

How They Answered

On Aug. 2, Patrick J. Buchanan, special consultant to President Nixon, wrote an article on the Op-Ed Page of *The Times* in which he spoke sharply about the critics of the Administration. He said that "the Watergate crowd cannot hold a candle to its principal accusers in politics and the press." On the same day, William Safire, a *Times* columnist (and former Nixon speechwriter), wrote on the Op-Ed Page an article in which he also defended the Administration. His column posed a number of "howcums." An example: "Howcum the lack of investigation of massive vote frauds in the 1960 Kennedy-Nixon campaign has never been called a 'cover-up'?" The two columns drew a large response. Here are some of the letters:

To the Editor:

Patrick J. Buchanan and William Safire find themselves in the unenviable position of whitewashing the White House. Both a present and former Presidential speechwriter are desperately trying to bury Watergate under a scathing counterattack on the reputed misdeeds of the Democrats. But two wrongs do not make a right: alleged vote-frauds in the 1960 Kennedy Nixon campaign make a poor excuse for "dirty tricks" in 1972, and buggings of the past hardly justify Presidential wiretapping now. Our White House apologists should face the fact that absence of moral leadership is at the bottom of Watergate.

ALFRED GOLDSMITH
Pearl River, N. Y.

To the Editor:

I cannot refrain my appreciation. It took me back many years to when the *Times* editorial page was required reading. I only get *The Times* these days because of its delivery and financial section weekdays. Until this morning I was sure articles like those of Messrs. Buchanan and Safire would not be permissible. I am passing it along to two friends who have discontinued *The Times* because of its slanted views and mentioned it to three more who wouldn't believe my report. Together with the Anthony Lewis article on London it made for a delightful and refreshing half hour.

Thank you for the change and I hope it may indicate a presentation of both sides of national issues. This "Get Nixon" attitude on the part of much of the press and TV media both led by the Watergate senatorial committee, is creating unfavorable, and fearful, comment by many voters—exceeding the Watergate issues. WALTER P. BECKER
Lakewood, N. J.

To the Editor:

In his defense of President Nixon, Mr. Buchanan quotes a charge by the Chancellor of the University of Rochester, W. Allen Wallis, that the reaction to the Watergate break-in "... by journalists and politicians ... has been morally even more corrupt than the Watergate activities themselves."

Lest the public be led to believe that this is the impartial judgment of an unbiased mind, it should be noted that for many years Chancellor Wallis has been a personal friend and adviser of the President. For example, it was primarily through Chancellor Wallis' efforts that over faculty protest Mr. Nixon was awarded an honorary degree from the University of Rochester in 1966.

To quote Chancellor Wallis' opinion of the Watergate mess as if it were the view of an unprejudiced citizen, is as unfair as it would be to cite a known White House spokesman.

WILLIAM JACOBS
Columbus, Ohio
University of Rochester
Class of 1968

To the Editor:

In his passionate defense of the President, Mr. Buchanan attributes to "the power of the press" the fact that "36 per cent of the American people have become convinced that the President had prior knowledge of the Watergate break-in" though no witness has testified to it. It is not fair to expect a Presidential speechwriter to entertain an alternative explanation, but others ought to consider at least one other hypothesis.

Buchanan and Safire

Those Americans who suspect the President of complicity in the Watergate affair are in an old American tradition of believing the worst of their leaders. In each era of our history some politicians have taken advantage of the cynicism to further their own interests and careers.

The most notable recent exemplar was Senator Joseph McCarthy whose stock in trade was insinuation and accusation against those "in high places" who, for example, "lost China." Another man who furthered his career in this fashion was Richard M. Nixon who in the investigation of Alger Hiss made a great point of showing how outward respectability masked evil acts. MURRAY HAUSKNECHT
Hanover, N. H.

To the Editor:

The Aug. 2 Op-Ed Page might well be retitled the Committee to Resurrect the President page. Neither Mr. Buchanan nor Mr. Safire attempts to evaluate the charges against the President and his aides; indeed, they barely refer to them. Instead they try to bury them with a barrage of already discredited countercharges which have nothing to do with the current allegations. I thought that the analogy between Dr. Ellsberg's public release of a historical report the public should long ago have seen and the wiretapping of private conversations for partisan gain had already died a natural death but here it is again. Once more we are told that Joe McGinnis, who never represented himself as anything but the reporter he was, is the equivalent of hired spies and saboteurs who had other things in mind than simply writing books.

A point-by-point refutation of these accusations would be as irrelevant to the matter at hand as the charges themselves. Buchanan is quite right when he says that the ultimate question is not legal but political but, like so many Nixon aides, he confuses the political with the merely partisan. While President Nixon has shown in both word and deed that he considers politics to be a dirty business, we must ask whether it must be so.

BRUCE E. ALTSCHULER
New York City

To the Editor:

Back in the 1940's we raging liberals indulged in the indoor sport of swapping incisive parables that went by the name of jokes. Perhaps it is the passage of time that makes me think there was more wit and less wind in political debate in those days.

Mr. Buchanan's angry, rambling defense of Nixonian tactics put me in mind of a particularly apt parable. (It seems that): A Russian was proudly showing off the magnificent Moscow subway to an American visitor. After admiring the impressive decorations at length, the American realized that he had seen no trains in the station.

"How often do your trains run?" he asked.

"And have you noticed that the walls and floors are absolutely spotless? No chewing gum wrappers lying around here!" said the Russian.

"Yes," said the American, "but when does the train come?"

"The most prominent artists designed these murals," answered the Russian.

"That's wonderful, but where is the train?"

The Russian, no longer polite, snapped back, "Well, what about your lynchings in the South?"

CHARLOTTE FRIEDMAN
New York City

To the Editor:

"Pat Buchanan" tells it like it is.

What amazes this writer is the fact you published it. After all, it had to pass muster through the hands of pseudo-liberals, left-wing liberals and plain phony liberals. Its a wonder it did not end up in the trash can. My oh my! You liberals are really being liberals for a change.

JAMES KANE
Stamford, Conn.

To the Editor:

I wish to commend you for publishing the two articles. This has changed my opinion of The Times as I felt you were a "get Nixon" newspaper.

I think perhaps the unfairness of the Watergate "Inquisition" has opened your eyes.

I believe the President after opening friendly relations with China and Russia could have prevailed on these countries, so desirous of trade with the U.S.A., to stop the war supplies to North Vietnam and brought peace to all Indonesia and great credit for our country if the antiwar groups had not succeeded in stopping him and undoing all that had been done to bring lasting peace to Vietnam.

JOHN LAWRENCE
New York City

To the Editor:

Mr. Buchanan says Nixon's "principal accusers" want "to sink their teeth in the President of the United States." Move over, and pass the mustard. A little baloney might taste good for a change.

MRS. A. GORDON WHITNEY
Westborough, Mass.

To the Editor:

The volley of billingsgate fired by Pat Buchanan and Bill Safire testifies to the paranoia of those who would defend the cause of the Watergate perpetrators and of the executive responsible at all costs.

The thrust of the Buchanan-Safire attack came out of a propaganda primer. It used the tired conspiracy theory to blame newsmen and "liberals" of a plot to "get Nixon." Around this went a smokescreen of ancient allegations of political wrongs designed to seduce us into thinking that since politicians in the past did wrong, the present act of wrongdoing can be excused.

But the real meaning of Watergate remains undisturbed. Watergate poses the darkest threat to our system of free elections as well as to free assembly, free press and free speech. Apparently Buchanan and Safire cannot see this. Yet these rights are hardly the "small, vicious, murky, unimportant little things" that Nixon would have us believe.

DAVID Q. VOIGHT
Reading, Pa.

To the Editor:

Thank you, thank you, thank you! I twice checked to see if it could be the good grey Times. Surely someone must have taken the day off, or have Letters to the Editor been getting to you a last? If only this sort of thing could happen now and then I might again become a regular Times reader.

Keep trying.
W. L. PAYNE
Grahamsville, N. Y.