A WATERGATE DIARY

Notes of a Washington correspondent during the month of May, 1973

by Elizabeth Drew

"Whoever wants to see a brick must look at its pores, and must keep his eyes close to it. But whoever wants to see a cathedral cannot see it as he sees a brick. This demands a respect for distance."

—José Ortega y Gasset

May 1. Law Day. Law Day is when our chief law enforcement officers make speeches.

Two years ago, there were antiwar demonstrations here. Then Attorney General John Mitchell viewed the demonstrators from a window of the Justice Department, and later the Attorney General's wife remarked that it looked like a "Russian Revolution." There were mass arrests, most of them made without required arrest forms. The Attorney General said that this was necessary because of the danger to the government. The courts dismissed the charges against almost all of the demonstrators.

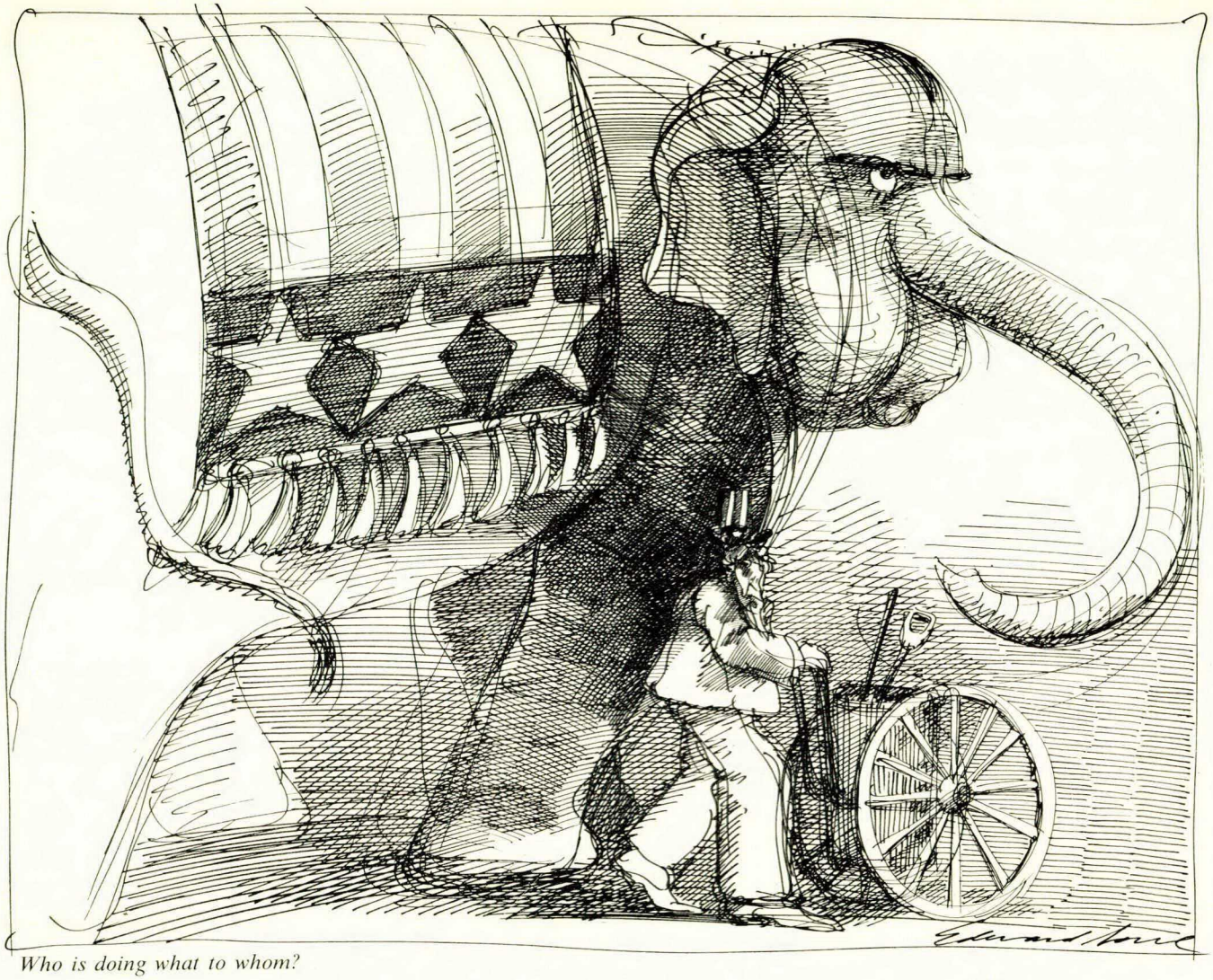
This year, the Attorney General, Richard Kleindienst, gamely goes ahead with his speech, despite the fact that President Nixon fired him yesterday. "Received and accepted the resignation" is how it is put officially. Some of Kleindienst's friends think it was an unkind cut that his dismissal occurred on the same day that the President discharged Ehrlichman, Haldeman, and Dean from their White House jobs. Kleindienst has not been publicly implicated in the Watergate affair.

Ehrlichman and Haldeman are almost alone in their troubles. They never had a political base. They seem not to have understood politicians—except perhaps the one who hired them—and in their protection of the President and assertion of his powers, they regularly gave politicians offense. Last Sunday, the Washington *Post* ran a front-page story headed, "Senate Won't Cry Over 'Those Two.'" To Republican politicians, Haldeman and Ehrlichman are disposable. Some even believe that if they are disposed of, Watergate can be exorcised.

The President's assistants are now turning their manipulative skills, once channeled into furthering the cause of their leader, on each other. They used to fight for the king's ear. Now they are fighting for their own skins.

The Watergate story feeds on itself. The news and the events it is about are often part of the same process in Washington—the news is an event, affecting the next event, which is then in the news—but never, in memory, to this degree. Skills at reading between the lines of the newspapers to determine who is leaking, and doing, what to whom are put to the test as never before. Some stories are both leaked and denied by the same person, or his allies.

Following the President's speech last night, there is a pause now, a sort of collective catching of breath, to assess the situation. We have developed a habit of looking toward presidential speeches to



Who is doing what to whom?

define situations. Even when the definitions the President offers are very controversial, they let us know where things stand. But this one was elusive.

May 2. One of the most bizarre aspects of living through this time is the way in which seemingly diverse threads suddenly connect. As one reads the news, flashbacks recur. The connecting threads and flashbacks are at once confusing, and help to make it all of a piece. For example: preparing for an interview with Murray Chotiner . . . In the clippings about Chotiner's role in the milk fund case, there, astonishingly, is the name "Howard Hunt." Milk producers had raised funds for the President's reelection through some hundred-odd dummy committees, and then the Administration had raised the price support of milk. Chotiner, now a Washington lawyer, had helped to raise the money. One of the dummy committees, the clippings say, was headed by Howard Hunt.

Hunt, the White House "plumber," is one of the mesmerizing and unifying figures in this whole business. Once connected with the CIA, a participant in the Bay of Pigs invasion, Hunt is a character out of his own adventure novels. Hunt's name in the address books of two of the men caught in the Watergate first linked the break-in to the White House. It was reported that Hunt, wearing a red wig, had gone out to Denver to see Dita Beard of ITT. The mind kept going back to that: a man on the White House payroll putting on a red wig and going across the country to see a sick, disgraced lobbyist. When Hunt's wife, Dorothy, was killed in a plane crash, $10,000 in $100 bills had been found in her purse. The $100 bills found on the men in the Democratic headquarters, and traced, via Mexico, to campaign donors, symbolized the central elements in the whole affair: money, much of it given in exchange for, or hope of, government favors, and some of it used for espionage and sabotage against those considered dangerous to the Administration, including potential political opponents. Hunt and Gordon Liddy, a Watergate co-conspirator, had raided the files of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist. Material from Hunt's White House file, including a report on Chappaquiddick, had been given by Ehrlichman and Dean to Acting FBI Director Pat Gray to burn, which he did, thus compromising Gray. And now here, in the Chotiner clippings, was Howard Hunt, head of a milk fund.

Elizabeth Drew is *The Atlantic*'s Washington correspondent.

Through all of the details there is a stark simplicity. It comes down to two themes that have been shadows on Richard Nixon's political career: aggression against the opposition, and money. Thinking about Murray Chotiner put it in focus. Chotiner was there in the early, controversial Nixon campaigns against Jerry Voorhis and Helen Gahagan Douglas. The Chotiner theory of politics, he once explained, is that "if you do not deflate the opposition candidate before your own candidate gets started, the odds are you're doomed to defeat." When Nixon was under fire for "the Nixon fund" in 1952, Chotiner urged him to counterattack with "the Checkers speech." A dog and a cloth coat entered American political history. After Nixon became President, Chotiner worked in the White House for a while, through the 1970 mid-term elections. (Among the Democratic senators up for reelection were Edward Kennedy and Edmund Muskie.) It was said that Haldeman and Ehrlichman got Chotiner out of the White House in 1971 because they thought he might embarrass the President.

May 4. The bombing of Cambodia grows—about sixty B-52 strikes today.

May 5. At a cocktail party, word spreads that the next *Newsweek* will say that John Dean has information implicating the President in the Watergate cover-up. Dean has already been reported to have linked Haldeman and Ehrlichman to it. Dean is fighting for immunity from prosecution. His battle against his former colleagues—and now his boss—is one of the sub-dramas. How much information does Dean really have? Will he—should he—be believed?

Every once in a while, there is a shift in the way that the Watergate affair is perceived. Its proportions seem larger, and so do its implications. Suddenly, now there are conversations about the procedures for impeachment, and resignation. There is no precise reason for this shift; the atmospherics of Washington often defy rational explanation. But there is a sense that more is coming, and that no one knows where it will end. The concepts of "impeachment" or "resignation" suggest a resolution, a definition of what has happened. We seem to find it hard to live without definitions or resolutions.

May 6. The Sunday New York *Times* says John Dean told the FBI that the following items were found in Hunt's office: a "Colt revolver, one clip for the revolver, one holster, three shoulder harnesses, three belt harnesses, four rechargeable Bell and Howell batteries, one tear gas cannister, two microphones in simulated Chapstick containers. Three antenna leads, four antennas, six jack wires, one shoulder harness with white lead wire and phone jack, three operating instructions for a Bell and Howell portable transmitter. There was also one copy of the book, 'The Pentagon Papers'; six brown envelopes containing classified material relating to the Pentagon Papers; one tan folder marked 'Ellsberg'; one tan folder marked 'Pentagon Papers'; one folder marked 'John Paul Vann'; folders marked 'Time and Pay Records,' which contained verification of hours worked at the White House, and a folder marked 'Press Contacts.' "

The *Times* reports that Hunt has told the federal grand jury that the CIA supplied some of the equipment.

Flashback: Richard Helms was replaced as Director of the CIA after the election; it was never very clear why.

May 7. Ordinarily, *Time* and *Newsweek* are read on Tuesdays, when the subscription copies arrive. But now, copies are bought as soon as they reach the newsstands on Monday morning. *Newsweek*'s story about Dean is more carefully hedged than the weekend stories about it suggested.

Time reports that J. Edgar Hoover's files on official wiretaps disappeared from his office after he threatened to disclose their existence.

Hoover has gone through several retrospective permutations. His stubborn independence of political authority was trying to the Democrats when they were in power. It became a liberal truism that the FBI Director should be accountable to the political authorities. But perhaps there was more safety in the principle of an independent FBI Director than had been thought. Pat Gray was accountable.

The FBI is now a shambles. The factionalism into which it began to deteriorate in Hoover's last years threatens anyone who tries to succeed him, and could even destroy the agency itself. On one level, it is a set of bureaucratic battles of Hoover men against anti-Hoover men, and of agents in the field against those in Washington. On another level, it is a morality play: FBI agents, with information about the espionage and sabotage and cover-up, weighing their responsibilities to the bureaucracy, to the institution, to the Administration, and to the public. Motivated by both patriotism and petty rivalries, the FBI has become an important source of leaks to the press. Hoover men are believed to have provided information which sandbagged Pat Gray. An agency trained in obtaining sensitive information and double-dealing and blackmail is now, using these capacities, devouring itself.

Can we train people in the black arts and then control their practice of their craft?

Other items in this morning's New York *Times:*

"12 Million Found Inadequately Fed; Senate Study Notes Recent Rise in Food Prices" (page 14).

"Pentagon Plans $100-Million Missile-Detection Radars Despite Success of Spy Satellite" (page 23).

Elliot Richardson, still serving as Secretary of Defense, defended the bombing in Cambodia before the Senate Appropriations Committee today. Norris Cotton, a New Hampshire Republican who has been a dependable Administration ally, gave Richardson a hard time. Cotton said the prisoners are back and the war is over. The issue of the bombing had frustrated opponents of the war. It was remote, and did not hurt Americans—except for an occasional pilot—and was hard to transform into a major issue. But now the bombing was being done without congressional authority, for unclear purposes. The logical extension is that a President could bomb any place, any time. Richardson says that even if the committee denies money for the bombing, the bombing will continue. Even Norris Cotton is disturbed.

Tonight the television news programs carry the White House denial of the *Newsweek* story about Dean. The way the networks handle it shows how much things have changed. At first, White House denials about the Watergate affair—a "third-rate burglary"—were taken pretty much at face value. When the President said last August that an investigation by John Dean had shown that "no one in the White House staff, no one in the Administration presently employed, was involved in this very bizarre incident," some time elapsed before questions were asked about the qualifying phrase, "presently employed." Tonight, something new happened. The denial was reported, and then its apparent loophole was immediately noted by the television correspondents. Within seconds, a presidential statement had been shredded before our eyes.

A friend from out of town gives a dinner for a French journalist at the Watergate. The building is now a landmark. Airline pilots include it, along with the Washington Monument and the Capitol, in their talks as they circle Washington. Taxi drivers point it out to tourists; some tourists are disappointed that they see nothing happening there, that it is not roped off. Watergate matchbooks and menus are prized souvenirs.

The French journalist asked what, exactly, "Watergate" is. His question underlined the problem of defining the issue. "Watergate" no longer stood for just the break-in and tapping of the Democratic headquarters, but it was still the word used to cover a number of real and alleged deeds. The issue had changed, but our language for it had not.

Some asked "Who did it?" as if we were still talking about a "third-rate burglary." We had no language to define precisely, and in fact we could not yet be sure, what "it" was. Some of the possibilities still sounded too dramatic, disturbing, hard to assimilate. A secret police force run out of the White House? The fixing of one party's nominating process by the other? Grand-scale selling of government decisions in exchange for campaign contributions? There was also, in talking about "it," the problem of drawing lines. Spying on the other party, trying to influence its primaries, arranging government benefits for contributors, wiretapping and gathering information on journalists and other troublemakers—all were known to have gone on before. Where were the lines between the disagreeable and the unacceptable? Should we have drawn them sooner?

May 8. Some of the stories contain startling irony. The Washington *Post* prints the text of Howard Hunt's grand jury testimony. Hunt says that, acting on instructions from Charles Colson, and drawing on his own CIA experience, he prepared phony cables linking the Kennedy Administration with the assassination of Diem. There were "technical problems," Hunt testified, referring perhaps unconsciously to a decisive moment in Richard Nixon's career, "because after the Alger Hiss case, everyone was typewriter-conscious."

Someone in touch with the White House staff reports that the mood there varies and that today it's cheerful. They think the case will blow over. There comes to mind the Graustarkian uniforms the White House guards wore for a while, until the laughter reached even the President's ears.

The Op-Ed page of the Washington *Post* has the following two columns, the first above the second: Joseph Kraft: "Restaffing the White House"; Victor Zorza: "The Power Shuffle at the Kremlin."

On the page behind that, a page often overlooked, there is, in a roundup of several items, the news that a Senate committee will vote to give the President authority to ration all forms of energy. (Not long ago, the "energy crisis" was on the front pages regularly.) The President is to be given another emergency power. At the same time, another Senate committee is studying the emergency powers he already has. They have found more than six hundred of them. Because we are still in the state of "national emergency" declared during the Korean War, the powers could be used by the President at any time. They include the power to send troops anywhere in the world, and to declare martial law anywhere in the United States.

The New York *Times* discloses that the Presi-

dent, "invoking national security, sought on at least two occasions within the last two weeks to prevent the release to the court of details of the burglary at the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist."

The contest over Watergate between the *Times* and the *Post*, which has won the Pulitzer Prize for its coverage of the story, is watched as avidly as a football championship playoff. Reporters for other papers are under pressure from their editors to come up with exclusives about Watergate. It is a dangerous time for the journalists; some say that they are fed false stories by people seeking to set them up for discrediting.

May 9. Vice President Agnew has attacked the Washington *Post*. Ziegler announces the number of letters and telegrams of support that have been coming in. Immediately, the reporters ask if the White House sent any of them. Letters and telegrams of support have gone the way of body counts.

Egil Krogh, who recently resigned as Undersecretary of Transportation, is interviewed on the nightly news programs. Krogh had directed the work of "the plumbers." He says that Ehrlichman did not know that the CIA had been involved. He appears to be protecting his old friend, with whom he practiced law in Seattle, and for whom he worked at the White House.

In his first years at the White House, "Bud" Krogh was given to earnest conversations about where the country was headed. He expressed concern that the President's strong anti-crime and anti-Communist stances were divisive. But Krogh was also very impressed with Ehrlichman, and with the President. In 1970, he told me about accompanying the President in his predawn visit to students protesting the Cambodian invasion, to the Capitol, and then to the Mayflower Hotel for breakfast. At the Capitol, the President encountered a charwoman who asked him to sign her Bible. As he did so, the President said that his mother had been a saint. "You be a saint," the President said to the charwoman.

Now here is Krogh on his lawn, on television. He had done what he had been told to do. His resignation letter said that he had made an error in judgment, but that he had acted out of the "highest sense of right." On television, he says he wants to be part of the "healing process."

Today, Elliot Richardson told the members of the Senate Judiciary Committee to reject his nomination to be Attorney General if they question his integrity. Perhaps it is a ploy, or perhaps in his Brahmin pride he does not understand that his integrity is not the issue, or perhaps he does not know that his integrity is nevertheless in question. His defense of Administration positions on busing and bombing had tarnished his reputation in the liberal-moderate constituency from which he had come, and which could decide his political future. Richardson had told the President that he did not want to be Attorney General, and now he is fighting for the job. He is caught in a struggle between the committee and the White House. It is possible that even if he wins, he loses. Watergate may destroy the reputation of anyone who gets near it.

There is a serious, built-in conflict of interest in the role of the Attorney General of the United States. He is to be at once the chief legal adviser to the President, and the chief enforcer of the laws of the land—simultaneously the President's lawyer and the people's lawyer. Unfortunately, these roles can conflict. Moreover, it has become the job to which Presidents have often appointed their closest political advisers. The Justice Department can gain access to highly important and sensitive information; its powers are particularly subject to political uses. In its enforcement of the laws, the Department, of necessity, administers selective justice. In making decisions about how to proceed on questions of civil rights, civil liberties, tax, antitrust, and criminal cases, the Department can have a profound effect on social and economic policy.

May 10. The Washington *Post* reports that Frank Wills, the guard who discovered the break-in at the Watergate, has hired a lawyer and is charging "honorariums" for interviews. A record company has agreed to pay Wills $300 to put his picture on an album cover.

Why shouldn't Wills profit from this? Others will—especially the lawyers. Even the lawyers are getting lawyers.

John Mitchell, the former Attorney General, and Maurice Stans, the former Secretary of Commerce and Nixon fund-raiser, are indicted, along with financier Robert Vesco, for conspiracy to defraud the U.S. government and obstruction of justice. This may be just the first in a series of indictments for Mitchell. We had heard it was coming, but still there is shock, perhaps a healthy sign; we are not yet numb.

Flashback: My interview with Mitchell, early in the first term of the Nixon Administration. He sat there, unsmiling, looking at me through his narrow eyes, puffing his pipe and saying little. When I asked about campus disorders he talked about "subversives," and when I asked him about civil rights, he was impatient. "After all," he said, "we're not a social agency." Flashback: A Justice Department official from an earlier administration telling me in 1969 that what worried him most

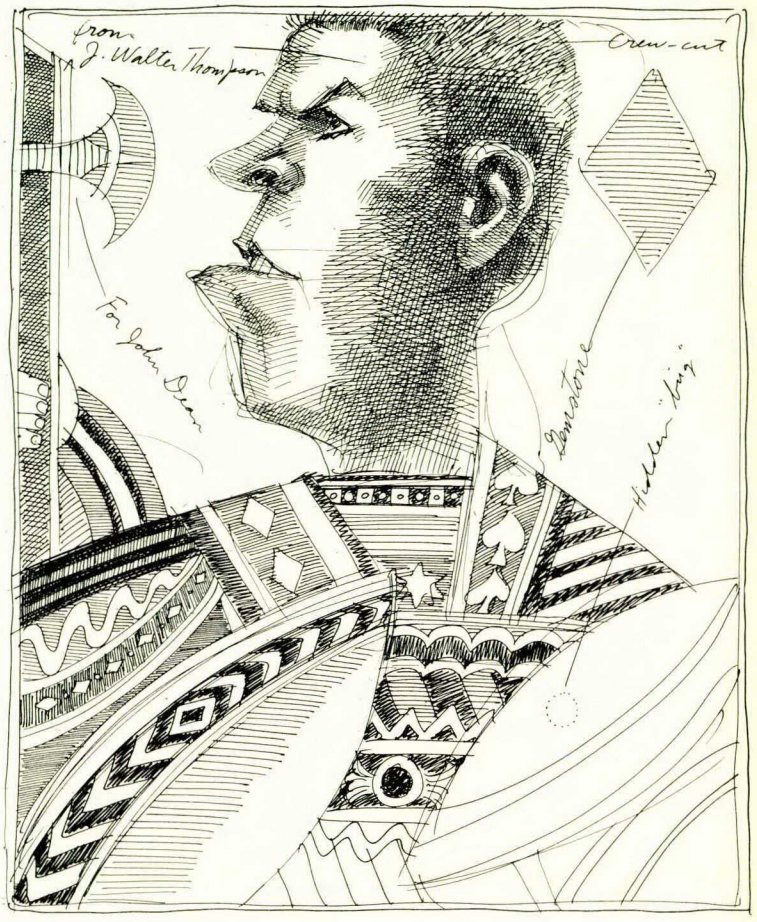
about the new group was that it might read the FBI reports, which lean to the conspiratorial view of things, and believe them. "If you believed the FBI," he said, "you would think that everything was being done from a phone booth in Cuba."

Other items on the nightly news programs:

The President has decided to drop the idea of a super-Cabinet. This is to be a signal that the President is ending the isolation which many say brought on Watergate. But will the President really be less reclusive? Can a man who has been lonely and suspicious for so long change now? And how, exactly, will he coordinate the workings of the various departments, with their overlapping and underlapping responsibilities? Or will he try? Through Haldeman and Ehrlichman the President had built a government within a government, and now that has collapsed.

The House of Representatives has voted to deny funds for the bombing in Cambodia. This is the House's first antiwar vote. The Senate has voted to limit the President's power to impound funds.

May 11. It is oddly like the time that the Pentagon Papers were being published in the newspapers almost two years ago. A careful reading of the morning papers can require an entire day. Today, there is a story about Charles Colson's interview with the FBI. Colson says he was told by Ehrlichman and Dean to keep quiet about the break-in of Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office. Colson is one of the curious, elusive figures in this whole affair. We know that he brought Hunt to the White House and, according to Hunt, asked him to forge the Vietnam cables. Colson used to disavow knowing what Hunt did after he got to the White House. During his White House career, Colson was understood to be doing delicate political jobs. Colson achieved a certain fame for his memorandum stating that he would "walk over my grandmother, if necessary" to reelect Richard Nixon. Before the Watergate dam burst, Colson left the White House to establish law practice in Washington. As he settled into his new offices, he told an interviewer: "What I miss most is the opportunity to be with the President and talk with him every day." Lines like that would not hurt his legal practice. But Watergate would, and as it broke, Colson was busily paddling away from the scene. His law partners announced to the newspapers that Colson had passed a lie detector test about Watergate. In late April, the *Post* ran a story saying that Colson had warned the President last December that Mr. Nixon's staff was deeply involved in the bugging of the Watergate and the cover-up. The story was a classic of the Watergate genre. It cited "a Colson associate" as its source, and then said Colson denied the story, and then said that the "Colson associate" had said that Colson would deny the story in order to protect (1) the President and (2) Colson.



A government within a government . . .

Richardson is doing some paddling, too. He told the Senate Judiciary Committee yesterday, the papers report, that he felt "betrayed" by the "shoddy standards and morals displayed by people whose activities have recently come to light."

There has been another change in atmosphere. The question is being raised as to whether the President "can govern." It is being asked by many of the same people who were concerned, at the beginning of the year, that he was governing excessively. We are hooked, it seems, on the presidency. That wasn't the way it was supposed to work.

It is becoming fashionable to say that Congress is reasserting its powers. But its recent votes against the President have been less exercises in courage than instinctive reactions to his weakened position. The long-range effectiveness of the Congress is still in question.

The evening's news:

The Pentagon announces that the bombing of

Cambodia will continue, despite the action of the House.

The judge in the Ellsberg trial has dismissed the case. Ellsberg had been overheard in a wiretap of the phone of an aide to Henry Kissinger, and the government says it cannot find the records of the tap. That is the last straw for the judge, who says that the government's behavior "offended a sense of justice."

May 12. Pat Gray says that he told the President in July, 1972, that he was "confused" by the role of White House aides in the Watergate investigations, and that their actions might lead to trouble for Mr. Nixon.

May 13. The official confirmation that the telephones of reporters and White House aides have been tapped is more disturbing than might have been expected. For years, it had been assumed that reporters' and officials' wires were tapped, but the facts on this were never clear. Paranoia was fashionable, and the assumption that one was tapped was a mark of self-esteem. It was considered amusing, in the course of telephone conversations, to say something to the (presumably) phantom wiretapper. Even now, some reporters are envious of those who have been named as having been tapped. Yet, the transfer from fantasy to reality is difficult. Abstract invasions of privacy are easier to live with than real ones. The outer borders of fantasy expand as reality begins to fill them in. Strange phone calls are given more afterthought than usual. One thinks again about the time one's office was broken into.

May 14. *Newsweek* reports that Dean has said that the President never asked him for a report on Watergate, and he never wrote one.

William Ruckelshaus, the Acting FBI Director, announces to a press conference that missing wiretap logs have been found in John Ehrlichman's safe. Ruckelshaus says that he and FBI agents had practically to "arm wrestle" with the Secret Service to get the wiretap files. Ruckelshaus ends his press conference with the comment, "My departure may be more rapid than you think." The press likes him, and the line goes over well. The press has become a kind of moral arbiter in this whole affair. Those who have cultivated and have been accessible to the press are faring better than those who have not. It is as if there were some sort of equation between accessibility and morality.

Some reporters are having difficulty accepting that Kissinger knew that his own staff members were being tapped, and that he read logs of what was said. Kissinger has been especially successful at cultivating reporters, and he has been treated well in the press. Now that he is in trouble, reporters are calling Kissinger and Kissinger is calling reporters and the reporters are calling each other to compare notes about what he said to each of them. They say stories sometimes vary.

The stock market went down eighteen points today. The price of gold went up to over $100 an ounce, for the first time in history.

May 15. Senator Symington reveals that Richard Helms and his deputy attended a meeting at which Haldeman asked them to ask the FBI to call off its investigation. Symington says that there was continuing pressure on the CIA by the White House to assist in the cover-up.

Symington commends Helms's behavior, because Helms permitted only limited cooperation. Now that the affair has reached beyond Nixon men to people such as Helms and Kissinger, men with whom senators like Symington more readily identify, the senators are troubled.

Some questions will not go away: Why did Helms and Kissinger not raise more objections, or leave? Both men are said to have believed that they would be replaced by people who would have gone along with worse things. They may be correct. But what if they had spoken out? What would any of us have done?

Ruckelshaus withdraws his comment about "arm wrestling" with the Secret Service. He said he had engaged in "hyperbole."

The Senate Appropriations Committee, in an unprecedented action, has voted 24-0 to cut off all funds for bombing Cambodia and Laos.

May 16. The *Times* reports that "the only report that President Nixon received last year on possible staff involvement in the Watergate break-in was an informal report from John D. Ehrlichman." The *Times* also reports that the President authorized the wiretapping of more than a dozen subordinates on the National Security Council and in the Pentagon beginning in 1969. The tapping was undertaken after word "leaked" to the press that B-52's were bombing inside Cambodia. It is not clear why this disclosure was considered a threat to national security. The Cambodians must have been aware of the bombing.

At the White House, Leonard Garment briefs the press about the President's proposal for a commission to study the reform of election procedures. (The commission can have a Republican majority.) It is hard to believe that the White House believes

that it can achieve very much by playing this old record. But the President and his aides also thought that John Connally could join the White House without relinquishing his law practice. Connally clientele did substantial business with the government. The White House also suggested to Richardson some candidates for the role of special prosecutor. Yesterday afternoon, Ziegler called in the officers of the White House Correspondents Association. He told them that the President had been reading the transcripts of the White House briefings, and was very concerned about the impression of evasiveness they gave. What, asked Ziegler, could the White House do? "Come clean," replied the reporters.

Today, Ziegler's face seems puffed. Before, when Ziegler had been nonresponsive and uninformative, the reporters didn't like it, but they did not blame him. Most of the time, the role-playing went on—the reporters asking questions, Ziegler giving nonanswers—with a kind of good-humored acceptance that this was the way it was. But now the reporters feel that they have been had. Their pent-up frustration at being un-, and mis-, informed is let out. They shout questions at Ziegler, and Ziegler strains to answer in his convoluted style. ("The information that we referred to was based on the understanding that an investigation had taken place and no one was involved.") From time to time he ventures a smile and a gee-fellas-this-is-a-game-and-we're-all-in-it-together-I'm-your-old-buddy-Ron shrug, but the reporters can no longer be humored. "Ron, it's your credibility that's in question now," one says. He never would have said that before.

In the Washington *Evening Star-News,* Betty Beale, the social columnist, reports that "diplomats are not the only people in Washington appalled at efforts to fault Henry Kissinger for the wiretaps that followed national security leaks."

Watergate is causing serious problems in the preparation of the next edition of the Green Book, Washington's social register.

At dinner, someone says that Washington needs a baseball team to take its mind off Watergate.

May 17. A lovely spring morning, exactly eleven months after the break-in at the Watergate. The Ervin hearings begin.

Ervin is the lion of Washington now. He seems to enjoy his celebrity. Ervin's reputation as a "great constitutional lawyer" is in part a matter of relativity—he has shown more interest in constitutional issues than many of his Senate colleagues—and in part a result of his habit of referring to the lawbooks during lengthy speeches opposing civil rights measures. His Southern colleagues referred to him as the "great constitutional lawyer"—"I yield now to the great constitutional lawyer from North Carolina," they would say—and the term stuck. Ervin is a bit of a primitive; his uncluttered mind focuses on basic points. His constitutional conservatism led him to oppose civil rights, but also infringement of civil liberties, threats to the press, and executive encroachments on the prerogatives of the Congress. To his liberal colleagues, he was the perfect person to head an investigation of Watergate. They are probably right.

The Ervin hearings do not displace concurrent events concerning Watergate. "The Watergate bugging and the break-in into the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist," Bernstein and Woodward write in this morning's *Post,* "were part of an elaborate, continuous campaign of illegal and quasi-legal undercover operations conducted by the Nixon administration since 1969, according to highly placed sources." Earlier events, such as the stonings of Mr. Nixon at San Jose, California, and Burlington, Vermont, in 1970, are reconsidered. Which events had been real or staged? How many "demonstrators" who appeared on our television screens were undercover agents, wearing perhaps drip-dry, zip-up hippie suits, and borrowed wigs?

Reporters are advised to get to the Senate caucus room by 8:00 A.M. to secure their seats for the Ervin hearings. It is, like the opening day of Congress, one of Washington's see-and-be-seen scenes. *Women's Wear Daily* is there. The senators who serve on the Ervin committee enter the room just before 10:00 A.M. There is an unwritten rule that a politician must exploit an opportunity without appearing to be an opportunist. Lowell Weicker, relatively new at the business, has on occasion verged on breaking the rule. Howard Baker is more careful. (Flashback: The day the "Baker" buttons appeared, for a brief vice-presidential boomlet, at the 1968 Republican convention which nominated Richard Nixon.) The Democrats were chosen deliberately for their unlikely national prospects.

Dining at a restaurant with another reporter. A Cabinet officer materializes and seats himself at the table. After some pleasantries, he says: "I wonder if there are some other wiretap logs. Why would the taps have ended in February, 1971? Good-bye." And he is gone.

May 18. James McCord, today's star witness, does not disappoint the audience. His tale, told in his strange, high-pitched voice—of offers of executive clemency, of a note left in a mailbox, of instructions to go to the phone booth near the Blue Fountain Inn on Route 355, of a call from an un-

identified voice, of threats—electrifies the hearing room. Even the reporters are gaping, as they struggle to take down McCord's words. There is a propensity to believe him. McCord would do nicely as the bad guy gone straight. The press has a weakness for whistle-blowers.

Scandals need symbols. As McCord spoke of the telephone booth near the Blue Fountain Inn, one had a mental picture of photographers racing toward it. Even his description of an event as familiar as the Watergate break-in, with "surgical gloves," gave it new drama. People here used to wonder why the cash found in the shoe box of the late Illinois secretary of state Paul Powell had captured the imagination, while ITT, the milk case, "the wheat deal," and widespread flouting of campaign finance laws did not. These appeared to be at least as serious as accepting a vicuña coat, or a deep-freeze. But then the Watergate symbols materialized. There were the $100 bills. Suitcases. The Washington *Post* editorials, trying to keep the subject alive, began to talk about $100 bills "stashed" or "stuffed" in suitcases. Mexican laundry. Surgical gloves. It was not that Howard Hunt went to see Dita Beard; it was that Howard Hunt, wearing a red wig, went to see Dita Beard. Typewriters. Pumpkin papers. Pentagon Papers. Gemstone.

The politicians are nervous now that the spreading flood of Watergate will wash up over all of them. The taint of money in politics threatens the entire profession. The politicians fear a wave of anti-politics. Many Republicans are particularly eager to dissociate themselves from Watergate. Barry Goldwater's criticism of the White House bespoke deep-seated unease on Capitol Hill, and was a blow to Mr. Nixon.

Richardson's choice of Archibald Cox as special prosecutor is a nice finesse. Cox was Solicitor General under Attorney General Robert Kennedy, and so Edward Kennedy and his allies on the Judiciary Committee are now neutralized.

May 20. The General Accounting Office reports that Herbert Kalmbach, the President's lawyer, raised at least $210,000 last summer for the Watergate defendants or their attorneys.

Now John Mitchell has taken to the telephone. He has told Helen Thomas of UPI, his wife's phone-pal, that he will not be the "fall guy." Said the former Attorney General: "I've never stolen any money. The only thing I did was to try to get the President reelected. I never did anything mentally or morally wrong."

No facts have yet linked the President with either Watergate or the cover-up, but it seems that a kind of web, not at all made of tightly knit evidence, is closing around the President. Therefore, it is a matter of whether one believes that he knew, or that his highest aides spun a fantastic conspiracy without his knowledge. This is one central question, and it is as yet unanswered. Perhaps it never will be. The question floats above the facts. The facts are down there around calls from telephone booths, and missing files. A lot of people are waiting for some fact, or piece of testimony, that will topple the President. But that may never happen. It may end in ambiguity.

A conclusion may ride on the interplay of a few characters: Haldeman, Ehrlichman, Mitchell, perhaps others. Will one of the people around the President, who have been turning on each other, turn on him? Do they have anything to turn on him with? Does it matter?

There are those who say that what is happening is that the "Goldwater faction" of the party, or the "Ray Bliss [a former party chairman] faction," is fighting the "White House faction." (You see, Goldwater's friend, Kleindienst, was ousted.) What White House faction? It is said that one has to understand whether John Caulfield is a "Mitchell man" or a "Dean man." A month ago, *Dean* was a "Mitchell man." The scorecards keep obsolescing. Perhaps scorecards are irrelevant.

Some people say that we mustn't lose perspective. Our politics, they argue, are still very honest compared to those of Latin America. This is an odd, and novel, standard.

May 21. Julie Nixon Eisenhower is reported in the morning papers as having said that her father would not resign. Said Mrs. Eisenhower: "I don't think he'd ever bug out, so to speak."

The *Times* reports that the White House established a secret intelligence unit in 1970.

May 22. Symington has disclosed that a White House aide drafted a broad plan of domestic espionage in the summer of 1970, but J. Edgar Hoover raised "strong objections," and the plan was not implemented.

The Ervin hearings are beginning to backwards reel. McCord to Caulfield to Ulasewicz to Alch. A minor figure we have not heard of before is suddenly a *deus ex machina.* As each new figure surfaces, the intricacies of his relationships to other figures and events are examined in the hearings and the newspapers. It is taking on the characteristics of a Russian novel, requiring frequent reference to a list of the names and identities of the characters. Daniel Schorr carries a notebook containing 26 pages of names. Stories about Caulfield

take us back to earlier controversies surrounding C. Arnholt Smith, a San Diego businessman and a friend and financial supporter of Mr. Nixon. The human mind cannot make all of the connections. The Ervin committee is planning to computerize its information.

May 23. The President's astonishing 4000-word statement of explanation must have been issued in anticipation of further damage. (The Pentagon has a term for this sort of thing—"protective reaction.") The statement leaves the President open to further attack for both what it does and does not say. It is a fascinating document, worthy of lengthy study and exegesis. Now the President has confirmed that there were wiretaps; that an internal security plan—to include break-ins—had been drawn up by the White House but blocked by Hoover; that the White House had established its own "special investigations unit . . . to plug leaks of vital security information." He says that there may have been some covering up of Watergate by his aides, and that "unethical, as well as illegal activities" took place in the campaign. The statement raises two important questions. One, to which we may never know the answer, is how much the President believes of what he says about the many threats to national security. The other, which will be answered in time, is how far he might seek to carry the "national security" issue.

The issue has almost limitless possibilities. The "national security" threat could be attached to all manner of real and imagined enemies. Candidates: bureaucrats who leak information and journalists who print it; doves; demonstrators. "Elitists"? The media? "Soft-headed judges"? If there is a witch-hunt, how many will go along?

May 24. At the hairdresser's, a young lady is having her hair combed into a formal, upswept style. She is a schoolteacher from Chicago, and has flown to Washington at government expense to attend, with her boyfriend, tonight's party at the White House for the POW's.

At the White House briefing, Gerald Warren, the deputy press secretary, says that "we feel that we are in very good shape" on staffing the Administration. Warren explains the difference between "vacancies" and "unannounceds." He concedes that "we are a little behind" on ambassadorships. There is now a problem in awarding ambassadorships to contributors, and some wealthy would-be "Excellencies" are out of luck. One change, as a result of Watergate, in the way things are done.

There is no way of knowing now whether all of this will lead to real reform, or to greater apathy and cynicism and danger. To think about where we might be going, we have to consider where we have been. Last October, a wise and cool-headed man suggested at lunch one day that perhaps we were about to have the last election. "If I wanted to take over the country," he said, "I would checkmate every institution that could check me. I would intimidate the press, emasculate the Congress, subvert the system of justice, stifle the independence of the bureaucracy, and use a covert apparatus to inform on my opponents." The point is not whether my friend's prescription fitted what was happening. The point is that the atmosphere was such that level-headed people considered that possibility. We have had some disturbing insights into the uses to which power can be put. We have had to readjust old assumptions about what can and cannot happen here.

There is a lot of brave talk now about how Watergate shows that the institutions—the courts, the Congress, the press, the bureaucracy—stood up to great dangers. But they almost didn't, and only small proportions of them did. Moreover, a number of practices which Watergate threw into focus have been accepted for a long time. It was not news that money buys access and government decisions; that there are enormous powers available to

"The only thing I did was to try to get the President reelected."

a chief executive who chooses to use them; that decisions that affect our fortunes and our freedom can be made in secrecy by people whom we cannot hold accountable.

Bernard Barker tells the Ervin committee that in breaking into the Democratic headquarters, "I was not there to think. . . . In a paramilitary operation, you don't question the orders of your superiors."

The nightly news programs show the President telling cheering POW's that it is time "to quit making national heroes out of those who steal secrets and publish them in the newspapers."

May 27. When the *Santa Ana Register* said a few days ago that the Nixon house in San Clemente had been purchased with campaign funds, the theory went around that the story was the work of a department of dis-information. It was, some thought, a successful planting of an incorrect story in order to discredit the press. It seemed inconceivable that we would come full circle on the matter of private gifts. Ron Ziegler said the story was a "total fabrication." Now the White House is explaining how Robert Abplanalp, perfector of the aerosol spray valve, helped the Nixons buy the house. The White House will not say who else might have joined Abplanalp in the venture. The story lacks the shock it might have if Abplanalp were in, say, oil, instead of aerosol spray, or if he were a controversial figure. He is obscure, known mainly for his Grand Cay island retreat where the President seeks isolation. The story is a nuisance, threatening to confuse the issue. It had been a truism of Watergate that such a banal matter as private gain was not involved. Have we come back to the cloth coat?

May 28. It is the third rainy day of this Memorial Day weekend. Most of the politicians are out of town. There is mercifully little in the papers about Watergate, except for the columnists wrestling over Henry Kissinger's soul. General Alexander Haig has been calling journalists to say that Kissinger is a national asset, and that if there are too many critical stories, Kissinger might leave the government. Unattributed stories are beginning to appear which say that certain former Kissinger aides had to be "eased out" as a result of what was heard in the wiretaps of their phones. Some former Kissinger aides are considering a suit against the government. The taps were conducted under a doctrine, announced by Attorney General Mitchell, that the government could wiretap, without obtaining a court order, those who constituted a domestic threat to national security. The Burger Court overruled him, 8-0, in June, 1972. The President's statement of a few days ago insists that the taps were "legal at the time." There is some debate over whether a policy pronounced legal by the Attorney General, later found illegal by the courts, was ever legal.

There has been another atmospheric shift which may not have anything to do with reality. Conversations now center on the question of who will be the Republican leaders to go to the President and tell him that he must resign.

The *Evening Star-News*' banner headline is that Washington will get a baseball team: the San Diego Padres, owned by C. Arnholt Smith. They won't take many minds off Watergate.

May 29. It promises to be a quieter week than recent ones. The Ervin committee hearings are in recess. The President is in town for the day. Tomorrow he goes to Iceland, to meet with French President Pompidou. William Rogers, the Secretary of State, is back from Latin America. Congressional leaders are to be briefed on these world events, and on Kissinger's recent meetings in Paris. It is as if we were in a time capsule, almost as if nothing had happened.

May 30. Ziegler says it would be "constitutionally inappropriate" for the President to testify before federal prosecutors. "It would," he said, "do violence to the separation of powers."

May 31. The Senate votes 63-19 to withhold funds for bombing in Cambodia and Laos.

The Associated Press reports that Robert Abplanalp received a federal bank charter after he bought the land for the Nixons in San Clemente.

The Securities and Exchange Commission is suing C. Arnholt Smith for fraud.

John Ehrlichman's testimony about his role in trying to involve the CIA in the cover-up impugns both the CIA and the President. Ehrlichman's statement suggests that everything is indeed doubling back on itself. The President, he says, wondered whether CIA officials were covering up for subordinates.

Said Ehrlichman, "The President said substantially: A man makes a grave mistake in covering up for subordinates. That was President Truman's error in the Hiss case when he instructed the FBI not to cooperate." □