

Anatomy of a Smear

Patrick J. Buchanan charged the Senate Watergate committee with having conducted a "covert campaign of vilification" against him. But later in his testimony, the special consultant to President Nixon engaged in what can best be described as a classic example of the political smear.

As a veteran political strategist, Mr. Buchanan appears to have sensed that an attack on the philanthropic foundations could provide just the sort of diversion that would get the Senators' minds off the subject of political burglaries and dirty tricks.

Mr. Buchanan: "Well . . . the Ford Foundation, for example, provides funds for the Institute for Policy Studies. The I.P.S. holds, has held, it is my recollection . . . seminars with Congressmen, for staffers and the like, and they deal in trying to influence Congressmen and the like to vote in one direction. . . . The Institute of Policy Studies has in turn funded the Quicksilver Times which . . . is one of the radical, what they call underground newspapers which has a political point of view which is sold for profit."

The significance of the Quicksilver Times not having been immediately grasped by the committee, Mr. Buchanan offered a compendium of other allegedly political foundation activities, including support of voter registration which, he suggested, led to the election of a black mayor in Cleveland, and the subsidy of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference which had sent him some "strictly political literature." He also complained of occasions when "as soon as a . . . Brookings study is done, you will see it on the front page of The New York Times and The Washington Post . . . and these things are moved into the political bloodstream, and one of my basic contentions is that there is an imbalance in resources with regard to these foundations."

Mr. Dash subsequently informed the committee that the general counsel for the I.P.S. had telephoned to say that it never funded the Quicksilver Times and that the only money the institute itself had ever received from the Ford Foundation was \$6,000 in 1964. (The foundation subsequently said the amount was actually \$7,800.) After Senator Gurney had characterized the radical, anti-Republican content of the Quicksilver Times as part of the "dirty tricks department," the committee inserted the publication in its record, even though, as Senator Ervin suggested, it had no relationship to the hearings.

Regrettably, the committee lacked either the will or the sophistication to challenge Mr. Buchanan's contemptible diversionary tactics. None of the members denounced the attempt to establish a non-existing link between an obscure, radical publication and a major foundation. The Senators appeared too enthralled by Mr. Buchanan's amoral political joviality to question his arrogant insistence that even the most outrageous election abuses perpetrated by the President's surrogates were nothing more than politics-as-usual.