

Association, the National Organization for Women, or the Emergency Committee for Soviet Jewry to raise similar funds in the name of similar candidates running in the name of issues they support? If one sets down universally applied technical requirements for qualifying, it is difficult to see how this could be otherwise, and hard to argue that it should be.

Anti-abortionists have not limited their activity exclusively to the McCormack effort. They provided a hefty proportion of Jimmy Carter's victory in the Iowa precinct caucuses and generated some of the pressure that led President Ford to announce his support for an amendment returning authority over abortion to the states. The new visibility of abortion in presidential politics is neither the final nor the most important goal of the movement, however. The real objective, according to pro-life activists, is to elect a Congress that will enact a human life amendment to the Constitution in 1977. McCormack's poor showing in national politics does not accurately reflect the impact that anti-abortionists are likely to have in congressional elections later this year.

Since the Senate Judiciary subcommittee on constitutional amendments turned down proposals for an amendment last fall, the anti-abortionist movement has relied less on national lobbying efforts and more on local activities. McCormack's candidacy suggests that groups like her own Pro-Life Action Committee are more ambitious and professional in 1976 than ever before. Meanwhile, the Catholic Church is launching a major effort to provide those groups with new direction and new organization in the election year. At its annual conference in Washington, DC last November, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops adopted a "Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities" that calls specifically for political action at the local level. The plan urges the establishment in every congressional district of "well organized pro-life units." The National Committee for a Human Life Amendment—a Washington lobbying organization supported almost entirely by the donations of Catholic bishops—provides technical assistance to right-to-life groups across the country on how to lobby most effectively on the home ground of elected representatives.

Earlier this year, Iowa's precinct caucuses illustrated the resources available to candidates who support the pro-life cause. On the Sunday before delegates were actually selected, every Catholic church in the diocese of Des Moines was asked to hold "demonstration" caucuses to familiarize voters with the political process, and every parish priest was asked to establish a "parish contact person" responsible for getting out the vote. In some states, the mere prospect of similar activity may influence the stands that congressional and state candidates will take on abortion. In Illinois, for example, 125 candidates for the state legislature and 29 candidates for the House of Representatives have said

they would support a human life amendment. In states like Maryland, where none of the announced congressional candidates supports the pro-life cause, Maryland's two right-to-life groups plan to enter their own candidate in the race. McCormack's campaign, invigorated by public funds, suggests that there may be more single-cause activists running for office in the near future. Though new campaign legislation passed in the House and Senate limits public financing to presidential races, support is still growing for separate legislation to extend public financing to congressional candidates. Such legislation would make the precedent set by McCormack's campaign all that much more attractive to single-issue organizations. It would give groups like the anti-abortion movement, whose real strength lies not on the national but the local level, a chance to have much more than an "educational" impact on American politics.

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White House Watch

The Woodstein Flap

The pitch that Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, the *Washington Post* reporters who did more than any other journalists and any officials did to expose the evil of Watergate and drive Richard Nixon from the presidency, used with some of the 394 sources that they boast of having drawn upon for *The Final Days* (Simon and Schuster; \$10.95) was that they'd written some pretty rough and marginal stuff in their Watergate news stories and were going to make up for it in this book with a reasoned and balanced account of Nixon's twilight and departure from the White House. My reading of the book is that they tried and failed to do this. The book is fascinating. It is beautifully done (I'd like to know more than they tell about the contribution of "Alice Mayhew, our editor," who is thanked "for the hundreds of hours she spent with us and with this manuscript"). It tells much that I never learned during what I think it's fair to say was as close a watch as any reporter kept upon the Nixon presidency. And in my biased opinion it is on the whole the worst job of nationally noted reporting that I've observed during 49 years in the business.

In this opinion I differ with most of the Nixon people who figure in the book and with whom I've had time and opportunity to check. Most of these people say four things. First, they don't want to be identified as

Woodward and Bernstein—"Woodstein" in the current Washington argot—sources. Second, they don't want whatever they say about the accuracy or inaccuracy of the book and of the references to them to be attributed to them. Third, and with some exceptions, they consider the book to be "basically accurate." I must have heard that said 20 times in the week or so preceding the writing of this piece. Fourth, and also with some exceptions, they hold that the book exaggerates, over-dramatizes and occasionally distorts what the people whose view is reflected here say they told Woodstein. That's where I part with these people. They are more tolerant than I am of exaggeration, over-dramatization and distortion.

Finally, and for a thoroughly selfish reason, I object to the abuse of a method of reporting that Woodstein brag about and practice throughout the book. I object because, damn it all, it's my method. Woodstein never once attribute a statement to the source or sources of the statement. They and their research assistants interviewed on what journalists call a background basis and they write from background, on their own authority. So do I, usually and by preference. But the effect of piling statement upon unattributed statement for 450 pages is to give a good method a bad name. Two examples of the absurd lengths to which the device is carried are a long conversation reported in direct quotation between Nixon and his press secretary, Ronald Ziegler, as if Woodstein were in the room with them, and the direct quotation of a remark that one of Nixon's lawyers, Leonard Garment, made in chambers to Judge John Sirica. The Nixon-Ziegler conversation is from the transcript of a Nixon tape published by the House Judiciary Committee. The Garment remark ("Just wait") is from a published court transcript. The Woodstein claim when they were writing their Watergate stories in *The Washington Post* and their earlier book, *All the President's Men*, that they reported only what at least three sources had told them greatly wearied me. In this book, they profess to report only what they've been told by "at least two people." That is crap. What second source could confirm that Henry Kissinger, Fred Buzhardt, David Gergen, Pat Buchanan, Leonard Garment, Ronald Ziegler—naming a few of the many who are thus depicted—"thought" this or that in an elevator, during a dinner or during an office conversation? Some of the best stories I've ever gotten were known to one person only, the person who told me. Woodstein must know it's crap. The fact that they persist in the fiction in this book is a sign of insecurity. It supports the perhaps patronizing but in my opinion fair judgment that they comprehended only the evil of Watergate and not the totality of the situations, relationships and motivations of many of the people who figure in the book.

Here are some examples of Woodstein reporting that I've checked with one or more of the people involved.

Philip Buchen, President Ford's life-long friend and chief counsel, and Clay Whitehead, a Nixon official who worked with Buchen and others to prepare the transition from Nixon to Ford, appear as follows in an account of one of the pre-resignation meetings: "Whitehead walked Buchen out to his car to talk privately. What would happen if Nixon were impeached and convicted and then refused to leave office? Maybe the notion of the President resisting removal was not so absurd. Suppose he went crazy and tried to use the military to retain office. The two men wondered if perhaps they should raise the question with the Secretary of Defense, James Schlesinger"—and so on. Buchen said to me the other day, in a gentle jibe at the many who were refusing to be quoted, "I'm not one of those who won't admit they talked to Woodward and Bernstein." He said that every reference to him in the book, including the one just quoted, is accurate.

William Watts, one of several Kissinger assistants who quit the National Security Council staff in 1970 at the time of the Cambodia invasion, figures with Kissinger and General Alexander Haig, then Kissinger's White House deputy, in a vivid description of Watts' departure: "Watts went to see Kissinger alone to state his objections. 'Your view represents the cowardice of the Eastern Establishment,' Kissinger told him. Furious, Watts got up out of his chair and moved toward Kissinger. He was going to punch him. Kissinger moved quickly behind his desk. He was not serious, he said." Watts then had a show-down talk with Haig. "'You've just had an order from your Commander in Chief,' Haig said. Watts could not resign. 'Fuck you, Al,' Watts said. 'I just did.'" I've been told that this passage, particularly the bit about Watts being about to punch Kissinger, exaggerates Watts' importance and belligerence. Watts says it's "pretty accurate."

The book lists among the qualities of Lawrence Eagleburger, one of Kissinger's close associates, "the ability to say, 'Henry, you're full of shit.'" Eagleburger has been heard to say that about Kissinger to others, but it is unimaginable that he's ever said it directly to Kissinger. In a reference to Eagleburger and to Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft, Kissinger's former deputy and his successor at the White House, Woodstein write that Kissinger's "frequent descriptions of Nixon as irrational, insecure and maniacal could at times just as easily apply to Kissinger as to the President, they believed." I state as fact known to me that Eagleburger and Scowcroft never believed this of either Nixon or Kissinger, except perhaps of Nixon in his time of final disintegration. Kissinger bad-mouths practically everybody he knows, Presidents included. But several of his NSC assistants—among them John F. Lehman, Jr., now deputy director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency—tell me they *never* heard Kissinger describe Nixon "as irrational, insecure and maniacal." Lehman, who was one of Kissinger's closest

and best informed assistants in the Nixon years, says that Woodstein never approached him or tried to check anything with him. Ben Bradlee, the *Washington Post's* executive editor, says he encountered Kissinger at a social affair after the book appeared and challenged him to deny anything in it. He attaches great importance to the fact that Kissinger didn't deny anything. The fact is meaningless. Apart from the little he's said publicly, Kissinger isn't talking about this book.

Very few of the central facts and assertions in the book are wholly new. I reported in this journal in 1974, for instance, the view of some of Nixon's assistants that the pressures upon him before he resigned had unbalanced him and the further view, less widely held, that he'd been fundamentally unstable for years before the end. Three episodes reported in the book, however, are new, interesting and real additions to our knowledge of the Nixon tragedy.

The most widely noted of these additions is the account of the hours Kissinger spent with Nixon the night before he announced his intention to resign: "Between sobs, Nixon was plaintive . . . How had it come to this? How had a simple burglary, a breaking and entering, done all this? Nixon . . . was hysterical. 'Henry,' he said, 'you are not a very orthodox Jew, and I am not an orthodox Quaker, but we need to pray.' Nixon got down on his knees. Kissinger felt he had no alternative but to kneel down, too . . . And then, still sobbing, Nixon leaned over and struck his fist on the carpet, crying, 'What have I done? What has happened?'" This was one of the many passages Kissinger had in mind when he complained in a public statement that the book lacks decency and compassion. But the odd thing about the prayer story is that it had to come, directly or indirectly, from Kissinger. I am told and believe that he never described this scene to the two assistants, Lawrence Eagleburger and Brent Scowcroft, whom he rejoined in his White House office after he left Nixon that night. Only two errors in the account have been cited to me, the line about Nixon beating the carpet and a report that Eagleburger listened on a telephone extension to Nixon begging Kissinger not to tell anybody that he'd broken down. I'm told Eagleburger hung up when he realized Nixon was calling.

Two other pieces of genuine news in the book are the intention, frustrated by Gen. Haig, of two Nixon lawyers, Leonard Garment and Fred Buzhardt, to recommend to the President that he resign in November, 1973, and Gen. Haig's attempt to hire Hugh Morrow, Nelson Rockefeller's long-time press spokesman, as Richard Nixon's chief spokesman in early 1974. Garment and Buzhardt told Woodstein the resignation story. Carl Bernstein learned by accident of the attempt to recruit Morrow soon after it occurred and saved it for this book. Haig believed in late 1973 that Nixon would weather the Watergate storm and therefore refused to pass the Garment-Buzhardt

recommendation to Nixon. The Morrow account errs slightly in having Morrow flatly demand that Press Secretary Ziegler be fired and that Nixon come clean about his Watergate role. Morrow declined when Haig told him that neither of these things was going to happen, but he didn't make them absolute conditions. One gathers that he didn't want the White House job, anyhow.

The two most serious flaws in the book are in the accounts of Henry Kissinger's relationships with and attitudes toward Nixon and Haig. It is simply not true that Kissinger viewed Nixon with "loathing" from the beginning of their relationship and throughout it. "Loathing" is much too simple and strong a term for the attitude of Kissinger, a very complex man, toward Richard Nixon, who also was and is a very complex man. They did not entirely trust each other, they were somewhat jealous of each other, but they needed and served and basically respected each other. It also is not true, as the book asserts, that Brent Scowcroft and Lawrence Eagleburger considered one of their priority duties to be the concealment of Kissinger's "loathing" of Nixon. They didn't believe then and don't believe now that Kissinger "loathed" Richard Nixon. I was told recently and on excellent authority that I was close to the mark when I wrote in this journal's March 20 issue that Kissinger's attitude toward Nixon was and is "a mixture of pity, disgust with Nixon as a person, respect for much of his performance as President, and gratitude to him for raising Henry Kissinger to power and eminence . . ."

Much the same may be said of the Woodstein thesis that the relationship between Kissinger and Haig was essentially one of hostility and distrust. They were indeed rather wary of each other. Haig, like practically everyone else who worked for Kissinger in the Nixon years and who works for him now, found him to be a brutal and at times nearly unbearable taskmaster. But I never heard Haig, with whom I spent hours over the years in discussion of Kissinger, speak of him with anything other than tolerance, respect and occasional humor. And I have never heard Kissinger, with whom I have had a contact and a reporter's relationship that Woodstein never had, speak of Haig with anything other than profound appreciation and respect. To have them secretly warring with each other, holding out on each other, distrusting each other during the last months of the Nixon presidency and of Nixon's disintegration, as this book does, is to be incredibly mistaken and wrong. Kissinger and Haig spent hours upon hours, day after day and night after night struggling together to maintain at least the façade of a viable presidency until their ruined President at last departed. This was the tragedy that Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein sought to relate and, with prodigious effort and in prodigious detail, reduce to the level of a sordid barroom brawl.

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