

Nixon Spy Quotes Disputed by Sources

By Jack Anderson

The possibility has now been raised that the celebrated political spy, Seymour Freidin, may have submitted false reports to the White House.

We have obtained copies of his colorful, confidential spy reports. One of the most sizzling passages, for example, recounts what the late President Lyndon B. Johnson was supposed to have told Newsweek columnist Ken Crawford off-the-record on June 18, 1971.

Freidin quotes LBJ as swearing "to do everything I possibly can" behind the scenes to defeat Sen. George McGovern (D-S.D.) and "the lefties, the creeps and all their ... friends" associated with him. This was a year before McGovern was nominated.

"They hate me; they always have," LBJ supposedly said. He vowed not to attend the Democratic National Convention, Freidin reported, because the McGovernites had "rigged" convention procedures. "It won't be a convention," LBJ supposedly growled. "It will be a g—d—zoo."

His refusal to attend, he was quoted as saying, "won't bother the b—s. What will bother them is what they won't really know. I'm going to do every-

thing I possibly can to beat the dirty, rotten SOB's in 1972. You can bet on that."

He referred to McGovern personally, according to the spy report, as "that silly SOB" and warned that "the b—s are trying to kill the country; they don't give a damn. We have to find a common, unifying way to beat their heads to a pulp."

Crawford acknowledged that he had spoken to the late President on the phone and may have discussed the conversation with Freidin afterward at lunch. But Freidin's account, swore Crawford, was "made out of whole cloth."

Later, Freidin reported to the White House that the McGovern crowd suspected Mr. Johnson was working secretly against them even after they made a pilgrimage to the LBJ ranch to mollify him.

On Aug. 28, 1972, for example, Freidin quoted McGovern aide Gary Hart as saying: "Hell, we all knew LBJ's background for cunning and fast dealing. Here is his man John Connally and his man Leonard Marks for Nixon. As a former President who was in the Democratic Party, LBJ couldn't say that he'd be a Democrat for Nixon. But all his close pals were."

However, Hart told us: "I don't recall making any state-

ment of that sort. And I don't remember even meeting Mr. Freidin. I absolutely was not with the traveling party in late August as Freidin implies."

Former Sen. Fred Harris (D-Okla.), took exception to still another Freidin spy report. Suggested Harris: "I imagine that every time Freidin needed a payment he simply sat down and dreamed up a report."

Two former aides of Sen. Ed Muskie (D-Maine), Berl Bernhard and Dick Stewart, also denied statements that Freidin attributed to them. "That's just baloney," Bernhard told us. "I'd say Freidin's reports were apocryphal, and as a matter of common decency, he should return the money he received."

Stewart also swore he never spoke to Freidin. "I wouldn't recognize him if I fell over him," he said.

Freidin was hired by President Nixon's political aide, Murray Chotiner, who paid him \$1,000 a week to use his correspondent's credentials to spy on the Democrats. We reached Freidin in London where he is a foreign correspondent.

He said his political spying had consisted simply of attending press briefings with other correspondents and picking up "gossip at cocktail parties."

"I never had an exclusive in-

terview with anybody," he said. He had passed on his reports, he said, in raw form. "I never saw a finished report," he told us.

The final reports were distributed by Chotiner to then White House chief of staff H. R. Haldeman, Attorney General John N. Mitchell and campaign director Clark MacGregor.

The reports not only contained alleged "intelligence" from inside the McGovern camp but occasional suggestions from Freidin on how to handle McGovern.

For instance, Freidin reported that "McGovern gets rattled when sharp questions are thrown at him," and suggested that McGovern be badgered at future news conferences with these questions:

What makes you think you are qualified to run for the presidential nomination? Have you ever had a piece of major legislation adopted? Where did you get the money for your present house?

"When I tossed these questions at him," confided Freidin in a report to Chotiner, "he ducked . . . All three questions put to him can be re-run and used repeatedly. They shake him up."

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