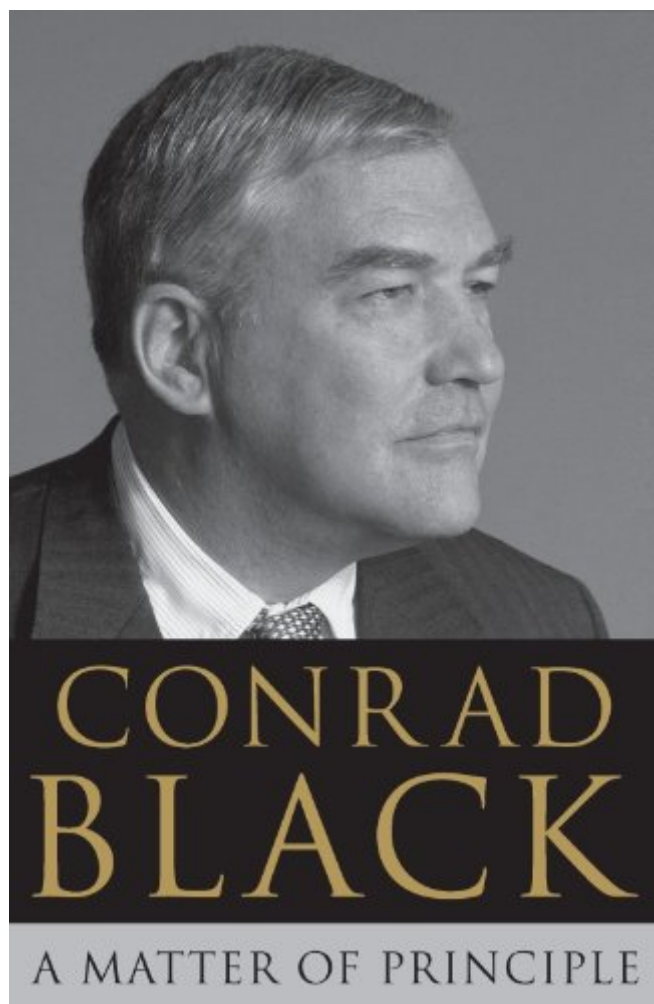


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A Matter Of Principle



Synopsis

"I never ask for mercy and seek no one's sympathy. I would never, as was once needlessly feared in this court, be a fugitive from justice in this country, only a seeker of it."—Conrad Black, in his statement to the court, June 24, 2011

In 1993, Conrad Black was the proprietor of London's Daily Telegraph and the head of one of the world's largest newspaper groups. He completed a memoir in 1992, *A Life in Progress*, and "great prospects beckoned." In 2004, he was fired as chairman of Hollinger International after he and his associates were accused of fraud. Here, for the first time, Black describes his indictment, four-month trial in Chicago, partial conviction, imprisonment, and largely successful appeal. In this unflinchingly revealing and superbly written memoir, Black writes without reserve about the prosecutors who mounted a campaign to destroy him and the journalists who presumed he was guilty. Fascinating people fill these pages, from prime ministers and presidents to the social, legal, and media elite, among them: Margaret Thatcher, Tony Blair, George W. Bush, Jean Chr tien, Rupert Murdoch, Izzy Asper, Richard Perle, Norman Podhoretz, Eddie Greenspan, Alan Dershowitz, and Henry Kissinger. Woven throughout are Black's views on big themes: politics, corporate governance, and the U.S. justice system. He is candid about highly personal subjects, including his friendships - with those who have supported and those who have betrayed him - his Roman Catholic faith, and his marriage to Barbara Amiel. And he writes about his complex relations with Canada, Great Britain, and the United States, and in particular the blow he has suffered at the hands of that nation. In this extraordinary book, Black maintains his innocence and recounts what he describes as "the fight of and for my life." *A Matter of Principle* is a riveting memoir and a scathing account of a flawed justice system.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a review of the new book by Conrad Black, "A Matter of Principle." Overall, my impression of this book is very favorable. My greatest criticism of it is that I do think it would benefit by a bit more editing. In terms of editing, fewer references to famous friends of Lord Black would help the book. Although his vocabulary is extensive and at times extravagant, his choice of words is usually extraordinarily apt. I do advise keeping a dictionary close to hand. The storyline has been summarized by many of the reviews above. Fabulously rich Canadian, English Lord, and wildly successful entrepreneur, Black attracted the attention of too many people with his lavish lifestyle. As a result, numerous allegations were made that certain expenses were inappropriately paid for with corporate funds. This led to an "investigation" by a "qualified" "independent" group of outsiders to uncover and correct any wrongdoing. This group of outsiders billed tens of millions of dollars for their services. Ultimately, it was proclaimed in the press that Black had stolen over \$600 million from the companies involved. A Chicago indictment rapidly ensued. The prosecutor, aware that the burden of proof he would bear presumably would be "beyond a reasonable doubt", chose to charge Lord Black with fleecing his shareholders the much smaller sum of \$80 million, later reduced to merely \$60 million. After trial and many years of appeals, Conrad Black was actually convicted of improperly receiving \$285,000 (which payment was shown as approved in corporate minutes) and of obstruction of justice. The latter consisted of moving boxes from an office from which he had been evicted.

Reading a 550-page book is a major undertaking, but not this one. Conrad Black is a lively writer with a rich vocabulary. He exposes a perverse justice system where prosecutors: 1) indict people without careful investigation of the facts beforehand, and 2) put the squeeze on underlings to give "helpful" testimony against the target in order to obtain a plea bargain deal or a conviction. Based on my experience in the criminal trial courtroom, I can agree with Black's accusations. He is not exaggerating. In his case, the government was so anxious to get a conviction that they seized the

sale proceeds of his wife's diamonds and his \$8 million New York apartment so he wouldn't have money to pay his lawyers. The government also paid huge fees to former SEC officials to produce "helpful" testimony. Says Black about his chief accuser: "If Breeden could not generate indictments and convictions from this report, he would fail... All Breeden had to do was turn on the spigot and a great sluice of mud and merde poured out" (p. 218, 289). He captures the twisted mind-set of the prosecutors well: "The fact that so many government witnesses were incompetent or lied, the fact that there was so much evidence exonerating the defendants... was evidence of the cleverness of the crime" (p. 408). Cleverness, not innocence. What's remarkable about Black's book is how well he controls his inchoate rage. For a man who got hammered by the government with every dubious tactic (pre-trial publicity, phone tapping without a warrant, false testimony, illegal seizure of assets, etc.), he is remarkably calm and serene: "I do not believe in false, extorted, or unspontaneous allocutions...which demean the spirit of confession and repentance and reduce justice to corruptly procured self-humiliation" (p. 153).

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