

A Classmate Remembers...

By Kenneth Schlossberg

WASHINGTON—As a former classmate of Patrick Buchanan at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, class of '62, an elitist institution if there ever was one, I remember the drill we used to go through trying to make sense out of a jumble of bits and pieces of information and turning them into an understandable story.

Pat, I regret to say, was always considerably better at that drill than I, finishing first and almost always getting the story straight. Maybe that's why his latest effort on making some sense out of the Watergate was such a shock. It is just very difficult to see how anybody who was once so good at getting the story so straight, can get one so screwed up now.

I will say this. I agree with Pat 1,000 per cent on the coalition-government proposal that leading Democrats should be given free Cabinet seats at Richard Nixon's Round Table.

Why any Democrat, of any substance and of sound mind, would want to lend respectability to the Nixon regime now is beyond me. So, on that point, Pat and I agree. He doesn't want any of us Democrats in there now, and neither do I.

When it comes to Watergate, though, agreement between us would seem to end. Reading Pat's account of last fall's events, one would be led to believe that Watergate was really quite a major issue in the campaign, changing millions of votes.

Maybe Pat and I see this one so differently because he was sitting here in Washington, holed up with the President attending to affairs of state, reading the infamous Washington Post which was just about the only journal doing a real job on Watergate.

Out there in the country, traveling on the campaign plane with Senator McGovern, reading the non-Eastern Establishment journals in which Pat places so much stock, Watergate was a dam which pretty clearly hadn't even begun to leak, never mind burst into the public consciousness.

It has been about four months since James McCord's sledge-hammer letter to Judge Sirica put the first big crack in the Watergate dam. There were five months left of campaign time, following the arrest of McCord, Liddy, Hunt *et al* in National Democratic Committee headquarters.

What if during those five months—June, July, August, September and October—during the heat of the campaign, the following had occurred:

Jeb Stuart Magruder, Deputy Director of the President's re-election committee, had been charged with perjury before the grand jury and forced to resign his post?

Maurice Stans, former Secretary of Commerce and finance director of the President's re-election committee, had been indicted before a grand jury for lying in regard to an S.E.C. case against a corporation?

John Mitchell, former Attorney General and former campaign director of the President's re-election committee, who resigned hurriedly and under mysterious circumstances, had similarly been indicted and, further, had been linked to the Watergate burglary itself as having directly approved it?

John Dean, the President's counsel, had admitted involvement in the cover-up of Watergate, had charged higher White House involvement and had leaked documents proving long-standing and widespread illegal and clandestine White House-directed activities, including wiretapping the press and breaking into embassies and Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office?

The President's two oldest and closest advisers and friends, H. R. Halde- man and John Ehrlichman, had been forced to resign under a cloud of suspicion?

The President had issued a long public statement, admitting setting in motion the chain of events that led to the whole, unsavory affair, but had denied direct involvement or responsibility for the final result?

Pat says all of this wouldn't have made much of a difference in the count last November, that the public was so turned off by McGovern's Eagleton disaster and identification with unpopular social groups and policies, the vote would have stayed at 60 to 40.

I say give me back those five months. Give me a Democratic candidate, who, despite his Eagleton and other problems, projects a genuine sense of decency and honesty. Give me a Democratic party united behind that candidate because of the outrageous acts of the opposition. And, finally, give me a really informed public, with all the facts about both candidates' campaigns.

Give me all that and I'll give Pat Buchanan any odds he chooses that George McGovern, instead of being wiped out in a hopelessly rigged election, would have given Richard Nixon a real run for his money.

Kenneth Schlossberg is director of the Senate Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs.

Article by Buchanan,
NYTimes 11 Jun 73

