

From the Office of
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"PROJECT UNCOVER" HEAD BLASTS PRESIDENT'S EFFORT TO 'SHIFT THE
BLAME AND GRAB CREDIT' IN ESTES CASE

Rep. Bob Dole (R. of Kans.), director of "Project Uncover," today sharply criticized President Kennedy's "awkward attempts to shift the blame away from the Government officials who aided indicted crop speculator Billie Sol Estes while at the same time claiming credit for the indictment. "

The Kansas Republican, a member of the House Agriculture Committee, said: "The credit for exposing this mess belongs chiefly to the press, particularly to several Texas newspapers. The Federal Government was a latecomer in the exposure of Mr. Estes. Its indictment came after the exposure. Moreover, I think that the President should be aware of the fact that the Estes case first attracted national attention after two Republican Congressional leaders, Representative Halleck and Senator Dirksen, called for a thorough investigation at a Joint House-Senate GOP Leadership press conference.

"As a matter of fact, this demand by the GOP leadership for a full investigation was made necessary by the fact that it had become plain that the Democrats in the Administration and in the Congress were dragging their feet in this matter.

"The most noteworthy efforts of the Administration in the Estes matter have been directed not at providing full public disclosure but rather in the opposite direction. First, we had the open abuse of one of the Agriculture Department's employees, Mr. N. Battle Hales, solely because he insisted on pursuing the Estes case to its full extent.

"Now we are told by the President that Secretary Freeman, who appointed Estes to the National Cotton Advisory Council after he had been fined \$48,000 by the Department for violation of Department regulations, enjoys his full confidence. And among the reasons he cites for his confidence in Freeman are the rather irrelevant grounds that the Secretary once played football at the University of Minnesota, is a war veteran and former Democratic Governor of Minnesota. Instead of looking in Mr. Freeman's scrapbook, the President might take a hard, cold look at Freeman's ^{handling} ~~history~~ of the Estes case. The Estes case is a matter that calls for the most careful study by the President, the Department and the Congress. The integrity of all three is at stake. It certainly deserves more consideration than it has yet received."

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