

The Story of a GOP Trickster [Donald H. Segretti]

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While Segretti was allegedly organizing undercover agents against the Democrats, other Republicans were operating in more traditional but no less deliberate ways to spike another set of rivals, George Wallace's American Party. Wallace, in early White House calculations, was seen as a substantial threat to Mr. Nixon, a drain of right-wing votes that could throw a close state contest to the Democrats. Accordingly, in southern California, where the American Party has considerable appeal, Los Angeles adman (and GOP functionary) Robert Walters told NEWSWEEK's Stephan Leshner that he hired mercenaries to go door to door a year ago trying to persuade American Party members to switch registration to either major party. Had they been able to reduce the American Party's registration to less than 11,000 (it was then 44,000), the party might have been dropped from the ballot. Then, after Wallace's shooting this year, his campaign director, Charles Snider, was invited to Washington by William France (a former Wallaceite now tied in with John Connally's Democrats for Nixon) and offered what Snider called "a rather responsible position in government" on the understanding that he would abandon Wallace. Snider later called an American Party leader named William Shearer and told him he could "write his own ticket" as a Republican - especially if his own party decided not to name a Presidential candidate.

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