

Watergate Backwash

How difficult it will be to banish from American political life the dark suspicions born of Watergate is indicated by the brief attention given at the White House to a malicious effort by enemies of former Gov. Nelson A. Rockefeller to knock him out of consideration for the Vice Presidency. On the basis of shadowy allegations from an even more shadowy informant, a chain of over-response by government and press created a momentary sense that a nauseating new instance of political chicanery in the 1972 campaign had been uncovered.

It took almost no time at all for investigation by Special Watergate Prosecutor Jaworski to pronounce the entire allegation baseless, a conclusion President Ford has accepted. He has made it clear that the episode is closed and that it will have no effect, plus or minus, in his assessment of Mr. Rockefeller's Vice-Presidential qualifications. The astonishing thing still is how, given the unsubstantiality of its source, anyone chose to give the report currency before it had even been checked.