



CHARLES W. COLSON
... awakened at 6:30 a.m.

\$10,000 for Opinions on Book

ABC Paid for Colson Appearance

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By Lee Lescaze
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NEW YORK—ABC television paid \$10,000 for Charles W. Colson's opinions of the H. R. Haldeman book that labeled Colson the "heavy" of the Nixon White House.

David Burke, an ABC vice president, said Colson was a consultant like other experts the network hires and that \$10,000 "wasn't the kind of payment that other networks have made to other people."

He referred to Haldeman and Sirhan B. Sirhan who both got sizable fees for on-camera interviews. NBC paid Sirhan about \$15,000 in 1969, and

CBS paid Haldeman \$25,000 in 1975, raising protests about "checkbook journalism."

ABC's arrangement with Colson did not purchase exclusive rights to his views of Haldeman's book, Burke noted. A spokesman for Colson said he gave interviews to both other networks. "We have histories of hiring consultants for special programs," Burke said, "and Colson's payment was in line."

James Reston Jr., a professor at the University of North Carolina, who helped David Frost prepare for the Nixon interviews, said yesterday that

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he was paid a \$1,000 consultant's fee for helping with ABC's coverage of the Haldeman book. He pointed out that that fee originally was planned to cover 10 days, work.

In addition to Reston, Robert Zelnick, a member of ABC's Washington staff said he contacted three lawyers who worked in the Watergate special prosecutor's office, Richard Ben-Veniste, Philip A. Lacovara and Peter Kreindler. None of them agreed to sign on as a paid consultant.

ABC contacted Colson after Zelnick was allowed to read and take notes from the Haldeman book. Although the book was being handled with unusual secrecy in an attempt by Times Books, a New York Times subsidiary, to prevent any leaks, Zelnick was shown the book on the condition that ABC await the publication of excerpts by newspapers that bought the rights before mentioning its contents on the air.

"We started to prepare ourselves to cover the story in the best way we could," Burke said. The network believed it had an advantage over its competitors because it had seen the book and planned to report on each of the five newspaper installments on its evening news show as the installments appeared, Burke said.

In addition, the network was planning one or two specials on the book, the first of them for Feb. 28, the planned publication date.

All of those plans were frustrated, Burke said, when The Washington Post obtained a copy of two-thirds of the book and published a story about it last week.

Burke said ABC planned to make extensive use of Colson and consid-

ered him a consultant.

After ABC learned that The Post had published major details from Haldeman's book, it sent a messenger to Colson's house and woke him at 6:30 a.m. Feb. 16 so that he could appear on the "Good Morning America" program. Colson also appeared on the evening news that day and in a 30-minute special the network broadcast that night.

"Even though we couldn't use him as we had wanted to," Burke said, "we didn't think that was Colson's fault. So the network paid the \$10,000."

The payment was to Prison Fellowship, the McLean-based Christian-oriented convict rehabilitation organization which Colson founded and work with, and not directly to Colson.

Burke said that in his discussions with Prison Fellowship officials, "There was the suggestion" that a contribution would be welcome if ABC wanted to take much of Colson's time. Burke said that Colson receives no salary from Prison Fellowship.

Gordon Loux, the executive vice president of Prison Fellowship, said, "There was no requirement of a contribution."

The network, Burke said, chose the \$10,000 figure on its own.

After his Watergate conviction, Colson said he underwent a religious experience and was "born again," as he described it in his book of that title. Most of the royalties from the book went to Prison Fellowship, Loux said.