

Big Smear Campaign Nears End

By Drew Pearson

One week from today, the American public will know the final results of one of the bitterest, most below-the-belt Presidential campaigns in history.

As I read the polls and the political opinions expressed both privately and publicly in various areas, ranging from North Dakota



Pearson

to Florida, Lyndon B. Johnson will be elected by one of the heaviest margins in history.

The State of Arizona, home of Barry M. Goldwater, seems likely to desert him.

If this estimate is anywhere near correct, it will be despite one of the filthiest series of smears launched against any President, on a mass basis. It will also be despite a second scandal charge that the Republicans are reported set to launch.

'Protect the Presidency'

Early in this campaign, the Johnson strategy board discussed the question of a Senate investigation of the vast accumulation of big-business gifts to the Eisenhower farm, especially the cash expenses given by three oil men to pay the farm's management and operation costs.

It was known that the Re-

publicans were set to pound home the hi-fi set that Mr. Johnson received from Bobby Baker in 1957, and some argued that this should be offset by a probe of the half-million dollars worth of gifts received by Gen. Eisenhower.

But the decision was negative. The reason was: "Let's not pull down the prestige of the Presidency."

Sen. Goldwater's strategists were not so charitable. Not only have three smear books against Mr. Johnson flooded the country to the extent of over 9 million copies, but there have been systematic drives to saturate different voting communities with "Liberty Lobby" propaganda.

Town by town, the Liberty Lobby's "LBJ, a Political Biography" has been distributed house to house, with readers not knowing what is behind this right-wing lobby; or that this column just won a big libel suit brought by Curtis Dall of the Liberty Lobby. The right wing in this case was knocked right out of court.

Never have so many detectives been employed by a political party to track down every youthful escapade, every love affair, every past association of the Democratic candidates and lesser functionaries on their staffs. Never in my covering of campaigns has there been so much peddling of political pornography, so

much extremism in mud-slinging.

The Snoop Sleuth

Even as this is written, the FBI is checking on the back-alley sleuths who have been dredging the political sewers for sordid tidbits. One is Thomas La Venia, a private eye, who got into the snooping business as a gumshoe for the late Sen. Joe McCarthy.

La Venia has been shadowing Bobby Baker and his associates—peering round corners, dogging their trails, and digging into their garbage—looking for possible evidence that might embarrass the Democrats.

La Venia's part-time operatives have been painfully obvious. When they copied the automobile license of one visitor, the visitor simply pulled out his own pencil and copied the license number of the surveillance automobile.

The FBI has learned that La Venia found out about White House aide Walter W. Jenkins's arrest before it broke in the papers. Another who had advance knowledge was Harold Stewart, former chief of the Park Police, who has been hired as a gumshoe by House Republicans.

It may be only a coincidence that one of his former detectives, Park Policeman Carrol Shoemaker, inquired at the Washington Metropolitan Police Department about Jenkins's arrest record.

Despite this, the public still figures that the basic issues in the campaign are peace or war, trigger-happiness, medical care for the elderly, Social Security, economic growth, and jobs.

Ohio-Go-Round

Two years ago, conscientious Rep. Walter H. Moeller (D-Ohio) was defeated by the doctors' lobby when it spent about \$100,000 in his district. Today Moeller is probably going to stage a comeback. He is fairly sure to defeat the man who once defeated him, Homer Abele, a Goldwaterite with a weak Washington record. Abele has a Logan, Ohio, restaurant owner, Clarence Blosser, on his Capitol Hill payroll for \$7000 though Blosser spends most of his time back home running his steak house . . . Robert Sweeney of Cleveland, now running for Congressman at Large in Ohio as a Democrat, is the son of the late Rep. Martin Sweeney, who once sued me for calling him the congressional spokesman of Father Coughlin. I proved the allegation in court, whereupon Martin was defeated . . . Charles Fry, the Republican running for State Representative in Clark County, Ohio, was so right-wing in his GOP primary battle that his Republican opponent refused to shake hands with him when they debated . . . Buddy Baach, dynamic Democratic Mayor of Springfield, is now running against Fry.