

The Administration Reacts

WASHINGTON — Now that the election is over, it appears as if CBS television and the Washington Post can expect a heavy return fire from the Nixon Administration because of the way in which the CBS-Post axis sought to promote the presidential candidacy of George McGovern.

Evidence of administration anger is mounting. On Saturday, Nov. 11, special counsel to the President Charles W. Colson attacked CBS and the Post before the New England Society of Newspaper Editors. He laid out the chronology of the CBS-Post political warfare and likened their anti-Nixon tactics to the 1950's style of the late Senator Joseph McCarthy.

FURTHER GRIST for the administration's mill comes from TV Guide's Edith Efron, author of "The News Twisters," 1971's best-selling documentary of the network's glaring bias toward elitist liberalism. Obviously no one to shrink from a sharp (and commercially profitable) combat, Miss Efron has produced another volume entitled "How CBS Tried To Kill a Book." The reference, of course, is to CBS' attempt to rebut the bias charges of "The News Twisters."

Miss Efron charges CBS News President Richard Salant with all sorts of McCarthyite tactics, including: a) using hired "scholarship" to contest Efron research the scholars had never seen; b) issuing a report to the press which suppressed the chief political findings of an independent study which Salant himself originally commissioned; and c) circulating a systematically misleading study of "The News Twisters" throughout the U.S. media.

"It was to be expected that the networks would not receive a bias study gracefully," says Miss Efron. "But the CBS campaign was so dishonest that, although it did not succeed in killing TNT, it cannot be dismissed. It reveals a book-burning mentality in corporate CBS."

Alas for Salant and Company, Miss Efron is now at work on still another book, this one analyzing network coverage of the 1972 campaign. Walter Cronkite's CBS evening news will presumably be the chief target.

Efron and Colson are implicitly suggesting that the CBS-Post wing of the media Establishment is entering the thicket of partisan politics in a way that could change longtime constitutional relationships.

PRESIDENTIAL COUNSEL Colson's charges appear deadly serious. First, he accused the Washington Post of manufacturing "out of whole cloth" the alleged connection of White House aide Bob Halde- man to the Watergate scandal. Second, Colson seems to have accused the Post of timing its false charges to coincide with McGovern's campaign schedule.

As for CBS, Colson takes a solid swing at it, too, saying that "the ultimate coup was delivered by CBS in the closing days of the campaign — a two-part so-called news special on the Watergate case, rehashing all of the old charges, coming up with no new information, and noting only selective few denials. On one program, the unlabeled editorial took 15 minutes of a 22 minute news report. The second was ten minutes, one week to the day before the election."