

Bookmakers

by Christopher Dickey

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Ex Post Watergate

RICHARD NIXON is laboring away at San Clemente on his own version of the Watergate affair. The New York Times reported at the end of last month that he "maintains his innocence and contends that Watergate was merely a partisan scandal used by his enemies to bring him down." Since then, however, several persons associated with the project have denied that Nixon has written about "Watergate" at all, but only about the last few weeks of his stay in office, and his family's reaction to the growing pressure for his resignation. His agent, Irving Lazar, "has not read" anything yet about Haldeman or Ehrlichman or the Watergate crisis in the years between the break-in and the resignation. Most of what has been written—about 300,000 words—has been about Nixon's early years and about his relations with foreign leaders.

Nixon originally aimed to finish the manuscript—expected to be about 400,000 words in its early form, between 200 and 250 thousand when published—before his birthday on January 9. Now it is not expected until late February or March, with publication of the book no sooner than Fall 1977.

Warner Books owns the hard and soft cover rights to the memoirs, having reportedly paid \$2 million for them. When Howard Kaminsky, president and publisher of Warner, was asked if the account would be a "whitewash" he would only say that

any explanation by Nixon of his role in Watergate will be "considerably more complex" than what was suggested in the New York Times story. Asked about possible buyer resistance to a self-serving account, Kaminsky said that the book "will be fascinating. And that is what a book needs in order to sell."

Both Kaminsky and Lazar deny any knowledge of how or why the outline and a fraction of the manuscript reached the front page of the New York Times. What Lazar said was, "Nobody at Warner leaked them. I didn't leak them. Sydney Gruson did read those pages." Gruson is executive vice president of the New York Times Company, which bought serialization rights to the memoirs last June. He is vacationing in Mexico and has been unavailable for comment.

Meanwhile, Spiro Agnew has begun work on his own memoirs and according to a reliable source he has called at least one publishing house to discuss them, and the house was not Playboy, which published his novel. A spokesman for his agent, Scott Meredith, denies any knowledge of these overtures.

Meredith was also the agent for H. R. Haldeman at one point, but has since severed ties with the former Nixon aide. Outlines and drafts of the manuscript which were shown around to publishers were reportedly so exculpatory that no one was interested.

John Ehrlichman, having scored a reasonable success with his CIA roman a clef, *The Company* (paperback

rights to Pocket Books, film to Paramount), is at work on his second Washington novel for Simon & Schuster. He has just delivered the "first block of manuscript," but his agent, Morton Janklow, declined to talk about it. (Janklow is also the agent for former CIA chief William Colby, whose memoirs are currently being offered to publishers in New York.)

John Dean's book, *Blind Ambition* has been on conspicuous display in one Georgetown bookstore for a week, but as of Friday had sold only about 15 copies. Another shop, downtown on Connecticut Avenue, reports sales of 40 to 50 copies since the book arrived last Tuesday.

At Random

IN THE LAST few weeks Random House has lost two vice presidents, an editor and an assistant editor. Selma Shapiro, vice president in charge of publicity, resigned. Soon after, vice president and editor-in-chief of the adult book division, James Silberman, decided to accept an offer from Richard Snyder of Simon and Schuster to establish a new publishing house of his own as an affiliate of S&S. Accompanying him on his move have been Christine Steinmetz and Mary Guin. What is not clear yet is whether such authors as E. L. Doctorow and Adam Smith, whom Silberman edited for Random House, will now publish with his new company.

Jason Epstein, it was announced, will now become the "editorial director" of Random House. □