

Capitol Punishment
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# 'Fallguys' And Footnotes

By Art Buchwald

LONDON—I don't wish to put down our own Watergate affair but when it comes to a good government scandal the British have us beat by a mile. Their latest scandal has to do with SEX.

It is the type of intrigue that even a charwoman can understand, having for its major characters cabinet ministers, lords, dukes and callgirls.

While our Watergate investigation has to do with who bugged whom, the British inquiry has zeroed in on who slept with whom, and for how much. And while the Senate drones on endlessly about what one lawyer told another lawyer in the Watergate break-in, the British scandal delves into the motives of why a man of title, wealth and position would pay for pleasure in the arms of a fallen woman.

What makes the British story different from Watergate is that all the major players are keeping a stiff upper lip. There is no begging for immunity, no taking the Fifth, no threats to implicate others.

When Lord Lambton, Prime Minister Heath's defense undersecretary, was confronted with compromising photographs of himself and a callgirl named Norma Levy, he did not say he was doing it on orders from higher authority. Nor did he explain he took his action to protect national security. He did not hide behind the Union Jack.

He said simply on the BBC when asked by the commentator: (and this is an exact quote, which shows you why British TV is so much better than ours) "Why should a man of your social position and charm and personality have to go to a whore?"

"Because," Lord Lambton replied, "I think that people sometimes like variety. I think it is as simple as that and I think this impulse is understood by everybody."

The main fear in the so-called Lambton Affair was that state secrets had been divulged during the liaisons. But Lord Lambton squashed that on his BBC broadcast. "Businessmen do not go with callgirls to talk of private matters. If a callgirl suddenly said to me, 'Please, Darling, tell me about the new laser ray,' or 'What do you think of the new Rolls Royce developments?' I would have known that something was up."

What also makes the Lambton scandal more interesting than the Watergate is that there was more than one lord involved. As a matter of fact, after Lambton, Lord Jellicoe, the lord privy seal in Heath's cabinet, admitted to having affairs with callgirls as well and tendered his resignation. There has also been a duke mentioned and nobody knows how many knights will eventually be involved.

I must say the British newspapers are taking it very well. They are keeping the public fully informed on every last detail of the sordid affair, interviewing the callgirls in question, the friends of the lords, the wives and anyone else who can shed light on what has become the best story since the Profumo Affair. As far as British journalism is concerned there will be no coverup.

Some Americans in London believe that the British broke the story at this time because they were jealous of Watergate.

"It was pure spite," an American State Department officer told me. "Britain knew it couldn't be a major power without a first rate scandal and the only way it could top us was to find one with lots of sex in it. We consider the breaking of the Lambton Affair at this time as a very unfriendly act."

The only bright side of the story, from the United States' point of view, is that although Lord Lambton has wiped Watergate off the front pages of Europe's newspapers, it's hard to sustain a callgirl scandal for very long.

Watergate, on the other hand, will probably go on for years. Americans can take comfort that while Haldeman, Ehrlichman and Mitchell will remain household words for a decade, Lord Lambton, Lord Jellicoe, duke what's-his-name and Norma Levy will soon be nothing more than a footnote in Britain's long and illustrious sexual scandal history.