

Open Clash Over Selling

Atlanta

The controversy over the right to publish and sell "RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon" — as well as the right to tell potential readers not to buy the book — produced a confrontation Saturday at the annual meeting of the American Booksellers Association.

In a cool but tense news conference, the president of Nixon's publisher and the leaders of the small but vocal Committee to Boycott Nixon's Memoirs exchanged strong words about the ethical issues of helping to enrich the former president who resigned rather than face impeachment proceedings.

Harold Roth — president of Grosset & Dunlap, which published

the book at \$19.95 — referring to the campaign against the book, angrily said, "Anyone in this country has a right to make a damn fool of himself." He also accused some newspapers of seizing every opportunity to discredit Nixon.

The conference was called by Grosset & Dunlap to explain its position on the book. William Boleyn and Tom Flanigan, the boycott group's leaders, appeared in T-shirts that read: "Don't Buy Books By Crooks."

Also in the audience, but not commenting, was William Sarnoff, chairman of Warner Books, the paperback publisher that made the original deal with Nixon covering all publication rights to the memoirs for a reported \$2 million.

"There are people who feel that the publication of a book by Richard Nixon, a man who lives under the shadow of suspicion, is a totally inappropriate act," Roth said. "I find it difficult to understand such sentiments. It is incredible that anyone could suggest that a book not be published. If we abridge the freedom of any one writer or publisher, we effectively abridge the freedom of all."

Boleyn said that the campaign against the book is being deliberately distorted into a censorship issue.

"We have never said to people that they should not read books by crooks," Boleyn said in an interview. "Our point is that people should not buy the books and help enrich Mr. Nixon. We have never

of Nixon Book

said that the book should be suppressed. People who want to read it can get it out of the library, which they are entitled to do, or they can wait till this \$20 book goes into the remainder bins a half-year from now for \$2."

Roth said that the original printing of 225,000 copies had been increased to 300,000 copies; that the break-even point was about 50,000 copies, excluding Grosset & Dun-

lap's overhead and that from 150,000 to 175,000 orders had already been received for the book. He was uncertain if there had been any reorders on the book.

Knowledgeable publishing sources said that reorders are the real measure of a book's acceptance. Booksellers generally have a right to return books that are unsold after a period of time.

New York Times