

## A Leaky Memoir



**Mary McGrory**

**H**E WASN'T, Richard Nixon told us in his second interview with David Frost, "a very good butcher."

H.R. Haldeman, his chief of staff, is, though. He has taken a cleaver to his old boss. And perhaps as a sop to conscience, or possibly just because logic was never a strong point in that crew, he goes on to tell us that he believes that Nixon was a man who "uniquely fitted the overwhelming demands of the times."

You will remember that after that broadcast last May, when Nixon accused himself of neglecting his role of chief law enforcement officer by acting as defense lawyer for Haldeman and John Ehrlichman, Haldeman declined to comment. Ever the adman, he held back for the buck. He would not defend his honor and his good name except for a price. Read my book, he said from prison.

Now "The Ends of Power" has been hurled into the public prints amid circumstances entirely worthy of the Nixon White House — big money, dark secrecy, intrigue, leaks, charges of treachery and bad faith. Despite printing-plant security precautions in the CREEP tradition, two-thirds of the book leaked to the Washington Post.

The New York Times, which published the book, and sold \$870,000 worth of serial rights, is "outraged" with the Post.

The Post's attitude is that the Haldeman memoir was "just like the Pentagon Papers, which the Times published when they had them handed to them."

**T**HE CONVICT and the ex-President must be enjoying the sight of the hated Eastern Establishment press at each others' throats.

And it could all happen again in May when the Nixon memoirs will be upon us. Will we have a rerun of the melodrama of secret printings, secrecy oaths, maximum hype, possible leaks and civil war in the press?

But the larger question is, is it all worth it in either case? Does the pen make an honest man of the liar? Why is Bob Haldeman any more believable writing that Nixon inspired the break-in than he was when he swore under oath at the Watergate hearings that Nixon had nothing to do with it?

The joke, if there is one, is that if Nixon had not turned on Haldeman on the David Frost show, Haldeman would have gone on defending him.

Haldeman informs us that he took up his dagger "reluctantly." Apparently, he will, presumably, cry all the way to the bank, like the other Watergate figures.

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**H**ALDEMAN IS having the last laugh — the J. Walter Thompson dream come true, a tidal wave of publicity, maddened media titans thundering at his old enemy, the Washington Post, royalties piling up outside the prison walls.

It may be time to paraphrase the old peace slogan, "What if they gave a war and nobody came?"

What if a Watergater wrote a book and nobody bought it?

**Arthur Hoppe is on vacation**