

# Wonder and Suspicion

BY COURTESY OF THE WHITE HOUSE and of the House Judiciary Committee the public now has before it two separate versions of eight Presidential tapes, the alternate reading of which may induce shock, surprise, indignation, or disbelief.

The discrepancies are such as to excite wonder and suspicion as to how they came about and the explanations advanced are less than satisfactory. The White House surmises only that its transcribers were in too great a hurry to deliver the promised transcriptions to the House committee; committeemen note that their staff listened to the tapes with more sophisticated equipment than was available to the other listeners.

Thus, to be sure, some White House "unintelligibles" may have been made intelligible to the committee's transcribers. Furthermore, they displayed an earthy determination to restore the expletives which their White House counterparts deleted, and which, beyond doubt, spice up the recorded conversations.

**THE BOLD INCLUSION** of these words in the committee transcript doubtless shocks many readers, as it did some editors who declined to print them. But shocking as they may have been, they are of relatively small importance as compared to the textual differences in the two versions, and to the revelation that long and pertinent passages were completely omitted from the White House transcription.

White House spokesmen shrug off the discrepancies as of small import, attribute their disclosure to a "hyped public relations campaign" against the President, and say that their misreading by committee members will be thoroughly discredited when the whole story is told.

The President certainly did not transcribe his tapes, but he did present them to the committee and the public as faithful. It will be up to him, or some White House deputy, to explain the gaps and discrepancies that have now come to light.