

Hunt calls 'blackmail money' collection of 'overdue bill'

WASHINGTON (AP) — E. Howard Hunt Jr. testified Tuesday that the money demand which former President Richard M. Nixon viewed as blackmail last year was just an attempt to collect an overdue bill.

Hunt, testifying at the Watergate cover-up trial, said it was neither extortion nor blackmail.

Following him on the witness stand was Jeb Stuart Magruder, who said that former Atty. Gen. John N. Mitchell once expressed annoyance about the results of bugs and wiretaps planted at Democratic party headquarters by agents of the Nixon re-election committee.

Magruder, formerly Mitchell's deputy in the 1972 presidential campaign, said Mitchell told chief Watergate burglar G. Gordon Liddy "that he was dissatisfied with the product Liddy was producing from wiretaps and photographs."

Magruder said Liddy told Mitchell "he was going to correct the problem."

Asked whether the problem was corrected, Magruder replied:

"Yes. We learned on the morning of June 17 that Liddy had not corrected the problem but created a problem."

June 17, 1972, was Saturday morning when police arrested five men in the act of burglarizing the Democratic party headquarters and trying to replace a telephone bug that had failed.

Magruder, who pleaded guilty to participating in the Watergate cover-up and to helping in the planning of the burglary, was the third witness in the trial of Mitchell, John D. Ehrlichman, H. R. Haldeman, Robert C. Mardian and Kenneth W. Parkinson. All are charged with conspiracy to obstruct justice.

Magruder, 39, has been in prison since June 4 on his guilty plea.

During 35 minutes of questioning before the day's session ended, he covered the three meetings where Liddy presented various political espionage plans to Mitchell.

He said they also discussed plans by which Mitchell would have "deniability" — which Magruder said meant "if anyone was apprehended, Mr. Mitchell could deny knowing anything."

Hunt was asked during cross-examination whether he had blackmailed the White House.

"You don't consider your comments to disclose seamy things you did unless you got \$50,000, \$60,000, \$72,000 as blackmail?" the

Watergate break-in conspirator was asked at the Watergate cover-up trial.

"No, sir," said Hunt.

"What do you consider it, an investment plan?"

"I consider that I was in the position of a bill collector trying to get those who had made prior commitments," Hunt said.

Hunt underwent cross-examination on this second day as a witness at trial of John N. Mitchell, H. R. Haldeman, John D. Ehrlichman, Robert C. Mardian and Kenneth W. Parkinson, all charged with conspiracy to obstruct justice.

Hunt had testified that in March 1973 when he was about to be sentenced for his role as foreman of the Watergate break-in team he had word relayed to the White House that he wanted \$122,000 to pay his lawyers. He said he threatened to disclose other covert jobs that he had done for the White House.

The White House tape transcript of a conversation former White House counsel John W. Dean III had with Nixon on March 21 showed that both Dean and the President viewed the demand as blackmail.

"You don't feel you were selling your silence?" William Hundley, attorney for Mitchell, asked.

"No sir," said Hunt, "that was a

different matter."

On Monday Hunt testified he had lied at least a dozen times to grand juries and had decided to tell the truth finally after reading the White House transcripts last summer. He said he decided then that the people he was protecting were not worth it.

Asked by Hundley whether he would have felt differently had his demands been met, Hunt replied: "I felt a rude awakening."

"I read the President's contemptuous reference to those of us who had gone to prison as idiots and jackasses. I realized there had been a wild scramble going on for months in the White House to protect themselves and very little thought had been given to our plight, much less to the money which was the easier thing for them to give to ease our burden."

On the evening of March 21, 1973, after the President said the blackmail money could be raised, \$75,000 was delivered to Hunt's attorney, William O. Bittman, and Hunt said he got the money the following day.

That money delivery figures largely in the charges against three of the five defendants because the government said it was paid to keep Hunt quiet.

Supreme Court says names can be asked of political printers

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court has reaffirmed its earlier order permitting Texas officials to require printers of political advertising in the current election campaign to identify themselves.

The court declined Tuesday to vacate an order it issued Oct. 11 staying a decision of a three-judge federal court in Houston, Tex., that the requirement is unconstitutional.

Attorneys for the Printing Industries of the Gulf Coast asked the court to "reconsider its precipitate decision." They said they submitted a response to the Texas request for a stay, but the court acted before receiving the response.

They said granting the stay would be "manifestly unfair" because printers who completed their work after the law was declared unconstitutional, but before the stay was granted, would be exempt from the requirement while others would not.

The requirement is contained in a new campaign reporting and disclosure law passed by the Texas Legislature.

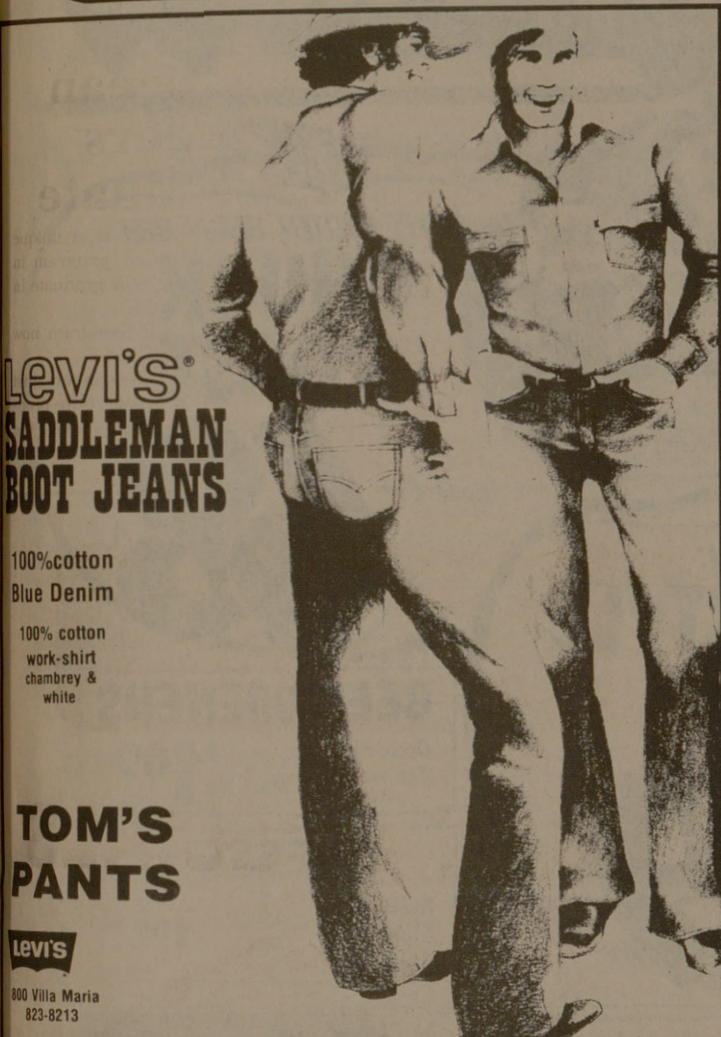
The printing industry contends it violates freedom of the press guarantees in the constitution.

The law requires that all political advertising bear the name and address of the printer.



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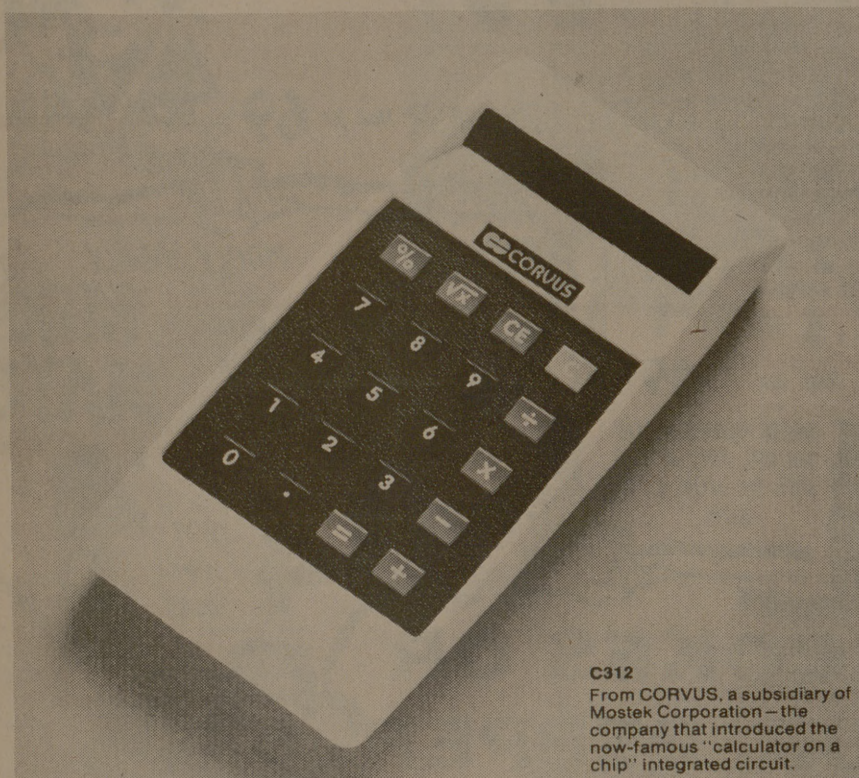
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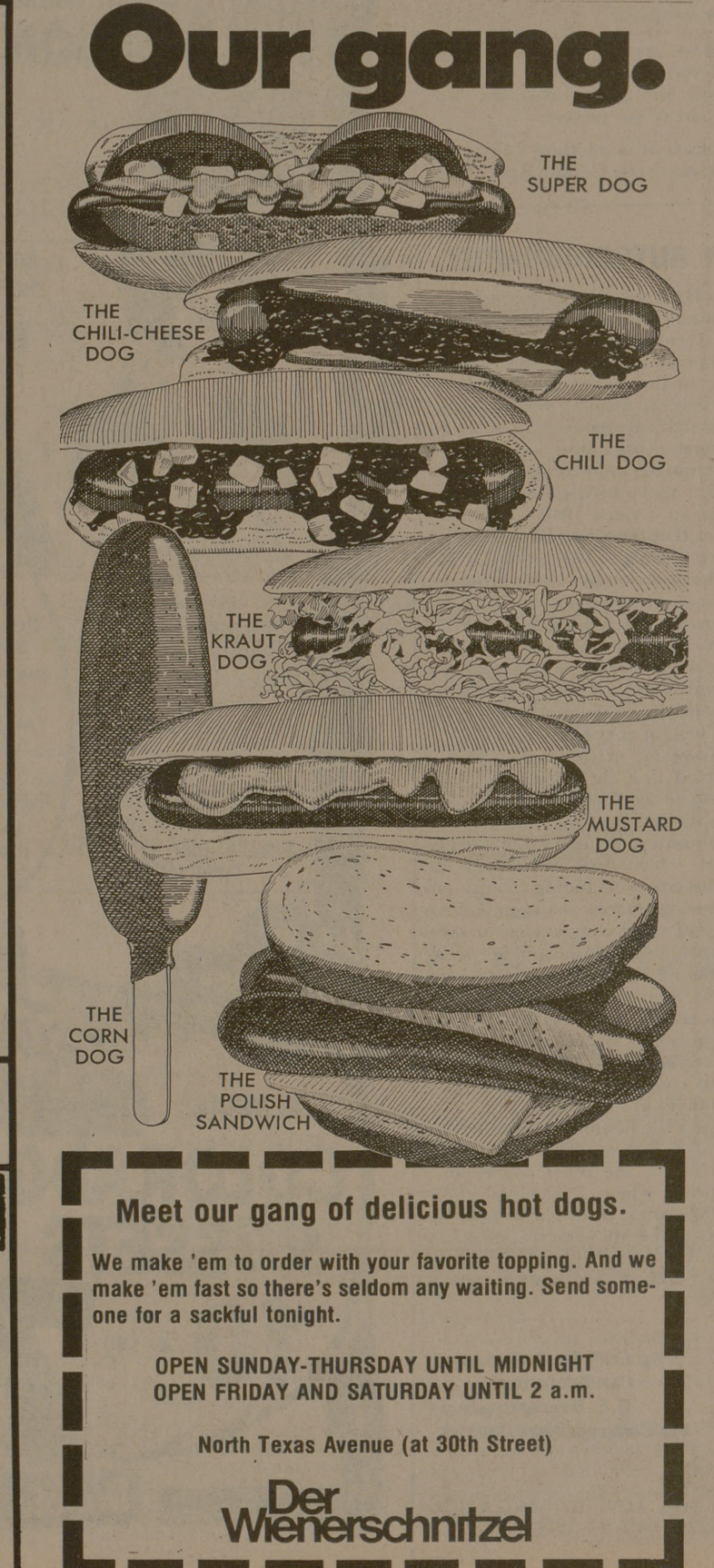
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