

Watergate Mood Building In Washington

One week into the Carter Administration, the aroma of Watergate is already perceptible on the Washington political scene. The sentiment that's building behind the scenes, revealed in informal conversations on Capitol Hill in particular — "The bumbling stupidity of this Carter crew is more than enough to frighten anyone. Something's got to be done about these idiots."

ITEM: Dark clouds are forming around the Secretary of State Cyrus Vance on the eve of his trip to the Mideast and Moscow. Vance's most intimate and long-standing legal associates, Harry Heller and the Simpson, Thatcher and Bartlett law firm, are defendants in a fraud suit resulting from a \$100 million oil tax shelter swindle dating back to 1974. And that's not all. Joel Dolkart, one of Vance's senior partners, has been indicted by a grand jury on 89 counts of grand larceny, forgery and filing false income tax returns, in a case where Dolkart stands accused of secretly pocketing \$1.5 million in fees from the Gulf and Western Corporation. Many believe that a full investigation into Simpson Thatcher's activities would create a very sticky situation for Vance ... a bigger scandal for Carter's Trilateral cabinet than the Sorenson leaks.

ITEM: Well-placed sources have indicated that the Federal Election Commission may run into trouble

on its Congressional appropriation in the wake of attempts by Carter's FEC "plumbers unit" to harass and intimidate contributors to the U.S. Labor Party's 1976 presidential campaign. Many on Capitol Hill recall the post-election FEC snooping into House Majority Leader Jim Wright's finances, and believe that the attack on the Labor Party is only the prelude to a major FEC assault on Congressmen unwilling to go along with Carter's plans. "Things could get pretty

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dirty if the FEC keeps this stuff up," one source commented. "I have had a look at their lists of Carter's campaign disbursements — now *there's* a real scandal."

ITEM: Insiders are reporting Congress in "a hostile mood" which could spell big trouble for Carter's package of "emergency" legislation — especially since Senate Majority Leader Robert Byrd's remarks on the "strained relations" between the Administration and Capitol Hill. "My God, Carter is stupid," one Congressional staff exclaimed to Washington Week after hearing of Byrd's comments. "To have provoked a major row with his Majority Leader of his own party so early in the game — it's absolutely with-

out precedent. And believe me, no Senate Majority Leader would say the things Byrd said without counting heads first."

ITEM: Carter's Congressional supporters are beginning to crack under pressure. Take Senator Durkin of New Hampshire, who is sponsoring an amendment to the Schlesinger energy bill to give the Carter team special powers to "investigate a producers' conspiracy." After several irate Senators vigorously attacked Durkin's plan on the Senate floor this week, the jerk in Durkin appeared in full bloom. "Well maybe we need fission, maybe we need fusion, I don't know what I know," he babbled. "I only know that we need to know, we need to know." Laughter erupted in the aisles of the Senate, and one aide was overheard remarking "He's waving his hands around like someone having a premature ejaculation." "For some Senators, like Frank Church, that would be quite a compliment" another staffer replied.

OVERHEARD AT THE INAUGURAL GALA: The escort of a prominent D.C. journalist observed three of Carter's cabinet heavyweights huddled in discussion as the festivities swept on around them. "Well, gentlemen," she inquired sweetly, "Is this a meeting of the National Security Council?"

"NO," one snapped back angrily, "It's the Trilateral Commission."