

Excerpts From the Eagleton-Anderson Exchange

From CBS's *Face the Nation* program

Sunday: *Post 8/1/72*

Anderson: . . . this is the first time I've had a chance to face you, and I do owe you an apology. I've always told my reporters, Senator, that a fact doesn't become a fact for our column until we can prove it. Now I have violated my own rule, and I want the nation and you to know that I violated it. A trooper, a former—not a present but a former trooper in Missouri—told me that the troopers there keep copies of all tickets that they handed out, and that a batch of these tickets were given to—photostats of several tickets were given to three different people. True Davis has now authorized me to say that he was one of them. The other two have not. The two—I talked to True—I called up True Davis and asked him whether he had seen these photostats. True Davis is a supporter of yours, he's a Democrat; his son, I think, worked on your staff. And so I had every reason to take him seriously as a source. He said he had seen photostats of these tickets. The other source said that he was aware of them, but had not seen them. The third source I have not been able to reach in all this time—he's out of pocket, but someone close to him says he still has copies of these tickets. I did not verify, I did not authenticate whether or not these tickets were genuine. Using these sources, I went ahead with a story that I should not have gone ahead with, and that was unfair to you, and you have my apology.

Sen. Eagleton: Well, let me say, Mr. Anderson, that the true test of moral character is, I guess, to admit when one makes a mistake. I'm not going to sit in moral judgment on you, and you, in turn, I guess, won't sit in moral judgment on me. But it takes quite a man to get on nationwide television network to say he made a mistake, and I commend you for your courage. . . .

Anderson: . . . I apologize to you for publishing a premature story. I apologize for publicizing documents that I have not seen and have not verified, and in this age of Howard Hughes hoaxes, I'm now acutely conscious of the fact that these documents couldn't—could—may be forgeries. But there's no question that True Davis saw these citations, and there is no question I've gotten from the state trooper a number of specific allegations which I'd like to go over with you in private, because I think that I've already done you a disservice by airing them in public. And I would like to be able—I wish that I could now—retract the story completely. I cannot do that yet. My conscience won't allow me to . . . I really would prefer to retract everything right here, but I cannot retract a story that still hasn't been pursued to a final end. . . .

Sen. Eagleton: . . . I think the story has been so thoroughly discredited that I just—it leaves me in a puzzlement as to why you can't retract a story that you say shouldn't have promulgated in the first place. That—that doesn't seem to be quite equitable to me.