

Buchanan's Testimony: Beneath the 'Glib' Talk

To the Editor:

I note that the media seem to be giving Patrick Buchanan high marks for his performance during the renewed Watergate hearings. I find this difficult to understand, in view of the substance of what was said.

It is easy, of course, for a reasonably articulate person to give a glib answer to almost any question, but in this case Mr. Buchanan appears to be getting credit for the quickness of his answers rather than for their content. Examining the content, one finds that he admitted to an extended pattern of deliberate misrepresentation, including:

¶Arranging demonstrations, ostensibly organized by local groups.

¶Planting letters to editors, ostensibly written by private citizens.

¶Setting up fake committees, ostensibly created by local groups.

¶Placing political ads, ostensibly written by independent groups.

¶Sending propaganda to Democrats, ostensibly from other Democrats.

His attempted "everybody does it" justification just won't wash. When Dick Tuck arranged to have signs at a Nixon Chinatown rally read, in Chinese, "What about the Howard Hughes loan?" the intent was to make Nixon look ridiculous, and to call attention to a real question. There was, after all, a real Howard Hughes loan to Donald Nixon, which is unexplained to this day. When, on the other hand, Donald Segretti concocted a false letter ascribing sexual misconduct to Muskie and Jackson, the purpose was to destroy them, by means of deliberate lies.

Serious as the systematic use of deception was, the attempt to influence the Democratic party's selection process was worse. Mr. Buchanan apparently believed that George McGovern, as President, would be a disaster for the country. Despite this, he was willing to devote considerable effort to increasing Senator McGovern's chances for the Democratic nomination, just to increase Nixon's re-election chances.

Worst of all, of course, is what Mr. Buchanan represents. I'm not referring to his moral obtuseness. There are always plenty of Buchanans: bright, ambitious, unprincipled young men, available for a fee. It is that Mr. Buchanan is typical of Nixon's entourage.

That Mr. Buchanan's memos were written is just an indication of what he is, personally. That they were favorably received and acted on, however, is reprehensible; and that the media, at this late date, fail to recognize this obvious fact, and make it clear to the electorate, is tragic. ROBERT GELMAN
Silver Spring, Md., Sept. 29, 1973