

Charles Colson: Time for Apologies?

According to Arthur Burns, chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, Charles Colson, the former White House special counsel, has been going about this city apologizing to people for misdeeds accomplished while he was in the White House.

Burns says Colson experienced a religious conversion after Watergate which has led to his requests for forgiveness.

One such request was made to Burns himself. The confession is illustrative of Colson's preconversion mentality—and also of the kind of dirty trick which was customary in the Nixon White House.

Early in the Nixon administration, Burns made a speech critical of some of the President's economic decisions. Within a few days after he spoke out, a wire service carried a story saying that Burns was lobbying for a bill which would raise his own salary.

Burns recalls that he was shocked to see the story, which was totally untrue. "I remember remarking to my wife at the time," he said, "that I didn't even know that the bill would raise my salary, and that I hadn't thought about a raise in salary."

On the day the story appeared in the newspapers, Peter G. Peterson, former

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White House aide and later Secretary of Commerce, mentioned it at a regular morning White House staff meeting.

"Let me say something about loyalty," Peterson told the assembled group. "I read that story about Arthur Burns this morning, and I think whoever did that is being disloyal to this administration. To suppose that a man of the stature of Arthur Burns would lobby for a raise in his own salary is preposterous. That means somebody here is playing dirty tricks. And I don't think it serves the President to have it thought that one of his appointees would engage in this petty lobbying."

Peterson left the meeting later in the company of Ronald Ziegler, the

President's press secretary. "You might be amused to know," Ziegler whispered to him, "that the guy you were accusing was sitting next to you."

Colson came to Burns some months ago and confessed responsibility. Burns accepted the apology. He also accepts Colson's statement of conversion. "He has come to Christ," Burns says of him. The two men attend occasional prayer meetings at the White House.

What may not have occurred to Burns is that Colson regularly spent hours closeted alone with the President, and that the attack on him probably had Mr. Nixon's authorization. What he may also not know is that, if Colson really intends to apologize to everybody he went out of his way to

damage during his years in power, he has a long list of calls still to make.

One victim on whom he has not yet called is former Sen. Joseph Tydings of Maryland, whom Colson helped to defeat by arranging for publication in Life magazine of a story that Tydings had improperly intervened with a government agency on behalf of a legal client.

Nor has Colson called upon Sen. John Tunney (D-Calif.) to apologize for advertisements he placed, and which suggested that Tunney supported crime in the streets. Nor to Sen. Adlai Stevenson III (D-Ill.) or Albert Gore, the former senator from Tennessee, who were similarly treated.

And then there is the Kennedy family, which might think Colson owes it an apology for faking a telegram suggesting that John Kennedy approved the murder of South Vietnam's President Ngo Dinh Diem, and arranging with President Nixon to make a statement, "We were implicated in the murder of Diem," at a press conference.

(Colson refused to accept telephone calls from this reporter to discuss his religious conversion or his list of apologies.)