

Playboy story by Woodward-Bernstein on their sources HW 4/8/74

Beginning yesterday and continuing into this early morning's radio news there is considerable attention to this prepub publicity. Not exceptional because the story is worth the attention it is getting. Have to try to see if they are on this a.m.'s TV shows, which would also not be exceptional.

What interests me is not their sources but their avoidances, already amply recorded in my files and these are exceptional.

Baker charges, in effect, a deal with CIA. It has credibility and it has superficial support in the record of my experiences with them, which led me to break off.

The advance is that they had as their major source Hugh Sloan and another still inside the WH code-named "Deep Throat." The latter is provocative to the point where one wonders if disclosure is another step in promoting the book.

Sloan cannot have been the source of their major stories. He can of the initial ones and of some subsequent ones. Sloan has much to gain from now appearing to be white hatted. I have no present hunch who Deep Throat may be. The name may, in fact, be designed to deceive with attention focused on the real identification of Sloan.

Playboy has a three-month time spread that I suppose can be shortened but it appears unlikely that this story was not done long before Baker went public with his charges of a Post-CIA connection.

I am certain that the Post's source for the story I'm sure they now regret having printed, that when Hunt was with CIA he did political spying for LBJ, was Baker and that Baker leaked the bum steer to Woodward.

What is not generally known about this pair is that Woodward is the conservative and Bernstein the liberal. Woodward would have no trouble getting along with Baker, Thompson and company.

There is always great temptation to do whatever will promote, particularly a book that has so much money riding on it. This may make drawing conclusions for this story difficult or even misleading.

However, I think the story should be gone over with great care because of the character of the Post's reporting, which tapered off too fast and was too selective. It did not have anti-CIA or anti-FBI stories, for example, when both were called for. It printed texts that had to be interpreted and were not. In the most grievous case in doing this it covered CIA. Example: Cushman's taping of Hunt's first visit after he joined WH staff.

Both Woodward and Bernstein refused to follow leads I had already followed to their end on the CIA and domestic activity. Woodward said he had been unable to do anything with the Littauer lead, which is absolutely false for it was easy, and Bernstein refused to follow the Washington end when I gave it to him. In fact, when he didn't, I offered to show him a way around the confidence I had to keep that would not have involved me in a violation of confidence. If either had done what any reporter should have done, the potential is almost limitless.

One key to the whole thing is that they never did any real investigating. They used leaks only and they may have spent an enormous amount of time cultivating and confirming them. Thus they had to serve the interests of the leakers. And the certain fact is that they and the Post always protected the CIA, the FBI and the Department of Justice. Putting two and two together points to sources.

Baker's only charge of which I know is that Bennett was a source. The Post admits this is true. I know enough of what Bennett could have told them and did tell others and was available to them to validate Baker's suspicion partly charged in public. Such things as depositions are standard sources and one of Bennett's depositions does include what was news under any circumstances, a tracing of Hunt's early movements, his disappearances and his terms for returning. More, his desire and what thwarted it for a while.

This amounts to a charge of unscrupulous reporting and that is the essence of Baker's charge. My view that this is a likely area of Nixonian counterattack is unchanged. This story coming after the good treatment Nixon is getting over the tax business can trigger it.