERIGLIO, director in chief of three Southern California detective agencies, fears that the image of the private investigator also is "going down the drain."

"Watergate is the biggest thing to blame," he says, "all those stories about bugging and breaking in. One of my staff investigators told me the other day that when he's meeting with people socially, he's almost afraid to tell them what he does for a living."

Speriglio fears that the bad publicity might do more than affect the detective's image:

"One of these days the Legislature's liable to restrict some of our activities — like surveillance or polygraph work."

As a result, he says his agencies are quietly looking into the activities of their competitors — an investigation of investigators — in an effort to reduce illegal activities.

"We're worried because we keep getting calls from people asking us to bug. When we say we don't do that, they say, well so-and-so does and they quote their prices," he says.