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## The Ends of Power

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## BOOK REVIEWS

**THE ENDS OF POWER.** By H.R. Haldeman with Joseph DiMona.<sup>1</sup> New York: The New York Times Book Co., Inc., 1978. Pp. xxi, 326. \$12.95.

*Reviewed by George L. Waas<sup>2</sup>*

It would be easy at first blush to cast aside *The Ends of Power* as simply another Watergate book written for profit—an attempt by its author to reap financial reward from criminal activity—except that the author served for more than four years as Richard Nixon’s Chief of Staff, the President’s alter ego, “the second most powerful man in government.”<sup>3</sup>

An explanation of Watergate from this unique vantage point is the book’s overriding justification as Haldeman meshes theory with revelation in presenting his version of how a “third-rate burglary”<sup>4</sup> became a convoluted labyrinthine cancer which consumed an administration, toppled a President, crippled a nation’s faith in its government, and almost tore apart its constitution.

There is no mistaking the fact that this book is about Watergate. Although Haldeman highlights some of Nixon’s accomplishments in foreign affairs and intimates that his ex-boss averted a crisis with the Soviet Union in 1970 similar to Kennedy’s 1962 confrontation with Russia over the installation of missiles in Cuba, the author continually returns to *the burglary* and *the cover-up*.

According to Haldeman, Watergate happened because of an unbelievable failure of President Nixon and his men to grasp the significance of each event as it occurred in relation to previous events. They could not fit the pieces into the Watergate puzzle as each piece came into existence until it was too late and others had seen the whole sordid picture.

Haldeman’s Watergate catharsis is a study of roleplaying by ambitious men and extremism in the practice and pursuit of Presiden-

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1. H.R. Haldeman is the former Chief of Staff to President Richard M. Nixon. Joseph DiMona is an author whose books include *LAST MAN AT ARLINGTON* and *THE BENEDICT ARNOLD CONNECTION*.

2. Member, The Florida Bar. B.S.J., University of Florida, 1965; J.D., Florida State University, 1970.

3. As so stated by members of the Washington press corps and others in and out of the Nixon administration.

4. The White House’s initial public reaction to Watergate as stated by Press Secretary Ronald Ziegler.

tial loyalty coupled with the absolute belief that the end justifies the means.

The author begins his Watergate reflections by looking at the central figure, his ex-boss, Richard Nixon. Haldeman portrays his mentor as a study of stark contrasts—brilliant and sociable, secretive and vindictive. Throughout the book, the author refers to examples of Nixon's explosive dark side, particularly his well-documented vendetta against the press and against all those he perceived as political enemies.

Nixon's attack mentality pervaded his inner White House structure and permeated the attitudes of his closest advisors. The President's attitude and its ability to infect those close to him meshed with Nixon's envy of the Kennedy style and charisma and with his own shortcomings (which Haldeman characterizes as "amazing awkwardness") to nurture effectively the seeds which sprouted into Watergate.

Against this backdrop, Nixon employed Haldeman as "the straight, hit-them-over-the-head" [p. 61] tactician, domestic advisor John Ehrlichman "was given the more devious approach" [*id.*], and Charles Colson "was assigned the real underground routes" [*id.*]. Such was the inner structure of the Office of the President of the United States in the early 1970's!

Haldeman says Nixon's personality and paranoia led him to erect a wall of isolation—a "Berlin wall"—around the President. The author cites two reasons for insulating Nixon and cultivating criticism for Presidential inaccessibility: to avoid wasting precious Presidential time and to protect Nixon from himself. Nixon was prone to issue vindictive orders (such as, in an emotional outburst, an edict barring the press from Air Force One) which, for obvious reasons, were never to be carried out. It was Haldeman's job to screen these orders and separate those which were to be executed from those which had to be ignored.

With all these elements in place, Haldeman spins his tale as to why the Watergate break-in occurred. According to the author, Nixon believed that Democratic National Committee Chairman Larry O'Brien was on Howard Hughes's payroll as a lobbyist and told Colson, the President's "hit man," to "get the goods" on O'Brien. Colson then passed the word to E. Howard Hunt, who conferred with G. Gordon Liddy, who decided that placing a tap on O'Brien's phone (and that of a Hughes associate) would be the starting point. Haldeman believes that the Democratic high command knew of the planned break-in, let it happen, and may even have planted the plainclothesmen who arrested the burglars. He

also believes that the CIA monitored the burglary, which he claims was deliberately sabotaged.

The author also theorizes that the incessant probing into the Watergate burglary in an effort to find a White House connection stemmed from Nixon's announced massive reorganization of the government in 1973 and its threat to the four major power blocs in Washington (in order of importance): the press, the bureaucracy, the Congress, and the intelligence community.

Each of them was under threat by the President in January 1973, who was at the height of his popularity with the American people. Each of them reacted with special ferocity because that President was Richard Nixon. And in the months of January, February and March of 1973, they would mount a war on the White House. [P. 181.]

Then came the tapes. Haldeman believes that Alex Butterfield, a former CIA agent who revealed the existence of the Nixon tapes during his appearance before the Senate Watergate Committee, may have been a CIA plant in the White House and that he may have been one of several such infiltrators. This is but another manifestation of the White House siege mentality at the time.

As Nixon became more and more aware of what was on those tapes, Haldeman believes his ex-boss's involvement increased proportionately. The author maintains that Nixon participated in the cover-up for three reasons: first, to prevent any possible connection of himself to the break-in through Colson; second, to forestall disclosure of former Attorney General John Mitchell's involvement; and third, to avoid exposure of other things such as the break-in of Dr. Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office. Nixon's involvement became so pitched that, according to Haldeman, the President personally sought to erase all Watergate material from the tapes when he started to worry that they—and he—might be exposed.

Yet Haldeman maintains that Nixon would have survived in the White House were it not for some bad luck:

It took bombshell after bombshell . . . to destroy a powerful President. What is fascinating in reconstructing the true story of Watergate is both the *timing* of those bombshells and the surprise twists which made their shocks even more effective. Nixon was never prepared. Time and again after he thought he had stabilized his ship of state, and knew every danger lurking in the waters, another torpedo would explode amidships and Nixon and his crew, including me, would frantically be shoring up bulkheads against a sea of outrage. [P. 232.]

Haldeman recites the three most significant events leading to Nixon's resignation: the disclosure of the tapes, John Dean's transition from White House loyalist to leading informer, and the United States Supreme Court's ruling against Nixon on disclosure of the tapes to the special Watergate prosecutors. On the last point, Haldeman makes his most damning accusation against his former boss by saying that Nixon would have defied the Supreme Court and refused to turn over the tapes if a less than unanimous decision had been rendered. When the Court, on July 18, 1974, ruled eight to zero against Nixon, it unknowingly averted a constitutional showdown between the executive and judicial branches of government.

It is unfortunate that Haldeman believes it is necessary to spend so much time trying to find psychological and political reasons to explain Watergate as justification for his premise that it was blown completely out of proportion by those out to "get" Nixon. Such an excuse for what happened is of secondary value. What this book lacks is a moral judgment and a statement to the reader that this type of conduct from those privileged to serve at the ultimate level of power must never be tolerated. Although he admits limited culpability, the author seeks to excuse his crime by saying that his perjury conviction arose out of events that appeared inconsequential and innocent at the time. Moreover, Haldeman intimates that, had the tapes been destroyed and had Dean remained silent, Nixon would have completed his second term.

*The Ends of Power* tells the reader much about the personality and psychological constitution of Richard Nixon. It also tells us much about his militant alter ego, who says he did not understand or come to grips with the significance of Watergate in time to save his chief and himself and, just prior to Nixon's resignation, asked his beleaguered former boss for a pardon for all Watergate participants, throwing in for good measure a pardon for Vietnam draft resisters. Haldeman's last request of President Nixon was a thinly veiled effort by this martinet to avoid prison for perjury and incidentally to get others off the hook.

A proper and adequate review of this book must take into account the author's spoken intentions and unspoken motives. Because, although Haldeman professes ignorance of the true and profound impact of Watergate as each event unfolded, he stands before the people as a convicted perjurer trying to explain away this sordid chapter in American history and blame others for its fallout while reaping economic rewards for telling his side of the story. In sum, it is impossible to judge this book by its cover.

THE GOOD GUYS, THE BAD GUYS AND THE FIRST AMENDMENT: FREE SPEECH VS. FAIRNESS IN BROADCASTING. By Fred W. Friendly,<sup>1</sup> New York: Random House, 1976. Pp. xvi, 236. \$10.00.

*Reviewed by Neil D. McFeeley<sup>2</sup>*

"[In] some areas of the law it is easy to tell the good guys from the bad guys. . . . In the current debate over the broadcast media and the First Amendment . . . each debator claims to be the real protector of the First Amendment . . . . [T]he answers are not easy" [p. xi]. This quote from Judge J. Skelly Wright indicates the issue which Fred Friendly confronts in this book. By focusing on the evolution of the "fairness doctrine" as applied to electronic journalism, Friendly attempts to take a wide look at the question of the application of first amendment freedom of the press to television and radio.

Friendly, who served as president of CBS News and is now a journalism professor at Columbia University, is in an excellent position to discuss the controversy between freedom of the press and fairness. (The only time Friendly's personal bias in favor of TV news, and CBS in particular, seems to show is in a relatively unimportant chapter in which he castigates a defective study highly critical of the Walter Cronkite show.) This perspective enables him to explore thoroughly the problem of how to prevent governmental interference with broadcast journalism, yet ensure access for opposing points of view. This is the conflict that the networks, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the Congress, and the courts have tried to resolve since the government began to allocate the airways and to license stations.

Friendly traces the development of the fairness doctrine—the FCC regulation (later codified in law) which requires that a "reasonable amount" of broadcast time be devoted to discussion of controversial issues and that a "reasonable opportunity" to present opposing viewpoints be provided. He notes that the latter aspect has been the subject of much of the controversy—the question of the "personal attack" provision upheld in *Red Lion Broadcasting Co. v. FCC*,<sup>3</sup> the use of the fairness doctrine as an instrument of public

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1. Fred W. Friendly is Edward R. Murrow Professor of Journalism at the Columbia School of Journalism and is the Ford Foundation Advisor on Communications. He is a former president of CBS News. Mr. Friendly received his Lh.D. from Rhode Island College in 1965, and was awarded a Doctor of Honorary Letters degree by Grinnell College in 1967.

2. Assistant Professor of Political Science, University of Idaho. B.A., University of Texas at Austin, 1971; Ph.D., University of Texas at Austin, 1975.

3. 395 U.S. 367 (1969).

policy in anticigarette advertising; and the question of equal access by the opposition to combat the President's use of TV. In all these areas there is a balancing of the rights of those who demand fairness on the part of radio and television stations and the rights of those journalists and others who argue that the government has no right to (and is prohibited by the first amendment from attempting to) regulate any part of the news media. Friendly describes how the various agencies and courts have attempted this balance.

One of the better parts of the book is Friendly's close examination of a few specific cases. *Red Lion*, the 1969 case in which the fairness doctrine was upheld, is traced from its beginning to the eventual Supreme Court decision. Friendly offers a fascinating account of a significant case which began with a demand for free rebuttal time worth less than ten dollars on a local radio station and yet resulted in a quarter of a million dollars worth of legal costs, the interplay of national political parties, and a judgment day in the Supreme Court. Friendly discusses both the interesting background and the strategy of the case which led to a "race to the circuits" in order to get the most favorable hearing.

Friendly goes beyond this discussion of individual cases to an examination of the central issue of freedom of the press versus fairness. He explores the opinions of a variety of network executives, journalists, FCC Commissioners, Congressmen, and judges in an attempt to show the conflicts in their views. He examines the Supreme Court's decision in *Miami Herald Publishing Co. v. Tornillo*<sup>4</sup> (rejecting the notion of government-required fairness in newspapers) and compares this more recent decision to that in *Red Lion*. *Tornillo*, which some claim relegates the electronic media to second-class status, is explained not by the theoretical fact of scarcity of licenses but by the fact that it is the government which grants the electronic media the exclusive place on the dial through the licensing process. But does this process confer on government the right to regulate the content of broadcast news?

The final chapters in *The Good Guys, the Bad Guys and the First Amendment* attempt to answer this question. Friendly offers his own thoughts on the issue and argues that there should be a middle ground between those who decry any governmental regulation and those who would have the FCC monitor each newscast for evidence of bias. He suggests that this middle ground might be a voluntary policy by the electronic media of access for responsible opposing viewpoints. Stations would then be judged on their overall records

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4. 418 U.S. 241 (1974).

of compliance "with the goal of devoting prime time to the discussion of controversial issues of public importance, and [their] active policy of affording reasonable opportunity for opposing viewpoints" [p. 226]. This approach would also require Congress to chart a course between the extremes of repeal of the fairness doctrine and rigid enforcement of it, a course which would not be easy but perhaps "is the only sane alternative" [p. 222].

Friendly's proposal is indeed a valid one—"the kind of free-speech formula," according to Friendly, "that can keep the FCC out of the newsroom and the broadcasters out of the courtroom" [p. 226]. But this formulation is perhaps too sanguine, for will it solve the problem completely? Who if not the FCC will enforce the "voluntary" access? Why will not politics intrude in the licensing process as Friendly reports it has before? Will not the courts have to balance the competing interests as they have previously? Friendly does not answer these questions, but his suggestion is at least an attempt to solve this important issue. That attempt is valuable in itself. And since it focuses attention on the requirement for discussion of controversial issues, it is also important.

*The Good Guys, the Bad Guys and the First Amendment* is an entertaining book. Friendly writes well and is a thorough researcher. His accounts of the cases are informative, and his discussion of the strategies of litigation and political dealing is eye-opening. Friendly's book is a valuable discussion of a significant legal and political issue. He does not identify who the good guys are and who the bad guys are, but he does explain the controversy and propose a credible solution. For those concerned with the balance between first amendment freedoms and public fairness in electronic journalism, this book is essential and worthwhile reading.



