

## Book Business



By JOYCE ILLIG

THE CITY EDITOR of The Washington Post, Barry Sussman, now has his own Watergate book, *The Great Coverup*. It will be published September 16 in hardcover (Crowell at \$7.95 with a first printing of 25,000 copies) and in paperback (New American Library at \$1.95 with a first printing of 500,000 copies). Early readers are predicting it will be the first Watergate book to put the whole story in perspective in a very readable way. And they call Sussman's conclusive chronicle of events astonishing because it bears out Watergate disclosures right up to and including the president's resignation.

The New York Review of Books and Book Digest are interested in it for serial rights, and English publishers have called about foreign rights.

What makes this attention stunning is that Sussman has been working on the book for two years, and hasn't had an easy time getting it published. He started out with an agent, and a deal at Random House. It didn't work out. Sussman kept reworking the manuscript as events would unfold and finally sold it to NAL himself a few months ago, not expecting a hardcover sale. NAL decided to submit it to hardcover publishers and Crowell caught the same high fever that had been running at NAL.

Sussman, who took a 10-week leave of absence from the Post to complete the manuscript, was one of the editors who was closely involved in the Watergate coverage as it developed and contributed a great deal to the newspaper's winning the Pulitzer Prize for its coverage of Watergate.

Sussman considers the most important theme in his book to be that of Nixon as a practitioner of the politics of cooperation. "The tendency of elected officials was to cooperate with Nixon, not to try to savage him," he said, offering as an example the proposed Patman hearings in 1972. "There were no Patman hearings because a number of congressmen agreed to the White House request not to hold hearings on Watergate before the 1972 election when

they really should have known better . . . that doesn't mean that every congressman who voted against the hearings was motivated by a politics of rescue, but it means that enough were to have destroyed those hearings. Nixon was a politician who believed in and was able to extract cooperation from members of both parties."

But he explained, "One of the things that forced these nonentities to take off after Nixon was the presence of massive press and television scrutiny. There's a limit to how much any politician is going to allow himself to be discredited. A lot of them don't mind being discredited among their colleagues but they sure as hell don't want to be discredited on a television screen."

TWO INSTANT PAPERBACKS on President Nixon's resignation have been published by The Washington Post and The New York Times. Both papers were prepared to publish special impeachment books and shifted plans two weeks ago.

*The Fall of a President* (\$1.75), a 256-page paperback published by The Washington Post and Dell, is based on a special section called "The Nixon Years" that appeared in the newspaper the day after the resignation and includes as well material such as the articles of impeachment and Nixon's East Room farewell. The first printing is 350,000 copies.

Bantam and The New York Times have 250,000 copies of their instant book, *The End of a President* (\$2.25) out now.

The 432-page book offers interpretive articles by the staff of The Times; a 190-page five-year chronology of events leading to Nixon's resignation; President Ford's inaugural statement; key documents which include the articles of impeachment and the three incriminating tape transcripts of June 23, 1972; and a 64-page pictorial history of the Nixon era.

The monopoly that Bantam and The New York Times had on instant books was broken when The Washington Post published their first instant paperback with Dell, *The Presidential Transcripts*, which sold approximately 1,360,000 copies of the 1,700,000 copies in print. According to William Dickinson, who heads the Post Writers Group and is responsible for getting The Post into the instant paperback field, the newspaper has a contract with Dell that says Dell has first refusal on the next instant paperback. In this publishing deal, Dell assumes the entire publishing risk so they determine price, length and print orders. The Washington Post keeps control of the editorial copy.

The availability of paper and of press time partly determine what can be done, and for this book, Dell felt they could only handle 256 pages. "So we had to cut a considerable number of pages on resource material at the last minute that we had hoped to get in," said Dickinson. "It's the kind of compromise you have to make to get the book out and distributed quickly."

The advance on *The Fall of a President* will go to The Washington Post newsroom to be divided among the writers and editors who worked on the project. □

JOYCE ILLIG reports frequently on the publishing scene for Book World.