

Time For Caution

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee is performing its proper function in re-examining the sworn testimony given by Henry A. Kissinger prior to his confirmation as Secretary of State, in light of ambiguous new allegations about the wiretapping of several of his staff. Restraint and caution are essential, however, to avoid interference with the Secretary's diplomatic functions during President Nixon's current Middle Eastern tour and the forthcoming visit to Moscow.

Mr. Kissinger's emotional threat to resign, delivered yesterday after he had left the United States in the President's party, came as a shock to many in Congress, who promptly expressed their continued confidence in the Secretary's diplomatic skill and appreciation for his far-reaching efforts toward peace. We certainly share those sentiments, as we have said repeatedly in recent weeks.

The wiretapping issue before the Foreign Relations Committee is unrelated to his current missions. Did Mr. Kissinger, while serving as President Nixon's national security adviser, direct the wiretap operation that was carried out against some of his closest aides? Are the committee members satisfied that they received true and accurate testimony from Mr. Kissinger when he was questioned on this matter last September?

Mr. Kissinger himself requested the review of the record before leaving the country. He has heatedly denied any improper behavior, and in consideration of his spectacular foreign policy achievements there has long been a strong reluctance to press any of the various charges that have been made against him.

Only through a comprehensive investigation of all the relevant evidence, including newly available information from the White House transcripts and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, can the committee—and the public—reach a fair judgment. The issues of basic constitutional rights certainly require a thorough airing. But until such an investigation is concluded—and it cannot be carried out in a hurry or under pressure from any source—the national interest requires that the Secretary of State be encouraged to continue the peacemaking efforts that stand as the brightest achievements of the Nixon Administration.