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# Senate Acting as if Indiscretion Were the Better Part of Valor

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**PSST!**

while Goldwater and Moynihan mentioned Helms, they reached no conclusions about his guilt and recommended no action.

Even so, the letter to the leaders prompted one from them in which they caution senators against divulging information that might be classified, although they do not say anyone has done so.

It's a pretty dramatic contrast to what happened to one legislator who spilled the beans on the CIA.

In 1975, a liberal, Rep. Michael Harrington (D-Mass.), revealed the agency's role in the overthrow of Salvador Allende of Chile. The House Armed Services Committee voted to rebuke Harrington and denied him further access to classified material. He was under a cloud for months until the House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct decided to dismiss the charges.

The difference is that Harrington said that he got his information from classified documents and Helms has not. Although it is said that in two lengthy Senate speeches he appeared to be quoting from transcripts of intelligence committee briefings, Helms insists that he got his information from a radio broadcast in El Salvador. No one seems to know the date or content of the broadcast.

The Senate ethics committee apparently has no intention of looking into the allegations against Helms or into Helms' countercharge that Moynihan leaked the letter.

None of this has deterred Hunt, who has lost his once-huge lead over the darling of the Moral Majority, from attacking Helms as someone who does not play by the Senate rules. Patriotic Tar Heelers are said to be incensed by Helms' whistle-blowing on the CIA and increasingly to be baffled by

his deep involvement in the affairs of D'Aubuisson's far-right ARENA Party, which is, of course, committed to the extermination of the guerrillas.

The White House is irritated by Helms' heavy-handed encouragement of D'Aubuisson's cries that he was robbed.

Duarte's election was a political necessity if Congress is to vote further military aid to El Salvador. Just about everybody except Helms is glad Duarte won. And while a nearly million-dollar CIA contribution is more or less acknowledged, the "made in the U.S.A." label Helms is plastering on Duarte's victory does not help.

In his first appearance in this country this week, a "Meet the Press" broadcast, Duarte seemed to be showing more appreciation for which side his bread is buttered on than the resolve to end the war and the "death squads" he exhibited while campaigning.

The conciliatory streak has been bleached out. He will talk to the rebels but will not share power with them. He endorses the covert war against Nicaragua, which would seem to cancel his previously announced plan to go to Managua for dialogue with the Sandinistas.

The White House, which is rabidly security conscious, has had nothing to say about Helms' sabotage efforts. Keeping the Senate in Republican hands has taken precedence over the need to keep its secrets.

A great silence has fallen in the Senate over the strange case of the allegations that Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) blabbed secrets of the Select Committee on Intelligence on the floor.

Back home in North Carolina, however, where Helms is fighting for his political life, his alleged indiscretion is becoming an issue, which seems to be the real reason that no one in the Senate wants to move against him for his embarrassing accusations about the Salvadoran election. Helms claims that the CIA bought victory for Jose Napoleon Duarte, who, as it happens, is a guest in Washington this week.

Democrats, who find Helms obnoxious on many counts, have held their fire because they fear that if they haul him up before the Select Committee on Ethics, North Carolina voters might see it as a blatantly partisan move intended to help Gov. James B. Hunt, the moderate Democrat who is in a neck-and-neck race with the ultra-conservative Helms.

Republicans, who are grinding their teeth over Helms' declaration that Roberto D'Aubuisson, Duarte's beaten right-wing rival, is "someone who openly espoused the principles of the Republican Party of the United States," are nonetheless rallying to Helms for the larger good of reelecting him and keeping Republican control of the Senate.

Sen. Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.), chairman of the Senate intelligence committee and usually a stern defender of state secrets, went to North Carolina over the weekend and put in a good word for the embattled Helms. He said that a letter that he and Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-N.Y.), vice chairman of the intelligence committee, wrote to Senate Majority Leader Howard H. Baker Jr. (R-Tenn.) and Senate Minority Leader Robert C. Byrd (D-W.Va.) contained no rebuke of Helms for disclosing classified information.

The letter is classified. The only copy of it reportedly is locked in the intelligence committee's safe. Someone who has seen it, but who cannot be identified, said that