

Buchanan Objection Ignored

By Lawrence Meyer
Washington Post Staff Writer

Presidential assistant Patrick J. Buchanan attempted in July, 1971, to dissuade other White House officials from launching the campaign to defame Daniel Ellsberg, a White House memo written at the time shows.

Two months later, in apparent disregard of Buchanan's advice, a White House-sponsored break-in occurred at the offices of Ellsberg's psychiatrist, leading eventually to the indictment of four former White House aides, two of whom have pleaded guilty.

In a July 8, 1971, memo directed to President Nixon's top domestic adviser, John D. Ehrlichman, Buchanan argued that concerted attacks on Ellsberg and others "while good for the country, would not, it seems to me, be particularly helpful to the President, politically."

In the same 1971 memo, a copy of which was obtained by The Washington Post, Buchanan also:

- Advocated "a major public attack on the Brookings Institution," a Washington nonprofit think tank with ties to the Democratic Party.

- Discussed an apparently unused plan by the White House to publicly attack The New York Times, which first published the Pentagon Papers after being given them by Ellsberg, and which frequently opposed the President's policies editorially. "Remarks drafted for the President on several occasions, which would have been an implied and unmistakable rebuke to The New York Times, and created a President-Times collision, were rejected time and again."

- Suggested that consideration be given to discrediting Parade Magazine, a Sunday newspaper supple-

ment magazine, and Parade's editor-at-large, Lloyd Shearer, because of "anti-Vietnam positions taken in the Personality Parade section . . ."

Buchanan, who is still a special consultant to the President, told the Senate select Watergate committee

See BUCHANAN, A4, Col. 1

BUCHANAN, From A1

last year that he was called to a meeting with Ehrlichman, White House chief of staff H. R. Haldeman and special presidential counsel Charles W. Colson on July 6, 1971. At the meeting, Buchanan testified, he was asked to oversee an investigation of Ellsberg. Buchanan testified he rejected the assignment as "a waste of my time and my abilities."

Buchanan also testified last year that he "did not have the impression that what the assignment I was being offered was something illicit or unethical or wrong; it was not, and I did not understand it that way from Mr. Haldeman, Colson or Ehrlichman." Buchanan went on to say that he did not know that a special White House investigative unit, which came to be known as the plumbers, was contemplated by Ehrlichman.

The plumbers eventually were established under Ehrlichman's supervision during July, 1971, with a presidential mandate to track down security leaks. However, the plumbers became involved in a campaign to discredit Ellsberg, after he gave newspapers the Pentagon Papers, according to White House documents obtained by the Senate Watergate committee. The campaign against Ellsberg led to a Sept. 3, 1971, White House-approved break-in at the Los Angeles offices of Ellsberg's psychiatrist.

White House aides Egil (Bud) Krogh Jr. and David R. Young were in direct charge of the plumbers reporting to Ehrlichman. The Ellsberg break-in, according to testimony and documents, was planned and directed by White House aides E. Howard Hunt Jr. and G. Gordon Liddy, both of whom were later involved in the Watergate break-in and bugging.

Krogh pleaded guilty Jan. 24, 1974, to conspiring against the rights of citizens in connection with the break-in.

Colson, Liddy and Ehrlichman were indicted on March 7, 1974, and charged with conspiracy against the rights of citizens in connection with the Ellsberg break-in. Colson pleaded guilty on June 3 to a charge of obstruction of justice for his role in leaking a statement to the press designed to defame Ellsberg and his lawyer prior to Ellsberg's trial on federal charges growing out of his release of the Pentagon Papers.

In the July 8, 1971, memo in which Ellsberg's name is consistently misspelled as "Ellsburg," Buchanan argued against the very kind of public relations campaign that the White House was planning, according to witnesses and testimony before the Senate Watergate committee.

"At the very best," Buchanan wrote, "let us assume we can demonstrate, after three months investigation, that Ellsberg stole the documents, worked hand-in-glove with ex-NSC

(National Security Council) types, collaborated with leftist writers Neil Sheehan and Fox Butterfield (New York Times reporters), got together a conspiracy to drop the documents at set times to left-wing papers, all timed to undercut McGovern-Hatfield (Sens. George S. McGovern (D-S. Dak.) and Mark O. Hatfield (R-Ore.)—what have we accomplished?

“What benefit would be derived to the President and his political fortunes in 1972—and what damage visited upon his major political adversaries on the other side of the aisle.

“To me it would assuredly be psychologically satisfying to cut the innards from Ellsberg and his clique in a major book expose of what they attempted to do, and what they did. But I have yet to be shown what benefit this would do for the President—or for the rest of us, other than a psychological salve,” Buchanan wrote.

Buchanan went on to argue that the controversy between the Nixon administration and the press over the printing of the Pentagon Paper was bound to end in a public relations setback for the White House since “the media controlled absolutely how the controversy would be portrayed to the American people.”

In addition, Buchanan said, a speech prepared for Vice President Agnew, “who was prepared to deliver it, was killed” and remarks prepared for President Nixon criticizing The Times had been rejected.

“An issue that has been decided on the front pages of the nation’s papers, and on the lead on the nation’s network is not going to be turned around in the public mind by a few well-placed leaks to back-page obscurantists like Allen and Scott (conservative columnists Robert Allen and Paul Scott.)”

Buchanan said in a telephone interview yesterday that he had been asked during the July 6, 1971, meeting to be the liaison between the White House and other federal agencies that would be conducting investigations in connection with Ellsberg.

Buchanan stressed that the investigation would have been conducted outside the White House. Because he turned down the assignment, Buchanan said he knew few more details of what the proposal would have entailed.

The speeches and remarks he prepared for the President, Buchanan said yesterday, constituted a “criticism of The Times for having printed the Pentagon Papers and the propriety of that decision. I think some of the criticism mirrored the minority of the Supreme Court.” (A majority of the court ruled that the Pentagon Papers could be published.)

At one point in yesterday’s conversation, Buchanan remarked, “I should have taken the job,” suggesting that had he done so he would have steered the White House away from such activities as the Ellsberg break-in.

In his memo, after arguing against a campaign attacking Ellsberg and others associated with him, Buchanan provided “a future example of what we should do . . . Let’s undertake a major public attack on the Brookings Institution. No one in the country knows what the thing is. We could have it attacked, discredited in the eyes of millions of people, and suspect in the eyes of millions of others—thus tainting every single anti-Nixon paper that came out of there, subsequent.”

ful one in terms of public opinion.”

“In the last analysis, however,” Buchanan wrote, “the permanent discrediting of all these people, while good for the country, would not, it seems to me, be particularly helpful to the President, politically.”

Among some other thoughts” Buchanan offered in his memo was the suggestion that “if Lloyd Shearer (of Parade magazine) is involved in this, a reading should be taken of all the anti-Vietnam positions taken in the Personality Parade. Jack Anderson told me, if I recall correctly, that Shearer did this and perhaps Parade can be discredited—that section is a power-

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

CONFIDENTIAL

July 8, 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR:

JOHN EHRLICHMAN

FROM:

PATRICK J. BUCHANAN

Having considered the matter until the early hours, my view is that there are some dividends to be derived from Project Ellsberg -- but none to justify the magnitude of the investment recommended.

At the very best, let us assume we can demonstrate, after three months investigation, that Ellsberg stole the documents, worked hand-in-glove with ex-NSC types, collaborated with leftist writers Neil Sheehan and Fox Butterfield, got together a conspiracy to drop the documents at set times to left-wing papers, all timed to undercut McGovern-Hatfield opposition -- what have we accomplished?

What benefit would be derived to the President and his political fortunes in 1972 -- and what damage visited upon his major political adversaries on the other side of the aisle.

To me it would assuredly be psychologically satisfying to cut the innards from Ellsberg and his clique in a major book expose of what they attempted to do, and what they did. But I have yet to be shown what benefit this would do for the President -- or for the rest of us, other than a psychological salve.

Most of the returns have already come in on this question -- and the media has emerged a two-one winner (Gallup). This is not surprising.

In this 1971 memo to John Ehrlichman, Ellisberg's name as Ellsberg. Buchanan Patrick J. Buchanan misspelled Daniel is special consultant to the President.