

Capitol Punishment

The Fear Of Their Convictions

PM 5/13/73

By Art Buchwald

The reason why the Watergate case has broken open is that everyone involved is leaking to the press to save their own skin.

I work in a building on Pennsylvania Avenue which also includes the offices of The Boston Globe, Newsweek magazine, Newhouse newspapers, The Dallas Times Herald, The Kansas City Star and The Chicago Tribune.

The other morning when I arrived there was a long line outside the building composed of people implicated in the Watergate affair. The line ran around the block.

A policeman stopped me at the door and said, "Get in the back of the line, Mac, like everybody else. Some of these people have been waiting all night to tell their stories to the press."

"I'm not a suspect in the Watergate case, officer, I'm a newspaperman going up to my office."

Some people in the line heard me and tried to shove documents at me.

"Let's have none of that," the cop said to the crowd. "You can show him your documents when you get inside."

One man, a former White House aide, shouted, "I can tell you the whole story on the Ellsberg break-in."

Another man said, "He doesn't know anything. I've got Ellsberg's psychiatrist's couch hidden in my home."

Someone down the line said, "Don't listen to him.

I have a blockbuster of a story. Howard Hunt and G. Gordon Liddy wrote Clifford Irving's book about Howard Hughes."

Someone else yelled, "I have the names of everyone who contributed a million dollars to the Committee for the Re-election of the President. Give me a break. I've been waiting since 6 o'clock last night to leak it."

"I'm sorry," I said to the man, "but I don't write that kind of story. Why don't you leak it to Jack Anderson?"

"You can't get near his office," the man said.

"I waited two days to leak it to him and I never got closer than a block away."

The police officer said to me, "I wish you wouldn't stand out here, sir. These people are desperate and I don't want a riot."

A man slipped me \$5,000 in new \$100 bills. "Take me upstairs with you to Newsweek's office and I'll give you another \$5,000."

The offer was tempting, but I gave him his money back. I said, "It would be unfair to the other suspects in line. I'm sure you'll all get in to leak your stories."

"That's what they told me at The Washington Post. But when I got up to the head of the line they said they didn't need any more on the Watergate bugging. They had enough leaks on that."

"I can't understand why all you people are so desperate to talk to the press," I said to several of the people, all former White House aides.

"You dummy," one of them shouted, "if we implicate others then we can get immunity from prosecution."

"Why should we be the scapegoats?" another man shouted. "We want to get the guys who put us up to this."

"If we get our stories in print," a third said, "then the public will know we were just little fish in a big, stagnant pool."

The police officer said, "You can't stay out here, sir. Either go upstairs or to the Sans Souci."

"I'll go upstairs," I said.

The policeman opened the glass door and the crowd pushed forward waving their incriminating evidence.

He shouted, "All right, you people stop shoving or I'll make you go to the back of the line."