



FORD

BUCHEN

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Q. One of President Ford's most trusted advisers is his old law partner, Phil Buchen—sweet, kind Phil Buchen of Grand Rapids. I understand Buchen is responsible for the resignation of President Ford's first press secretary, Jerald terHorst, and the near resignation of Ford's second press secretary, Ron Nessen. What's the story?—M.P., Alexandria, Va.

A. Buchen is President Ford's lawyer. It was he who helped arrange during the summer of 1974 President Ford's pardon of Richard Nixon. President Ford, of course, knew all about the pardon, as did Gen. Alexander Haig; Jack Marsh, a Ford counselor; Benton Becker, an attorney who was helping Buchen, and of course Jack Miller, Nixon's attorney.

Buchen claims he was under Presidential mandate to tell no one, including Jerald terHorst, about the Nixon pardon negotiations. When terHorst told Buchen he had received press inquiries concerning Benton Becker's presence in San Clemente and asked Buchen what he knew about it, Buchen revealed nothing about the pardon. He said Becker had been to San Clemente to negotiate the return of Nixon's Presidential papers. Buchen admits now that he was guilty of a "half lie."

The truth is that President Ford did not trust his own press secretary of the time, Jerald terHorst, with the truth about the Nixon pardon negotiations, and neither did Buchen. Which is why terHorst resigned.

TerHorst was replaced by Ron Nessen, who this past March threatened to resign—again because the Ford team refused to take the press secretary into their confidence. On March 13, Richard Nixon sent a report to President Ford about his February, 1976, trip to China. When the press asked Nessen about the report, Nessen denied that any such report had been received at the White House. Nessen did not know that he was telling a falsehood, because neither Buchen nor Gen. Brent Scowcroft, Ford's national security adviser, Ford nor Kissinger—all of whom

knew about the report—had told him the truth. The fact was that they had received such a report from Nixon, read it, then returned it to San Clemente. Buchen and Scowcroft did not tell Nessen about the Nixon report because they were fearful that, under the Freedom of Information Act, some journalist might apply for it and that, under the act, the Nixon report would have had to be made available.

The fairy tale that the Ford Administration is an "open one" is exactly that, a fairy tale. Gerald Ford did not completely trust his first press secretary, and there is evidence that neither he nor members of his staff completely trust his second.

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