

REVIEW & OUTLOOK

The New Pecksniffianism

President Ford remarked the other day that he would not buy a book written by anyone convicted in the Watergate scandal. It's hard not to share his affront that some of the convicted criminals may make large sums from books, in effect exploiting not only a national tragedy but their own misdeeds.

As we reflect on the matter, though, it gets less and less clear. A few years ago, after all, Nazi armaments minister Albert Speer made large sums from a book describing his experiences in the Third Reich. While he profited from his crimes, most people had little trouble agreeing that the more important thing was that he might contribute information and insights that would help history understand a cosmic tragedy.

Now there seem to be Americans—the ability to draw distinctions having waned in many quarters—who believe that Watergate is even worse than the Third Reich. But for our part, we think similar standards ought to apply. If a book by one of the convicted promises to offer insight, people ought to buy it in good conscience. Probably few of the impending books will promise anything of the sort, but we would advise against buying bad books even if they happened to be written by saints.

In one respect, though, we entirely salute the President's remarks. They were carefully qualified to apply to those actually convicted of crime. At the moment, in fact, we're less worried about the convicted making some money than about the not-convicted being tarred with guilt by association. It seems to be happening already.

Erwin N. Griswold has been Dean of the Harvard Law School, a founding member of the American Bar Association, president of the American Association of Law Schools, and a public opponent of Senator Joseph McCarthy in the 1950s. He was also Solicitor General of the United States when the Nixon administration accepted an out-of-

court settlement of its antitrust action against International Telephone and Telegraph Corp. Recently, President Ford named him to the panel investigating the Central Intelligence Agency.

Whereupon someone whose motives are unknown leaked a derogatory story about Mr. Griswold to Seymour Hersh, The New York Times' notion of an answer to Woodward and Bernstein. Mr. Griswold had been investigated for perjury in connection with the ITT settlement, the story went. Now, of all the Watergate allegations, the one about the ITT settlement is the flimsiest; the Oval Office tapes show President Nixon complaining that ITT President Harold Geneen was not even a

contributor: "He's nothing to us. I don't care about him." Yet somehow the suspicions about the ITT settlement cannot be quelled, and Mr. Griswold's life work cannot protect him from what Federal Judge Charles Edward Wyzanski Jr. described in a letter to the Times as "Seymour Hersh's McCarthy-like report."

And now we have the case of Ron Ziegler; groups at Boston University and Michigan State University

have worked themselves up into a moral huff and withdrawn invitations for paid lectures by the former Presidential Press Secretary. Now, Ron Ziegler is no Erwin Griswold, but neither is he an Albert Speer, or even a Gordon Liddy. He has not been convicted or even indicted for anything connected with Watergate, and is thus entitled to a presumption of legal innocence. One can of course criticize his politics and role in Watergate, but we were previously unaware that this was a disqualification for the college lecture circuit, which in recent years has proved financially lucrative for Jerry Rubin, Daniel Berrigan, Abbie Hoffman and any number of others not exactly beyond criticism.

We asked for an explanation of this from John Wicklein, Dean of the School of Public Communication at Boston, whose telegram to the student government precipitated Mr. Ziegler's troubles. Dean Wicklein, a former broadcasting executive, who talks freely of past tiffs with the Nixon White House, explains that Mr. Ziegler "did his best to subvert the First Amendment," and thus it would be a "travesty" if he got any money from the journalism department, which had planned to pay for his talk. However, Dean Wicklein would defend Mr. Ziegler's right to speak for free.

Dean Wicklein, though he needs to reflect a bit on the question, says he would have similar qualms about paying for a lecture by Mr. Speer. Jerry Rubin and Abbie Hoffman, both of whom have in fact been paid to lecture at Boston University in recent years, are OK because Dean Wicklein did not understand them as wanting to "subvert the First Amendment." Others of us understood them as wanting to subvert the whole Constitution.

This is presumably the best case that can be made for retracting the invitations to Mr. Ziegler. As you watch the fad spread to other campuses, and no doubt to other Watergate figures as well, our advice is to seek out the nearest dictionary and look up the word "Pecksniffian." If you happen to have a Random House, it will read, "hypocritically affecting benevolence or high moral principles—after Seth Pecksniff, character in 'Martin Chuzzlewit,' a novel (1843) by Dickens."