

Kissinger and Semantics

Washington

senator J. William Fulbright (Dem-Ark.) said yesterday that an "unfortunate semantic difference" has arisen over Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's testimony that he never "initiated" wiretaps of reporters and government officials in 1969-71.

Fulbright made the statement after General Alexander M. Haig, White House chief of staff, appeared before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee as the final witness in a new review of Kissinger's involvement in the wiretap affair.

Haig said he "generally supported Kissinger's account.

Fulbright, chairman of the committee, did not make clear whether he was backing away from previous support for Kissinger.

He said: "I am not prepared to make any conclusion yet."

Fulbright's committee began the review of Kissinger's role after the secretary threatened in June to resign unless cleared of allegations he did not tell the

truth in sworn testimony that he did not order the taps.

FBI documents gathered in the course of the House impeachment inquiry stated that the 17 wiretaps on newsmen and certain present and former government officials were instituted upon requests from Kissinger, which were relayed through Haig, who was then his deputy.

Fulbright said Kissinger's story is that the tapping program was ordered by Mr. Nixon "and all he (Kissinger) did subsequently was participate in carrying it out. In that sense he didn't initiate any wiretaps."

But he added "I think a very unfortunate semantic difference has arisen which will be difficult to resolve . . . I asked him in September whether he initiated any wiretaps and his answer was 'no.'

"I think he was thinking of 'initiated' as meaning the program. But if you think of it from the point of view of the individuals (who were tapped) I don't know how you can get away from saying he initiated them."

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