

THE THEODORE H. WHITE LECTURE

WITH

DANIEL SCHORR

Joan Shorenstein Center
PRESS • POLITICS



• PUBLIC POLICY •

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The Theodore H. White Lecture on Press and Politics commemorates the life of the late reporter and historian who created the style and set the standard for contemporary political journalism and campaign coverage.

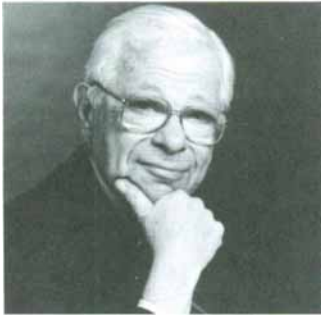
White, who began his journalism career delivering the *Boston Post*, entered Harvard College in 1932 on a newsboy's scholarship. He studied Chinese history and Oriental languages. In 1939, he witnessed the bombing of Peking while freelance reporting on a Sheldon Fellowship, and later explained, "Three thousand human beings died; once I'd seen that I knew I wasn't going home to be a professor."

During the war, White covered East Asia for *Time* and returned to write *Thunder Out of China*, a controversial critique of the American-supported Nationalist Chinese government. For the next two decades, he contributed to numerous periodicals and magazines, published two books on the Second World War and even wrote fiction.

A lifelong student of American political leadership, White in 1959 sought support for a 20-year research project, a retrospective of presidential campaigns. After being advised to drop such an academic exercise by fellow reporters, he took to the campaign trail and, relegated to the "zoo plane" changed the course of American political journalism with *The Making of the President 1960*.

White's *Making of the President* editions for 1964 and 1972, and *America in Search of Itself* remain vital historical documents on campaigns and the press.

Before his death in 1986, Theodore White also served on the Kennedy School's Visiting Committee, where he was one of the early architects of what has become the Joan Shorenstein Barone Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy. Blair Clark, former senior vice president of CBS who chaired the committee to establish this lectureship, asked, "Did Teddy White ever find the history he spent his life searching for? Well, of course no, he would have laughed at such pretension. But he came close, very close, didn't he? And he never quit the strenuous search for the elusive reality, and for its meaning in our lives."



DANIEL SCHORR, the dean of political commentary at National Public Radio, has been a major player in the coverage of domestic and international events for more than 50 years. His first-hand perspective and experience have given the nation the benefits of his rich analysis of significant events around the world.

Schorr's career in journalism began with the *Christian Science Monitor*, and later *The New York Times*, as a reporter in Western Europe. He was an eyewitness to post World War II reconstruction, the Marshall Plan, and the creation of the NATO alliance.

In 1953, he caught the attention of Edward R. Murrow, and he joined the staff of CBS News covering Central and South America. In 1955 Schorr opened a CBS bureau in Moscow. His stint there culminated in a nationally-televised interview with Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev on "Face the Nation." Not suffering Soviet censorship gladly, Schorr found himself in an imbroglio with the KGB and was barred from the Soviet Union at the end of 1957.

During the next eight years, Schorr covered Washington and the United Nations including Khrushchev's tour of the United States, an interview with Fidel Castro in Havana, and travels with President Eisenhower to South America, Asia and Europe. He was then assigned to Bonn as CBS bureau chief covering Germany and Eastern Europe until 1966 when he returned to the States to cover urban and environmental problems. In 1972 he became CBS's chief Watergate correspondent, winning him three Emmy Awards.

After Richard Nixon's resignation, Schorr covered CIA and FBI scandals. As an ardent defender of freedom of the press, he played a controversial role in the release of the so-called Pike Report, which the House of Representatives had voted to suppress. This led to an investigation by the House Ethics Committee in which Schorr was threatened for contempt of Congress if he did not disclose his source.

He refused on First Amendment grounds saying that to "betray a source would mean to dry up many future sources for many future reporters ..!t would mean betraying myself, my career and my life." Schorr resigned from CBS to write a book about this incident called *Clearing the Air*. He taught journalism at the University of California at Berkeley and for two years wrote a syndicated newspaper column.

In 1979 Schorr was hired by Ted Turner to serve as senior correspondent in Washington for the new Cable News Network. He remained there until 1985 when he joined National Public Radio as senior news analyst doing weekend and weekday commentaries.

From print journalism to television to radio, Daniel Schorr has enriched each medium. He has upheld the honor and integrity of the journalism profession with his characteristically unrelenting inquiry, his incisive and pragmatic analysis, and his unflinching commitment to the defense of the First Amendment.

THEODORE H. WHITE LECTURE NOVEMBER 18, 1993

Mr. Kalb: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I am Marvin Kalb, Director of the Shorenstein Barone Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, here at the Kennedy School. It is my pleasure tonight to welcome you to the annual Theodore H. White Lecture.

I must confess that over the years, when I've introduced such previous lecturers as Walter Cronkite, Benjamin Bradlee and Senator Warren Rudman, that I strived to be objective about each of them. A brief biography, a few anecdotes, a pat on the back and they were on their own. But, tonight I make no pretense to objectivity. Daniel Schorr is one of my oldest and best friends.

When we at the Shorenstein Barone Center considered the rich range of possibilities for the 1993 lecture, the name Schorr was on everyone's list. He was our unanimous choice. Not because he had done anything special in 1993, but simply because he has been so special throughout his long and distinguished career.

One quality more than any other — more than his wide-ranging experience as a domestic and foreign correspondent, more than his courage under congressional fire, more than his dogged aggressive pursuit of a story, like a good teacher his ability to explain complicated issues of policy. More than all of these things, one quality has always impressed me and that is his ability to conceptualize a story.

Better than just about any reporter I know, Dan Schorr can hear a seemingly innocent fact and then a week or two later relate it to another seemingly innocent fact taking place perhaps at the other end of the globe, the other end of the country, the other end of the city. He'll remember a throw-away comment, a certain gesture by an official, a phrase from a Bill Safire or an Ellen Goodman column. And suddenly the shape of a story begins to form in his mind. Some deep dark and embarrassing secret of government. Some strategy for a presidential campaign.

This is not the result of a leak, a deliberate leak, as so many officials would quickly have you believe, but a capacity to collect and collate data, impressions, experience, knowledge and that wonderful and special gift that most good journalists have: intuition.

Now sometimes this gift yields modest results. Once, in Moscow, where Dan and I met in the de-Stalinization excitement of 1956, he was the CBS News correspondent and I was a very young diplomatic attaché at the U.S. Embassy, there was a rumor that there would be a meeting of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party in late June. Now, I must confess to you that I have told this story so many times that I believe it to be true. I can even visualize it.

It was the Queen's birthday party at the British Embassy. Large tables groaning under the weight of strawberries and whipped cream. A full complement of ambassadors, diplomats and spies. Reporters in groups in corners wondering about that rumor. Suddenly the heavy steel gates of the embassy open wide and Nikita Khrushchev, leader of all the Russians, with the entire Politburo, enter. Short men in baggy pants and wide-brimmed hats — this was all pre-glasnost.

And Schorr, who wastes no time, without any fear, approaches Khrushchev. He says: "Mr. Khrushchev, I have a question for you." Khrushchev looks up at him. He says: "You see, Mr. Khrushchev, there is a rumor floating around Moscow these days that there is going to be a meeting of the Central Committee at the end of the month. Now, I want you to understand this clearly. I'm not asking you this question in order to get any news out of you. It is simply that I want to go on vacation at the end of the month. And you see, my office feels that if there is going to be a meeting of the Central Committee, maybe I ought not to go on vacation."

Well, Khrushchev looked at Schorr with peasant eyes, glowing with skepticism. And Schorr says: "Please sir, understand, this is not for news. I just want to know if I can go

on vacation." And the Soviet leader smiles, he thinks for a moment, then he says: "Mr. Schorr, go on vacation."

Dan was delighted, he had a story, he thought. He thanked Khrushchev and began to leave, at which point the Russian added: "And Mr. Schorr, if we have a meeting of the Central Committee, we will have it without you." (Laughter)

I've learned a great deal from Dan Schorr, even how to fill out an expense account. Dan once purchased or inherited a famous Walter Duranty icebox, named after the legendary *New York Times* correspondent of the 1920s and 30s, handed down from one generation of Moscow correspondents to another. At the end of the month, Dan sent his expense account to New York; 40 dollars, it read, for historic icebox. A network accountant struck the item from Dan's account. "Ineligible," New York proclaimed. Never to be outdone by anyone from New York, his hometown, Dan rewrote his expense account. Forty dollars, it now read, for office water cooler. That was never questioned.

Dan Schorr covered Moscow, Warsaw, Havana, Bonn, as one of Edward R. Murrow's team of outstanding foreign correspondents. In the mid-1960s, Dan returned to Washington, where he quickly established himself as one of the capital's premier investigative reporters, reporting on everything from health care to a certain 1972 break-in, in a place called Watergate. That earned for him an honored spot on Richard Nixon's Enemies List.

A few years later, Dan covered CIA and FBI scandals and turned up a secret report which he arranged to have published, which in turn led the House Ethics Committee to threaten imprisonment, if Schorr did not disclose the name of his source. Dan refused, stating at a public hearing: "To betray a source would mean to dry up many future sources for many future reporters."

Schorr then left CBS, and wrote a book. In 1979 he joined a new cable news operation called CNN, which no one at the time really thought would survive. And since 1975 he has been the Senior News Analyst for National Public Radio, performing a rare service for which we are all deeply grateful.

He has won many awards, including the Peabody earlier this year, for what was called "a lifetime of uncompromising reporting of the highest integrity." He has also been inducted into the Hall of Fame of the Society of Professional Journalists.

His theme tonight, "Press and Politics: Who's Using Whom?" Theodore White, himself an exceptional reporter and in whose name this lecture series exists, is no doubt listening carefully.

Daniel Schorr. (Applause)

Mr. Schorr: I could sit and listen to a lot more of that introduction. (Laughter)

The only way to respond to an introduction like that is to steal a Kalb story about Henry Kissinger. When, at one point, he was getting a great deal of adulation because of his shuttle diplomacy in the Middle East, he was approached at a large reception by a woman who took his two hands and said: "Mr. Secretary, I simply wanted to thank you for saving the world." And he looked back at her and said: "You're welcome." (Laughter)

Needless to say, just being here tonight to make this speech is a great honor, perhaps the greatest since appearing on the Nixon Enemies List. When Marvin called to tell me that I had been named and asked if I would come and make a speech, my impulse was to say: "I thought you would never ask."

There are all kinds of very warm associations tonight with this place and the people who are here. First of all Teddy White, who was the leader of our generation of journalists and who set the standard for all the rest of us. Then Joan Shorestein Barone, whom I knew at CBS and who performed the quite improbable feat of being gentle and gracious while being a television producer.

And Walter Shorenstein, who manages to be loved even though he gives money. He has been my friend since he volunteered, some 20-odd years ago, to drive me to San Francisco airport after a lecture. I think Joan probably put him up to that.

And then Marvin, I guess you all can tell about the relationship between us. Marvin, whose life, whose family, whose interests, have intertwined with my life, my interests, my family, since the first time in Moscow in 1956 he sat down to explain to me what really lay between the lines of *Pravda*. Then of course the association with Harvard which has sponsored some of the work of my wife Li, and has seen to the education, or at least part of the education, of my daughter, Lisa.

And I am about to make her mad again by saying that she graduated from Harvard College, a year or so on ago, Summa Cum Laude and Phi Beta Kappa. Lisa, I'm sorry, I had to say that. (Applause)

It is also a matter of pride and perhaps a little bit of awe to be following to this podium Walter Cronkite and Ben Bradlee. Warren Rudman, not being a journalist, doesn't count. (Laughter)

I think of all those years at CBS when you would test a microphone by saying: "Well, Walter — Well, Walter — Well, Walter." Then all the years in Washington, with Ben Bradlee, as fearless and no-nonsense a journalist as I have ever known, even before he became Jason Robards. (Laughter)

I was re-reading Walter's and Ben's lectures in preparation for this one and was struck by this common theme of the elders of our craft faced with this new media world. We've become uncomfortably aware that Americans don't love us so much any more. They aren't inclined to forgive us our press passes.

Somehow it seems to be a long way from Hildy Johnson of *The Front Page* to the million-dollar, blow-dried anchor person on television. And indeed, our whole profession sometimes seems to be crowded into a small corner of a vast entertainment stage. We find ourselves competing with entertainment and sometimes borrowing the tools and values of entertainment in this relentless quest for ratings. Reality yields to something called, "reality based," which is reality debased.

For the pain of self-doubt, there is nothing like a little self-flagellation to provide relief. Dan Rather recently made a Murrowesque speech to the news directors of Miami, saying: "They have got us putting more fuzz and wuzz on the air ... competing not with other news programs, but with entertainment programs ... We should be ashamed of what we have done and not done, measured against what we could do." Kind of a faint echo of a great Murrow speech there, it comes out somehow differently.

I don't know what Dan means by "fuzz and wuzz," whether he considers being teamed with Connie Chung as an abdication to entertainment values. But, where do you draw the line? Surely, Dan must be aware of the entertainment value that has contributed to his own great success.

In the chorus of self-criticism we hear now, there is Peter Jennings telling *TV Guide* he wants to pay more attention to what conservatives are saying, because we don't know enough about what conservatives are saying. Janet Malcolm, with *The New Yorker*, who says that every journalist who is not too stupid or too full of himself knows that what he is doing is morally indefensible. She sees the journalist as kind of a confidence man, preying on the people he deals with.

Well, I have some problems with the gospel according to Janet Malcolm, who seems to have some ethics problems of her own. Yet, the question that she raises and that all these people raise, is very much on people's minds.

What is the interface with journalists and the people we interview, and write about, and put on the air? Are we courageous scourges of the establishment, or have we grown into an establishment ourselves? Are we, as some people think of us, more invasive, more overweening, more oversensitive and more self-serving than the government and

the political process that we profess to monitor? And, furthermore, is the one establishment in bed with the other? In a word, who's using whom? And to what purpose?

I will never forget the cab driver who was driving me in from La Guardia Airport to the Waldorf Astoria in 1974, where I was to receive (with other CBS correspondents), an Emmy award for covering Watergate. As we drove along across the bridge, he said: "Mr. Schorr," flattering me by recognizing me, "why don't you reporters tell us what is really going on in Washington?" Well, I remonstrated that I was about to get a prize for telling him what was going on. But he shook his head and he said: "You're all together, you work it all out between you when somebody is going to be dumped. And then you go on, you and the people in government, and you are afraid to tell us what is really going on."

From 1974 to today, that has stuck with me, and made me ask why people perceive us that way. Why is it that they really believe that somehow we have failed them, and we are not the public servants we profess to be. But we have all become rich on what we do and work with other rich people and work other powerful people and exercise power in that way.

So here was I, the quintessential outsider, accused of this dreadful thing of being an insider. But how does it really work between the news media and the politicians? Who gains? Who loses? Who uses whom? And most of all, is the public served by the whole process?

The question has to be examined at various levels because the interaction between press and politicians has been evolving over the years. I think politicians have been gaining on us in sophisticated techniques for manipulation. I wrote this before Ed Rollins. (Laughter)

The advancing technology of instantaneous worldwide communication, in a very strange way, is making life unpredictable for both of us, the politician and the reporter. The traditional relationship, let me say, symbiotic, although we are reluctant to dwell on how often our successes are really somebody else's successes in using us.

Let me give you an example. Marvin was telling you about my experience with Nikita Khrushchev in Moscow. In 1957 as a CBS correspondent, I received a lot of credit for arranging the first-ever television interview with a Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev, from the Kremlin.

Let me tell you the secret of that scoop, never told before. A Soviet official called me at the bureau in Moscow and referred to the latest of the letters we wrote every month, in which we asked for a television interview with Premier Nikolai Bulganin. Now the official on the phone wanted to know, were we still interested in an interview with Nikita Khrushchev, head of the Communist Party? "Well, sure," I said, not mentioning that it was Bulganin we had asked for, not for Khrushchev.

The result was an hour of Nikita Khrushchev on American TV. President Eisenhower criticized CBS for letting this Communist boss into America's living rooms. How had it happened? Was it my brilliance? Was it my persistence in getting Khrushchev? Was it some great coup of mine?

Well, in fact, Khrushchev was trying very hard to figure out a way to resume relations with the West, torpedoed in 1956 by the bloodbath in Hungary. He wanted American television to help him in his campaign for renewed co-existence, that led two years later to a tour of America and his parley with President Eisenhower at Camp David. So, our scoop, or his coup? The truth? He did it.

Let me give you another example. In 1963, I was working on a documentary about Communist espionage in West Germany. I got an offer from the CIA. They could arrange an interview with an East German intelligence officer who had just defected and who would fit into my documentary very well. I said, "Great," He had stories to tell about how easy it was to penetrate West German security.

Why did the CIA offer me this thing? Because they wanted the German government to crack down on espionage. So, there was an interview in a Frankfurt safehouse, to which I was invited, to interview Lieutenant Guenter Maennel. I only mention the name because after all these years, the name still sticks in my mind. I didn't have to look it up. He played his part in my documentary. It looked pretty good on CBS. It sure helped the CIA.

Or, closer to home: In 1976, I obtained a draft of the final report of a House Intelligence Committee, which had been investigating the failures and misdeeds of the CIA. The Ford Administration was trying, and eventually succeeded, in having the report suppressed by the House.

I had a copy of the report and I arranged to have it published. I don't talk about sources. I didn't then and I don't now either. But, let me say that I am fully aware that I served somebody else's purpose by seeing that this report did not sink forever down the memory hole. It is a fact that I took the best I could get. I wanted CBS to publish it. I asked newspapers to publish it. In the end, I ended up with this report in *The Village Voice*.

Now, we are on to the oldest established feature of Who Uses Whom. "Leak" is an interesting verb, if you are interested in language. Originally, it was an intransitive verb when used. Something leaked, oozed out, escaped, seeped out, somehow. Then, somehow, in the arrangement between the press and the government, we turned an intransitive verb into a transitive verb.

Now, things are leaked. Somebody leaks. There are "leakers." There are "leaking sessions." Michael Kelly, in *The New York Times* says that former Secretary of State, Jim Baker, spent 35 hours a week leaking at a very high level. (Laughter)

David Gergen was then assigned to leaking at a lower level. (Laughter)

One has to divide leaks into two general categories — the *authorized* leak and the *unauthorized*. President Nixon and Secretary House files are full of references to "we will leak this, we will leak that, this should be leaked to this columnist, let's give this one to Evans and Novak, let's give that one, too." What should be leaked to what magazine.

The Howard Hunt forgery of a cable that was supposed to link President Kennedy to the assassination of Ngo Dien Diem was planned as a leak to *Life*. The information about a financial deal that drove Justice Abe Fortas from the Supreme Court was leaked to *Life*. But "unplanned" leaks — that is, leaks unplanned by them — drove Nixon and Kissinger up the wall — and into wiretaps of officials and journalists, and into creating a leak-plugging unit aptly named "The Plumbers," which dealt, among other things, with the biggest unplanned leak of all, the Pentagon Papers.

Not everything that looks like a leak is a leak. This next paragraph I put in only after I knew that my friend, Ben Bagdikian, was going to be here. I wouldn't want to say this if he weren't here. But Ben Bagdikian, writing about leaks in the *Columbia Journalism Review* in 1961, said that West German Chancellor Conrad Adenauer had "successfully leaked stories" to Flora Lewis, who was then of *The Washington Post*, and myself, who was then correspondent of CBS in Bonn.

The story in question had to do with Adenauer's criticism of President Kennedy at a closed-door party caucus of his in Bonn. In fact, I can say this and you'll have to believe me that it had not been deliberately leaked by anyone, but was a story pieced together by the strenuous efforts of four reporters working together over a long period of time.

But, because of the assumption that anything that looks like a leak has to be a leak, I wrote a letter to the *Columbia Journalism Review* to let Ben know that some stories are not given, but gotten. Not everything is that kind of leak.

There is also something that might be called a "secondary" leak. Let me tell you about that. In January, 1975, President Ford let slip, at a White House luncheon with the publisher, editors and columnists of *The New York Times*, that the CIA had been involved

in assassination conspiracies. Then, Ford, realizing he had made an error, tried to pull it back by saying, "Listen, can we consider this off the record?" Later on, Publisher Arthur O. Sulzberger, much to the distress of some of his staff, ordered that this explosive remark not be pursued.

Well, it came to my ears, never mind how. That resulted in an exclusive on the *CBS Evening News* that precipitated a Senate investigation and, finally, exposure of CIA's efforts, in league with the Mafia, to try to eliminate Fidel Castro.

Again, without quite discussing my source, I can say that no one in authority in the U.S. government and, certainly, no one in authority in *The New York Times* wanted that leak to occur, and none of them benefitted from it. The public, I submit, did benefit and mightily. This exposed to daylight one of the darkest chapters in the CIA's history — a secret that the agency had scandalously kept from the Warren Commission investigating the assassination of President Kennedy.

If those plots to assassinate Castro had been known to the Warren Commission back then in 1963–64, they might have better understood the motivations of Lee Harvey Oswald, who knew about the assassination plots because Castro had talked about them publicly and who, chances are, was a self-appointed avenger of Castro against Kennedy.

There are some terrible ironies here, that these plots either initiated by the Kennedys or on their behalf, in the end, may have been an arrow sent into the air against Castro that came back to kill President Kennedy. None of that could be investigated back then, because those things were kept secret until President Ford, who as member of the Warren Commission didn't know about it then, but learned about it as President, and decided to confide it to a few people at *The New York Times*. (Laughter)

Anybody here curious about the identity of, probably, the most talked-about and speculated-about "leaker" of modern times, that is, "Deep Throat"? All right, yes, I hear. Have you wondered why somebody who was apparently so inside as to know what was going on would be so disloyal to President Nixon, and, in addition, take such risks? I believe that that case has been broken by Jim Mann, who was a reporter and colleague of Bob Woodward at *The Washington Post*, and who now works for *The Los Angeles Times*.

He had it all worked out straight in an article he wrote for the *Atlantic Monthly* magazine. It goes this way and I believe it. I mean, I am utterly convinced by it. "Deep Throat" was one or more of three top-level FBI officials who were furious because Nixon had picked an outsider, 1. Patrick Gray, to succeed J. Edgar Hoover as the head of the FBI. Furious also, that Gray and the White House were obstructing the investigation of Watergate, which would then make the Bureau end up looking bad.

So, was the Watergate conspiracy punctured by G-men, jealous of their turf and jealous of the Bureau's reputation? I think so. So, where does that end up? Woodward and Bernstein got the Pulitzer Prize, the FBI got Nixon. Who used whom? What was that about?

Speaking of Nixon, would it amuse you to learn that recently I was a beneficiary of a leak from old "Enemies List" Nixon himself? He had written a memorandum about how President Bush was missing the boat on aid to Russia. He circulated his memorandum to a list of friends that did not include me. My friend, Bill Safire, showed it to me, but stipulated that I could not use it without Nixon's permission.

I noticed something about the memo. That is, that it didn't have anything secret or confidential in the memo. Nixon is pretty good at saying secretly what he wants to stay secret. He had said nothing about that. So, I called Nixon's office in New Jersey and asked his assistant whether she would ask him whether I could please quote a little bit of the memo. She instantly said it would be not necessary to consult him, that she knew that it would be fine. Well, it sounded as though she had been waiting for my call.

So, I got a story and Nixon, as he undoubtedly planned, put a shot across President Bush's bow, but in a way that enabled him to say that this wasn't a press release, he

hadn't meant to tell the press about it. It was just a private memorandum that leaked. Leaked? Was leaked? I think more "was leaked" myself.

I was an instrument. We are all instruments in these things. What the hell? It's a story and people ought to know about it. If, in the course of this, you are an instrument, well, that's the game and that is how it is played.

Once there were the days when you would get a leak, and you would be proud of it. In the current phase of our public life, a leak has become so commonplace as to be totally devalued. It just isn't the way it used to be.

Television correspondents now routinely report what the President is going to say in his speech tomorrow. Names of prospective nominees are floated and withdrawn without regard to their reputations. All of this leaks. There is hardly an official report, starting with the federal budget, that you won't find summarized in the papers and on radio and television before it is released.

Whatever happened to the embargo? There are some of us who, in journalism for a long time, still think of an embargo as a mutually convenient arrangement that lets you study a report for two or three days in advance, but that won't be officially released until a certain time. It's gone. Everything seeps and gets out now.

The "leak" has been absorbed into a much bigger kind of industry. That is called the "spin." Secret-keeping has now fallen prey to the bigger industry of image-making. As a consequence, the massaging of the media, the care and feeding of the media, almost has overshadowed the policy-making process, the decision-making process.

First, you leak something to the press. You feed the press, then you get feedback. If the feedback is negative, you go and make some changes in the thing you were planning to say — that is called "fine tuning." You take, for example, the Clinton health reform program. Nine months of gestation and trial balloons go back and forth. It went through so much "fine tuning" as to be worthy of an orchestra.

The White House image-making corps now grows steadily larger. David Gergen, the communicator, is now also the policy advisor. The danger is that communicating will become not only a way of explaining policy, but will dictate the policy and, ultimately, it will become the policy. The policy will be what *sounds right* as the policy, in this strange interaction we have now between policy-makers and the media.

So, "spin patrol," "damage control," "message of the day" — the process has become so ingrained as to make governing seem, in itself, like a form of theater. No one was better at it than President Reagan. When I was at CNN, one of my functions was, when President Reagan gave an evening news conference, to be out on the South Lawn right afterward to do something called "instant analysis." Typically, I would get up with my clipboard in hand and say, "Mr. Reagan made the following five factual errors tonight in his press conference." You would think I would be thanked for that-but, no, I wasn't thanked for that. (Laughter)

Instead I'd get many calls and letters of protest about my bias against the President.

Who uses whom? Reagan used television superbly well, managing to project an image which made facts almost irrelevant after a while. Did I ever do anything to Reagan? I think not. I don't think I affected any event.

President Clinton has now added still another dimension to governing by theater. He has effectively hijacked television from the journalists by talking over their heads. Don't think we don't get mad about it. He talks over our heads at town meetings, talks to MTV, talks to Larry King. Reporters, columnists and commentators have now become supplicants. They ask, can they have a meeting with him. They want to be invited to lunch with the President, so they can write something that he hasn't already said on the air. I have not yet been invited to any of those luncheons. I don't mind, though; I can always have lunch with Nixon. (Laughter)

It is curious that President Clinton, who has commanded more media exposure than any president in history, constantly complains that he is not getting the story of his accomplishments across. On NBC's *Meet the Press* the other day, he quoted people in his hometown as saying, "There must be a conspiracy to keep this a secret," talking about some of his great achievements. He ruminated about whether "this may be my fault, or may be somebody else's fault."

Well, who uses whom? The President really cannot complain of a lack of access to the public. If he comes off, in the end sometimes as less than coherent, then he'll have to examine his scattershot style, his handlers or his policies. There is nothing that we, in the media, have done to make things bad for him.

It is interesting that I wrote that yesterday, before the NAFTA A vote, and that if I had to write this now, I would say he finally has found his voice. He finally managed to find a way of saying, "I don't compromise everything, and everything isn't accommodation, and not everything is half a loaf. Here is this thing, and I can't change it because it's been negotiated with Mexico and Canada and I am going to stick my neck out and my chin out, and I may lose."

The fact that he was willing to take that risk and work that hard at it, has certainly projected a different image. If he can manage to maintain the image of the guy who is willing to take the chance of losing over something that he considers a matter of principle, then we will be seeing — I was about to say a new Clinton, but, I remember new Nixons we used to see.

Now, having said that the press use politicians and politicians use the press in a largely symbiotic, but not always symbiotic, relationship, we come to the next stage in this "who is using whom?" business: The stage in which television itself as a technology takes control out of the hands of the press and policy-maker alike.

President Reagan saw on television, for example, relatives of hostages in Lebanon who blamed him for not doing enough to bring home their loved ones. He said, "They are killing us with that. We have got to do something about the hostages." This was not anything that journalists had done. It was, simply, a reflection of what happens when he saw something on television. It had its own very potent effect. Seeing this political problem, he launched his ransom-by-arms-sales initiative.

President Bush, having decided to get American troops very quickly home from the Gulf in 1991, suddenly became aware that America was looking at frightful scenes of Kurds in flight from Iraqi genocide. Because he saw this on television, and because he knew America was looking at it and reacting to it, he sent the troops back to protect the Kurds. He said, "No one can see the pictures, and not be deeply moved." You know that when Americans are moved, then politicians are moved. That is what makes them move.

Television scenes of suffering in Bosnia led President Clinton to join in the humanitarian aid effort and to promise more aid than he was able to deliver in protecting the Bosnians. Somalia is a classic case of pictures dictating policy. In Somalia, scenes of starvation pulled America into humanitarian, and then military, intervention. Other scenes — of an American soldier's body being dragged through the streets — drove President Clinton to pull the troops out of Somalia. Going in and coming out — a function of reaction to the pictures that you see today on television.

National Security Advisor Anthony Lake confessed that "the pictures helped make us recognize that the military situation in Mogadishu had deteriorated in a way that we had frankly not recognized." Think of that. He has got military people there. He's got a couple of generals over there, and he needs pictures on television to tell him that the situation has deteriorated.

Deterioration on television is different from real deterioration. Deterioration on television is an aspect that drives policy because it means that, not only do we know, but the public knows and the public reacts. We have to react to the way that the public reacts.

Secretary of State Christopher made a remarkable statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee two weeks ago. "Television is a wonderful phenomenon and sometimes even an instrument of freedom. But, television images cannot be the North Star of America's foreign policy."

Who says it can't, because I think it is. I think that our constant lurches in policy don't happen for no reason at all. I think that, long before we reach that thing called "the information highway," we are coming close to something called an interactive system of policy formulation. The instantaneity of modern television makes it necessary to formulate policy on the run.

You know, Richard Reeves in his great book on President Kennedy reports one small incident about how I covered the beginning of the Berlin Wall early on a Sunday morning in August, 1961. He recalls that by the time the film reached New York and got on the air on the next available news program, Kennedy and his staff had time to read the cables from Germany, consult their allies and decide how to react. It doesn't work quite that way anymore.

If it happened today, the official would see the event, along with all Americans, on television about the time it was happening. They saw the Wall coming down on television. If we had had satellite transmission back then, they would have seen the Wall going up on television and the administration would have had to scramble for a public response before they could consult anybody and know what their response really should be.

However, the picture is far from being the whole reality and that's the trouble. But images now tend to replace reality, or to create their own reality. We are spellbound by pictures of the assault on the parliament in Moscow and on the Ostenkino television center (which may have been the more crucial battleground), but we are given very little understanding of what is happening behind the facade. So we end up reacting to pictures that show you what pictures can show, and not knowing those things which pictures can't show, and that is a new reality. It is a reality of what is on television.

Where is journalism? Where are we, the journalists? I mean, these are pictures. Anybody can turn a camera on, and show pictures. Today, we call that a news program. But it really isn't. It is a thing happening. That's why they call it actuality. It doesn't have any explanation. It doesn't have any meaning, but it can drive policy today.

Print journalists catch up more slowly and much less vividly, than TV, and hence with much less impact on the people who make the policy based on what they see in the television age.

That also happens some in domestic policy, I think, because when policy is driven by television, it tends to be driven by that reality that television creates. Vivid displays of violence, including juvenile violence, create an impression of pervasive crime all over the country. FBI statistics indicate that violent crime has been decreasing in large cities in recent years. But higher ratings on television are to be found in anecdotes of blood and gore than in statistics or analysis of where crime is or what crime is and why crime is.

So you find a crime bill being fashioned today, not by the reality of crime and the reality of what causes crime, but by pictures. If you see, in the schoolyard, kids lying dead, we want a hundred people guarding that schoolyard right away. The reaction here is the reaction to the anecdotal part of it rather than to the real meaning of it. The whole reality on which government proceeds has become slightly altered. So great is the obsession with reception and spin that spin tends to become the policy.

If projections of 40 percent of Americans paying more for health care create a firestorm, as it did, no problem. Tomorrow we will have some other projections, and we will try them out on television.

If the news media play up stories like the President's haircut and the White House travel office and the suicide of Vincent Foster, I think it may be in part because these are

the few remaining spontaneous stories, stories that have eluded the handlers and have eluded the spin doctors. Therefore they have an awful lot of potential because there are not many of them any more.

Who uses whom? We journalists have tried so hard to serve as guardians of reality, only to be no longer sure there is a reality — or whether our bosses care if there is a reality. Spin doctors are gaining on us, and the technology is gaining on all of us.

In the Gulf War, the censors did a pretty good job of controlling coverage. On the landing on that beach in Somalia, television made a mockery of the best-laid plans of mice and managers. In the next war involving Americans, news management may be defeated by all the latest wrinkles in minicams, portable dishes and cellular phones.

It is not the world that I came into when I came into journalism. All I want to say is that for 60 years I have loved journalism, not always wisely, but well. I have loved the news profession, not always the news industry. I think Teddy White would have understood that.

Some 45 years ago E.B. White, that great essayist, saw the coming age of television as a race “between things that are and things that seem to be.” I think that, were he here today, he would say that “seems to be” is running far ahead. I just hope that a younger generation of journalists will run very hard to reclaim “things that are.”

Thank you. (Applause)

Mr. Kalb: Ladies and gentlemen, we do have time to ask Mr. Schorr a number of questions, but I want to start with the first one. I see a number of my students, who know that there is a question that keeps coming up over and over again. Let us assume that everything that you have described is right on target. What effect does all of this have upon the vitality of American democracy?

Mr. Schorr: That is a tough one. I think, on the whole, that American democracy has been well served up until recently by the media. I’m beginning to think that, though, the merging into semi-entertainment and finally entertainment leaves Americans confused, impatient, cynical, untrusting of government, untrusting of almost anything. I have to say, I wasn’t really prepared for that question — and the trouble is when I’m not prepared, I tell the truth. (Laughter)

Mr. Kalb: Meaning what if you look ahead 25 years?

Mr. Schorr: Well that will have an intensification of this tendency to assume that people are crooked, that nothing is being done right, that nothing that is done by public-spirited people can be right. The short way to put it is that one of these days we will find America dominated by Ross Perots, by people who can afford to buy television time and be effective demagogues on television.

Mr. Kalb: Can this be turned around, in your view? Is there a way of turning this *Queen Mary* around?

Mr. Schorr: I wish I could say that. I think we work at trying to turn it around. I think that if we are really very good journalists, we can be a kind of an antidote for that poison. Whether the antidote can be administered in sufficient quantity to really neutralize all the poison, I don’t know. But when somebody stands up there and says: “This thing that you just heard this person say, he is lying. And let me tell you why he is lying.” That makes a small contribution to trying to bring things into balance.

Or, put another way, to say: “Don’t think that everything that is called government is bad-because this has happened, and it is good. Here is something that worked, and has worked well, and should be encouraged.”

I have this sense that somehow journalism has to separate itself from the media. I’m not sure how it is going to happen. But reporters have to somehow draw back from being part of the great performance and say there are responsibilities that we have.

Mr. Kalb: Mike Berlin.

Mr. Berlin: I ask you this because I don't think you are typical of Washington reporters. Many young reporters, if they are worth their salt covering city hall and find the mayor trying to lay something on them, will say to themselves: "Is the story what the mayor just told me or is the story why the mayor is trying to sell this to me?"

What is it about the Washington Beltway that causes reporters who cross it to cease asking themselves this question and simply relay what it is that James Baker or David Gergen is trying to leak to them?

Mr. Schorr: Part of it is "sound-bite television." It happens more in television than it happens in radio — and newspapers are something else. But the fact is that television has come to hate talking heads, especially journalistic talking heads. It likes to go with the sound bite of the important person saying the important thing. If the journalist has 15 seconds to say what is wrong with that, it doesn't work.

Mr. Berlin: I'm talking about the leak though, the leak to *The New York Times*, from Baker or someone. Is the story the leak? Or is the story why this person is trying to leak it? And why don't reporters in Washington ask that question more frequently?

Mr. Schorr: Well, that is an interesting question. I mean, it is certainly a valued story to know why Deep Throat leaks something to me. But it is a valid story. It is alas a story I'm not in a position to tell. Because I have obligated myself, as a condition for getting such a story, to maintain the confidentiality of that source.

Now, if somebody, by some act of enterprise, manages to find out the source, it can on occasion be a very valid story, no question about it. The source of leaks are frequently very interesting things to know. But they can't be told to you by persons who have promised not to.

Mr. Kalb: Nick Daniloff.

Mr. Daniloff: Dan, I suppose my question is a bit of a follow-up on Marvin's excellent and central question in all of this. In the late 1950s when I began becoming a journalist, we used to believe that the government told us the truth, that it made sensible decisions, and that it didn't lie to its people.

Today I'm involved in teaching the younger generation the few lessons that I've learned — and I find that they are incredibly critical, at least in comparison to me 30 or 40 years ago, if not to say cynical. Perhaps these very critical and cynical young men and women will have a better chance of recapturing reality from that deceptive image, which is the trademark of Washington today. What do you think?

Mr. Schorr: I hope so. I live these ebbing years of my life in the fond hope that that will happen.

Unfortunately, the way our industry has developed, there is a tendency for these people who we still call journalists, to learn more about techniques, about carrying a camera around, about a lot of things not directly connected to what we would have called news and journalism.

I am sometimes appalled, especially watching local television stations, by the lack of background information they have. They call themselves journalists, yet they don't really understand even basic things.

I think somehow everything runs in cycles, and these cycles at some point have to run to an end. The cycle we are in, I think, started sometime during the Vietnam War. When America on the whole, up until that time had worked on an assumption of regularity between the press and the government, between the government and the people, began to learn that the government could lie.

Then under Nixon, and to some extent, under Reagan and Bush, the government actually spent a lot of time lying, and then spent more time covering up its lies. As things came out, from Watergate to Irangate, Iraqgate, all those "gates," after a while there came that awful sense that if it is so easy for the government to lie, when do we know if the government is telling the truth?

In part, it is because the government, seeing what is happening on television, quickly runs to control the damage that has been done. My problem is I'm not sure *anybody* understands if there is such a thing as objective facts any more.

That cycle somehow has to play itself out. Don't ask me why I think so, but if I didn't think so, I'd be very pessimistic. Now, maybe Clinton will bring a new communitarian spirit into the government, I don't know. Maybe we will have some great rebirth and with that a rebirth of journalism in this country. But as of yesterday, I was not very optimistic.

Mr. Simon: My name is Eric Simon. I'm curious to know what your opinion is of some of Noam Chomsky's observations about media in America. For example, one of his suggestions is that the media imposes upon themselves a form of control or self-censorship more stringent than the government might impose. An example he gives, for example, is that human rights abuses in Nicaragua were microscoped, whereas human rights abuses in El Salvador were glossed over or reported much less.

Mr. Schorr: Generally, Chomsky tends to look for conspiracies in the media. It is my own general impression that the media are more manipulated than they are manipulating. We find out very late that what was being reported about death squads in El Salvador was true, although the U.S. Government was denying it. Some very good reporters reported it at the time, and it wasn't taken seriously. It is very difficult for a reporter to stand up against the majesty of government denying something.

But where I really part company with Chomsky, whom I am very happy to part company with most of the time, is that in his search for conspiracies he assumes that whatever we do which may have been a failure was a deliberate failure. It is usually not, it usually is that we were had.

Ms. Moeller: Susan Moeller, Brandeis University. You've given some compelling examples of the ways in which policy is driven by television. I wonder if you would comment on the converse of that. To what extent, and perhaps to what effect, would you say that the news, both print and broadcast, given your background, is driven by pictures?

Mr. Schorr: I think pictures are the thing today. Pictures dominate. Television dominates and pictures dominate television. The vast number of people, if you asked them what their impressions are of what is going on in the world, are more likely to have gotten them from pictures than from anything they heard with their ears or read only with their eyes. It is a pictorial medium, and we live in a pictorial world.

People now find symbolic pictures. I was mentioning this symbolic picture of that soldier's body being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu. This was one soldier, one body, but as a picture, a powerful image — and therefore it had a very powerful effect on policy.

Mr. Golden: My name is Mitch Golden. I think that your cab driver from 1974 would not have been especially reassured by what you are saying tonight. I guess my question goes to the heart not of how the media interacts with politicians, but how it interacts with itself?

You just described a case in which *The New York Times* essentially decided not to publish a story in which they knew a criminal activity had gone on. You also described a situation in which no one but the *Village Voice* would publish a story in which criminal activities were covered up. What are the forces that keep the media from publishing a story like that? How is it that the *Village Voice* is the only place in the country where we can find a story like that? Is it that *The New York Times* would not *want* to publish such a major story as that, once they know about it? That's no longer a question of their interactions with politicians because they have the information. It is a question of their interactions with themselves and with other media.

Mr. Schorr: I have to expose a small factual part of this to explain why *The New York Times* never did that story. I thought *The New York Times* also had a copy of the report, because they had summarized the report at great length on the front page. I worked under the assumption that there had been a collateral leak to *The New York Times*. Furthermore, I had put the disposal of this into the hands of others who finally came up with the *Village Voice* or maybe *New York* magazine as two who would publish it at that point.

The real question is why, working for CBS and having gotten this as a CBS correspondent and having already done reports based on this on CBS, when I went to CBS they said no.

When *The New York Times* did the Pentagon Papers, it ended up by publishing a book on the Pentagon Papers, by New York Times Books. So why should CBS and one of its publishers not publish this as a historical record? The answer was: "Dummy, because we are not a newspaper, we are in a regulated industry." And because it was a time when Congress was considering cable, and the television industry was frightened about what Congress might do. This was a matter of taking on the whole House of Representatives. And CBS said: "You're out of your mind if you think we will risk something like that."

So, the answer to the question is that it is different for television. It is different for television because television has to worry about licenses, competition on cable and a lot of strange things that Congress does which you don't understand, but which can cost television a lot of money at times.

Mr. Block: Thank you very much for speaking tonight Mr. Schorr. My name is Jared Block, I'm a freshman at the College.

I was wondering, it seems that some news organizations do a much better job of reporting — the *Economist*, MacNeil/Lehrer, NPR. Is it simply because they get the best talent, or do they have some sort of structure that keeps their eyes on the objective facts? As someone who has worked in so many organizations, can you give us some light on that?

Mr. Schorr: Part of it has to do with the tyranny of time. Public television and public radio have the luxury, because they are not selling large slices of commercial time, of being able to do things at some length. If you start by having the length to do it you can figure out how to do something in more depth than could otherwise be done. Part of it is as simple as that. The *Economist* is simply a good magazine.

But the competition in the electronic media is between the public side which, without a lot of money, still puts on material in-depth, and the commercial networks and cable, where they are in constant competition with non-news and non-journalistic shows, that all have to get ratings. That is a 30-second answer.

Mr. Kalb: You know, when you think about all of journalism, it does include news organizations that do a splendid job. And a whole bunch of them that do a dreadful job. In Dan's speech, I think, you get the sense of the pulling toward the negative, toward debasing the quality of news coverage and presentation. But it does not have to be that way.

There are any number of news organizations led by superior people, some of them I'm looking at right here, who do a terrific job every single day. So, I don't want to leave the impression, and I'm sure Dan doesn't want to either, that we are looking at a ship simply sinking into the Atlantic Ocean, never to rise again. There are tremendous forces at work that are both good and bad. And we shouldn't get lost just focusing on the bad, although we are in that moment in the cycle where the bad does seem to be predominant.

Now, there is a face over in front of that microphone, that belongs to George Herman, of CBS News. Go ahead, George.

Mr. Herman: Dan, I'm curious as to why you calmly accepted the slander which Mr. Berlin delivered on the character of Washington correspondents, that once we get inside

the Beltway we stop asking ourselves why did he tell me that and what did he mean by that? Do you believe that is true?

Mr. Schorr: No. But I was addressing myself to the end of that question, which was, “Is the identity of someone who leaks something not also something of possible interest?” And I have to admit that it is. But for the rest, we weigh leaks, we try to measure what is leaked against other information, check it out and all the rest of it. But thank you for letting me amend that part of it.

Mr. Herman: But didn’t you, every time somebody confided something to you, say to yourself: “I wonder what he means by that? What is he trying to sell? What is going on?”

Mr. Schorr: Yes. That’s right. But there are ways of doing that. You go to other people who are involved and other people who are interested and balance it against other kinds of information. Frequently, some of it will end up being a better story than the one that you were told in the first place.

Ms. Clark: Karen Clark. I’m taking a class here as a mid-career student about the difference between the ideals of journalism and the practice of it, and some of it seems to me to be a matter of accountability. I’m just wondering, with your experience, do you have any wish for certain structures of accountability that don’t now exist within your profession?

Mr. Schorr: Every once in a while somebody says, you know, First Amendment, fine, we will make no law abridging, and yet somehow the press has to be accountable. Let’s figure out some way to have it accountable. My former boss, Dick Salant, at one time supported something called the National Press Council. The idea was that if you had a complaint or thought something was unfair, you’d go to the Press Council, and they would have some form of trial and decide who was right and who was wrong.

Other friends of mine objected. I, in the end, objected. It is unfortunate that the only accountability that the press has ultimately is the accountability of people who see, or people who listen, or people who read.

But there is no way under our constitutional system to license journalists. You know, some people have talked about licensing journalists. But you can’t put them up before anybody that everybody else would respect, to judge whether this was right or wrong. In many cases to do 501 you would have to go into confidential sources who wouldn’t tell you anyway. Disorderly though this system is — and I agree it would be nice if we had some way of making the press accountable — the ways of making it accountable, I think, are more dangerous than living with this little disorder we live with now.

Mr. Allen: Hi, my name is Daniel Allen. I’m also a freshman here at the College.

There seems to be some kind of consolidation of the news media industry going on. For example, ABC, I believe, is in partnership with the BBC. And *The New York Times* has bought *The Boston Globe*. I was wondering what you thought, whether this is good or bad for the industry, since I guess it creates less competition?

Mr. Schorr: It is better to have Bosnia and Somalia reported here by BBC than not have it reported at all by American television. But, that this country has come to have to rely on the television networks of a little country called England to tell us what is going on in the world, is at the very least embarrassing.

Mr. Kalb: Another gentleman from CBS News.

Mr. Clark: Blair Clark. As a former colleague of yours, Dan—

Mr. Schorr: Come on, you were my boss. (Laughter)

Mr. Clark: Nobody was your boss.

Anyway, I am going to ask a question that you are only to answer if it is relevant to the theme or thesis of what you have in mind. And that is about a certain correspondent on the border between what we used to call “The Evil Empire” and the “Free World” —if

we still use either of those words — and an enterprise which he was involved with for his journalistic home which he was ordered to stop for reasons of security.

Mr. Schorr: What Blair is referring to is when he was news director at CBS, I was in Berlin working on a really wonderful story about some people who were trying to build a tunnel under the Berlin Wall.

One day I was asked to come to the U.S. Mission in Berlin, late at night. I said for what, and was told, for a phone call from your boss. I said: “Why can’t he call me in the hotel?” And they said it was because he had to use a secure line. Well, okay, so I went to the U.S. Mission and there was Blair Clark speaking to me from the State Department and saying that what I’m advised here is that what you are about to do is very dangerous and could endanger people and endanger the national interests of the United States. I said, “Malarkey, I think this is a story that we ought to do.” And he ordered that I not do it.

Why you wanted to boast of that I don’t know, but, okay. (Laughter)

NBC went and did it and got prizes for having done it. (Laughter)

Mr. Clark: A footnote: the circumstances were that I was summoned by Dean Rusk, the Secretary of State, at midnight, to the State Department. Pierre Salinger was there with three CIA people, and they produced what looked like proof that the tunnel was compromised and that dozens of East Germans going through the tunnel were going to be killed. I never have known whether it was true, but under the circumstances it didn’t seem to me I could say anything but what I said. But I wonder, on reflection, after 30 years have you had any “who does what to whom” thoughts about that?

Mr. Schorr: No. But I’d like to interview you on that subject. (Laughter)

Mr. Clark: Any time. Free.

Mr. Hogan: Hi, my name is Joe Hogan.

Here in Boston we have seen a local TV station bought by a businessman in Miami, who is promising more glitzy news, a lot more gore and exciting things like that. We’ve seen *Time* go to fast-format reading and that sort of thing. You talked about cycles. I don’t necessarily see a cycle back to quality journalism in the popular press and TV and I was wondering, what does it take? TV stations do have to survive in the ratings, but when will we see something like *Nightline* or NPR succeeding in prime time and people paying attention?

Mr. Schorr: I think it is wonderful that a program like *Nightline* survives, and has become now very important; it wasn’t when they first did it. I think you look for these little pearls among the rubbish, and you look at them and you enjoy them. But I don’t know what, frankly, is going to turn the general situation around very soon.

Speaking of television, because television is the most important part of the problem, what we have is three networks fighting rather desperately for slices of a shrinking pie. In the course of doing that, ratings dictate everything because ratings dictate advertising and profits, if any.

Therefore, in the search for ratings they learn that you can’t do your best, because you make more money by doing your worst. That you really need elements of drama, violence, sex, anything which is vivid and dramatic and involves conflict. And if that doesn’t have anything to do with what is really happening in the world, so be it.

That is the age that we are in, as long as we are in an age of commercial television. Cable is making it worse because cable is coming out with ever worse things and lowering the common denominator. Enjoy *Nightline*. Enjoy NPR. Enjoy what we have left because there isn’t very much. (Applause)

Mr. Kalb: One of the wonderful things about these Teddy White speeches is that, although the speech is over, the event continues. Tomorrow morning from 9:30 to 11 :30 there will be a seminar at which Dan will be present. He will be talking about the many interesting and provocative ideas that he put before us this evening.

Joining him tomorrow, leading that discussion, will be Linda Wertheimer from NPR. And four panelists: Ellen Goodman, Clarence Page, David Shribman and Ben Bagdikian.

I just want to say, on behalf of all us, that the Joan Shorenstein Barone Center chose well when it chose Daniel Schorr to do this lecture.

THEODORE H. WHITE SEMINAR NOVEMBER 19, 1993

Ms. Wertheimer: We are going to treat this like live radio and assume that whatever happens, happens.

Let me introduce the panel.

David Shribman is the assistant managing editor, columnist and Washington bureau chief of *The Boston Globe*. He joined *The Globe* after serving as national political correspondent for the *Wall Street Journal* and before that, covered Congress and national politics for *The New York Times*.

Next is Ellen Goodman. I think of Ellen Goodman as the person who just says what ought to be said, over and over again, in her column in *The Boston Globe*. She is a Radcliffe graduate and has been a Nieman Fellow. She has written a number of books, starting with *Turning Point* which was published in 1979. The most recent is *Value Judgments* — I recommend it to you.

Dan Schorr, you know.

Clarence Page is a columnist and editorial board member for *The Chicago Tribune*. He is one of the only people sitting up here besides me who is not attached to Harvard in some way, or to the Boston area. He lives in Washington and you see him frequently on television. He was a reporter and city editor for *The Chicago Tribune* for a number of years and then took a flyer in TV for WBBM in Chicago, then came back to the newspaper where he has worked for some time. He is also one of the newspaper correspondents who appears regularly on National Public Radio's *Weekend Edition*.

Ben Bagdikian is another person who has ties to this area. He began as a reporter for the *Springfield Morning Union*, which no longer exists, does it?

Mr. Bagdikian: I'm afraid it does.

Ms. Wertheimer: It does? Oh, dear. (Laughter)

Ben went on to become first assistant managing editor for National News, then ombudsman for *The Washington Post*. He moved on to academia and finished up with a title that I think we all envy, Dean Emeritus, at the University of California's Graduate School of Journalism. (Laughter)

Mr. Bagdikian: The best part is the Emeritus. (Laughter)

Ms. Wertheimer: Dan described last night a system of manipulation in which politicians float ideas, policies and nominations that we in the press bat around for a while. If they're still standing, then they happen. Dan was asking whether we can restore an appropriate relationship between the press and the politicians? How do you do that? How do you turn back that clock? How do you recycle, I think, was the notion that Dan had, back into another era?

Ben, as the Emeritus, you get to start.

Mr. Bagdikian: Well, I think the real sticking point is that editors and executive news producers have to be willing not to give up an exclusive, if their correspondent or they believe it is really not yet serious news. That is hard, even when you can make that discrimination.

I was the first national editor with *The Washington Post* who had to look at all the networks to know what is in the public's mind. To say, okay, somebody else is leading with this, but we are going to put in on page 23, because it is iffy.

That's why resolve is needed mostly on the editor's desk and by the news producers. And if that happened, we would make a big leap forward. At least we wouldn't be seduced into things that put a lot of static into the news.

Mr. Shribman: I think Dan hit on something pretty important last night. We have all been sinned upon and we have all sinned, I guess. But it is worse even than Dan said. This winter when the Clinton administration was putting together its first budget, I knew there were going to be leaks everywhere. What bothered me was that we at *The Globe* were not going to get any of them.

So, I thought to insulate ourselves we needed to come out early and write a story about government by leaks, government by trial balloon. It was a good journalistic trick, but it was really designed to show editors two or three days later (after we were beaten on a leak), "You see, we told you this was all going to happen."

So, not only were we out there trying to get leaks, and frustrated because we didn't, but we used our paper as an internal political tool to explain to our editors why *The New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal* and *Los Angeles Times* were getting these juicy stories and we weren't. It gave us a plausible reason why sources weren't calling us up and dumping huge piles of documents at our door.

Ms. Goodman: Well, I think there are two pieces to this in addition. One is the passion for insider information that editors, and I don't think this was always true, and reporters, both have for inside information. There is this current fashion that reporters have to present themselves as insiders — contrary to our traditional role as outsiders.

That feeds in to something that Dan alluded to, which is this cozy relationship of reporters on television to their sources, and reporters all saying what they think. Not just those of us who are assigned to tell people what we think, but reporters sitting in front of a camera doing instant analysis. It has, I think, a very subtle corrupting effect on the process. It creates "celebrity journalists" which was an oxymoron when most of us got into the profession.

Mr. Page: May I say a little something on this? I think I am going to sound a little bit like the agnostic at the temple, but I am not that terribly upset about leaksmanship, or leakspersonship, if you will. I have been to so many of these seminars where we sit around and wring our hands and fret over this — and then run right back and do it. None of us yet has come up with a model of journalism where a relationship between newsmakers and newscoverers can survive or function without leaks.

Sometimes leaks are a good thing. Sometimes there are "whistle-blowers" inside institutions who know something the media ought to know about and yet who cannot reveal their identities. We get some very good stories out of that. In seminars like this held during the Watergate era, we fretted about "pack journalism." So why was it that Watergate was broken not by regular White House correspondents but by two cowboys whose lives were later romanticized by Dustin Hoffman and Robert Redford and all that Dan alluded to last night.

It has something to do with the nature of beats versus the nature of general assignment reporters and something that Ben mentioned, which is editor's prerogatives, where the decision-making occurs.

In each of our publications or broadcast operations, editors set the standards. There are reasons why stories that are on page one of the *New York Post* are on page 15 or no page at all of *The New York Times*.

I think the best cure for all of this, if there is a cure, is a bit of sophistication. Perhaps I have a jaundiced eye from being one of these so-called "insiders," although I share with David this Beltway envy that comes when you are not a journalist for *The Washington Post* or *The New York Times*.

My paper, *The Chicago Tribune*, as you know, may be the most important paper in the Midwest, but outside the Midwest we might as well be *Paris Match*. In Washington, we are a "foreign" press and therefore have to scramble to get our telephone calls returned.

Which is one reason, interestingly enough, why TV has become important. My editors encourage me to be on television because they want *The Chicago Tribune's* profile raised. So sometimes when our reporters call up a newsmaker, he might say: "Oh, that is the paper Clarence Page works for, isn't it? I wonder what that John McLaughlin is really like." This is part of the sociology of Washington.

Yes, we fret about it, we anguish about it. Well, surprise, there is no Santa Claus or Tooth Fairy either. Let's be sophisticated about this. Let's understand that people leak for reasons — and their motives are an important consideration when we get a leak.

When I was teaching journalism, we talked about leaks, and how Ben Bradlee once put a ban on them. Meant to stop use of “a highly placed source” and similar kinds of blind attribution, this ban lasted about two or three days before *The Post* was scooped by *The New York Times*. Every editor toys with a similar idea, then realizes that it is part of the game.

When I left Chicago to move to Washington, a *New York Times* reporter said, “Whatever you do, don't lose whatever jaundiced eye you picked up covering Chicago City Hall.” I have tried not to. I have found out that Congress essentially is no different than Chicago City Hall — they just wear nicer suits.

Nevertheless, there are reasons to have trust in government, there are reasons to have trust in the media. There are reasons to question government and to question the media as well.

Ms. Wertheimer: As Dan pointed out last night, one of the problems is that when somebody leaks something to you as confidential and you give your word, you are stuck with not being able to write a trenchant analysis of their motives, since you can't identify them.

Mr. Shribman: But you can in a way, Linda, actually. For example, during the health care debate, if we are leaked some information that would show that the wealthy are going to do poorly on the health care plan, we can characterize the source by saying, “which was provided to *The Globe* by an opponent of the president's plan.”

Mr. Schorr: This problem of interface between press and government I think has reached an acute form that I didn't go into detail on last night. That is the problem, not of leaking, but the further problem of what happens when the leak is a lie?

For example, we have the latest revelations about the “death squads” in El Salvador. When first reported a decade ago, the State Department said it was untrue. Elliott Abrams said it was untrue, so it had to be untrue. Now recently we've learned from quite official reports that these death squads' activities, involving persons highly placed, were being subsidized and supported by the U.S. And it was all true.

A second example: there will be soon a report by the special prosecutor in the Iran/Contra case, Lawrence Walsh. In that report he describes a meeting on November 10, 1986, in the Cabinet Room with President Reagan, members of the Cabinet and Vice-President Bush, in which Ed Meese spelled out a scenario, a false scenario, about what the arms shipments to Iran had been all about.

Meese said what “really” had happened was that Israel had shipped these missiles without our permission or knowledge. He also said we thought at the time that this was oil-drilling equipment. He went through all of this for people who knew he was lying — but who also understood that he was spelling out what he planned to tell the public, even though it was a lie.

Nixon did that in Watergate. There were meetings where they didn't have to say, “Let's tell this lie.” What they said was, “What happened was ...,” understanding that they were constructing a scenario meant to gull a gullible public.

When our government conspires to lie to us, whether it be by leak or public statement or denial of things which others have reported, then I suggest we have reached a very acute stage in this problem of interface with government, in which nothing can any longer be taken at face value, and everything has to be held in question until we can get more information. Linda raises the question: What do we do about it? My answer, although it may sound like a vague generality in response to a specific problem, is you take all these journalists who are so busy putting together their sound bites and getting

on the air, and try to inculcate in them a crucial attitude. We don't want you to be cynical, because there is some good in the world. We do want you to be skeptical.

Mr. Shribman: I want to ask Dan and the rest of you all a related question. It's whether you think that, when we are the recipients of a leak that is a lie, we should feel ourselves released from any obligation to protect that source?

Ms. Wertheimer: That is a good question.

Ms. Goodman: But it raises the question of who judges whether it was a lie?

Mr. Shribman: Let's say it was clear.

Ms. Goodman: What if the leaker was not the *source* of the lie, but was also lied to?

Mr. Schorr: I was outraged when an editor in Minneapolis, for reasons of his own, decided to betray the source of a reporter in a political story out there. A promise is a promise. I mean, I think we should all be a lot more wary about what confidences we are willing to accept.

Ms. Wertheimer: Maybe you should remember the old dictum: Don't get mad, get even. (Laughter)

There are other ways to screw the person who just did that to you. (Laughter)

Mr. Page: Now you sound like a Chicago journalist.

Ms. Wertheimer: What is so difficult in the present climate is to sit on a leak until you think you know what you've got.

Mr. Page: I think that is the flip side of the question. What do you do when the leak is the truth but there is a possibility that it might be wrong? I'm thinking about the Senator Packwood story, which *The Washington Post* and the *Portland Oregonian* both had before the last election?

Ms. Goodman: Well, that wasn't a leak. I mean, the Senator denied everything, so that wasn't really a leak, that was reporting — and the women came forward.

Mr. Page: That is true. And it wasn't a new story although there was a lot of new information — and yet the editors held back. We have to make these judgment calls every day. It is hard to think of a hard and fast rule.

Ms. Wertheimer: But, in that case, *The Post* paused until they had the story completely nailed down. They checked the Senator's charges and therefore published after the election. Now, you know, you can teach it round or teach it flat but it seems to me that they did the responsible thing.

What I found so extraordinary was that they didn't go with it blind. They sourced everything and they named all the women. It took a very long time to get to the point where all those women would agree to be named.

Mr. Page: Then why have *The Post* and *The Oregonian* been criticized by a number of people for holding the story? I agree with you, but showing some responsibility still gets you spanked.

Mr. Bagdikian: That is a tough problem in this case, Clarence. Because getting a quick story, prior to an election, is an old dirty trick, of course. During the war, I was in a town in Louisiana where the day before the election posters went up: "What happened to the \$10,000 in Sheriff Jones' safe?" Well, of course nothing had happened to it. (Laughter)

Mr. Bagdikian: Yet there *is* that kind of story, and frequently editors have to consider whether a story may or may not be true — or even if it is true, whether it will be seen as a political move by the publication or broadcaster to turn the election. I think if it is grave enough then one does run it. But it is not an easy decision — at least *I* don't think it is. If a story comes in time to do some background checking, and in time for a response by whoever the target is, then I think there is no reason to hold back. But I think it is frequently a very tough decision.

Ms. Wertheimer: Before we go to questions from the floor, let me just ask one more question myself. Dan made a distinction last night between leaks that contain real secrets, from which dangerous public policies will ensue, and leaks that are a sort of convenient

political trap. Can we make a distinction between this sort of leak and a leak that is slightly advance information to protect politicians from doing something that will end up in a way they don't necessarily foresee?

Mr. Schorr: It's a good question. But we should really distinguish among *three* kinds of leaks: the authorized leak, the leak meant to counter the unauthorized leak, and the whistleblower's leak.

Obviously, you credit an unauthorized leak much more because this is not from a person sent out there deliberately to lead you into believing something. That usually happens when somebody says: "They can't do this; it is a terrible thing, the world must know about it." That usually requires an act of conscience, and sometimes entails risk to that person. A reporter can usually recognize that.

Now, by the same token, a leak of conscience is an angry leak. It sometimes may not be entirely correct and needs a lot of checking.

Ms. Goodman: I love the term "the authorized leak" though.

Mr. Page: But isn't it the same as a "trial balloon" really? And don't such trial balloons have a place in government? Government by trial balloon might be a good thing, might be a bad thing. But it certainly can focus attention on an issue, and let an internal debate get out there without an administration having to commit to one policy or another.

Of course, it can show a weakness of will by an administration, a sense of blowing and shifting in the wind. I guess my point of view is government by trial balloon is a reality in 1993.

Mr. Shribman: But Clarence, this is certainly easier to talk about here at Harvard than it is in Washington newspaper bureaus. We have somebody who constantly leaks to us about Clinton's health care plans. All of a sudden, this person stopped because he was criticized for leaking to us. So then everybody else started getting these stories that *we* weren't getting, because this person was worried he would be criticized for giving it to us, when in fact he was giving it to everyone else.

So, the dynamic became very peculiar: suddenly there was information that you could get basically by standing outside the White House with your hand out, that *we* couldn't get — because this person was afraid the White House would be upset if it appeared in *The Boston Globe*.

Ms. Goodman: I think we should draw back a little bit to the larger question that Dan raised, which is "Who is using whom," from a somewhat arcane discussion that has emerged. What is happening is this: The government is trying to get its message out and to get rid of us as the gatekeepers.

For understandable reasons, there was a time when the media weren't gatekeepers. Candidates went around campaigning, door to door, hand to hand, small audience to small audience getting their message across — in exactly the same way that Clinton, as you described it last night, has tried to get his over. Now, though, we call it "going over journalism's head." There is an implicit judgment somewhere in that, that somehow or other he's got his nerve, trying to go over our heads. And there is a resentment of that on the part of the press and an assumption that somehow or other we should be the gatekeepers.

So, now there is this cyclical thing, where we are trying to get it first and they are trying to get it first. It seems to me that is the origin of the "who uses whom."

Mr. Page: I'm hearing two different things here by the way. I wonder if, from the bureau chief's point of view, that Dave is saying, "If the media are going to be used, please use us. Don't use our competition."

Mr. Shribman: Yeah, that—

Ms. Wertheimer: That's always the way.

Mr. Page: Thank you. I just wanted to hear you confirm that, because my bureau chief would say the same thing. His attitude is that if the Clintonites screw us, then we are going to go back and screw them.

Ms. Wertheimer: Let's go to the floor.

George Herman: I have an anecdote which leads to a question. I was once leaked to by a very powerful Senator and, I thought, a good friend. The leak was to his advantage. I tried for a day and a half to verify it with other sources and couldn't. So, I swallowed the leak, buried it, never used it.

My question is, who am I to stand between a powerful Senator and the American public? Did I do right or wrong? Have you ever faced this situation and what did you do?

Mr. Schorr: You were obviously right, George. You were not standing between a powerful Senator and the public. The powerful Senator could have spoken with his own name if he wanted to address the public. If he, for some reason, wanted to tell you something without using his name, he wasn't addressing the public. If you had any reason to suspect the authenticity of what he told you, you did exactly right — you were being very professional.

From the Floor: Have you done it?

Mr. Schorr: On occasion.

Mr. Shribman: We did it this week. Sometimes you have a story that is so tantalizing that it is almost too good to be true — and often it is. We are just not willing, not to be too high and mighty about this, to compromise the good name of the newspaper for a cheap hit, if we can't confirm it. We all have stuff we haven't confirmed and some of it is too good to check and you just don't use it. If you are not sure, it is not even a close call.

Ms. Wertheimer: But then, the world of manipulation in which we all now live, you find *somebody* who will go with it. Then *we* write that *they* wrote about it — not that it has happened, but that it was reported. People can be very sophisticated about who will take it, knowing that once somebody does, it gets out to the rest.

Mr. Shorenstein: How do you go about confirming leaks? Lies have a way of building a life of their own; when you are trying to confirm a leak, how do you really come to the ultimate conclusion that it is what you want?

Mr. Schorr: Leaks tend to be tendentious. That is, they usually tend to promote or try to damage a person or policy.

But there is almost always another side. If the leak seems harmful to a person or an interest, there is somebody in that group or interest you can go to. Sometimes the story will be demolished; sometimes there is a grain of truth in it — and then you can begin to build a story. Sometimes you come to realize that a leak was done mischievously and isn't true — and you'll forget it.

Mr. Shorenstein: The point I'm trying to make is, you are making a judgment call about whether you should or should not use something.

Mr. Schorr: I would only amend that to say that you are using your own professional judgment.

Mr. Bagdikian: Now, you are entering an area of "semi-authorized leaks" that serve a useful purpose. For example, if when a bill for a new weapon system goes up to Congress, the Navy may say it is a weapon system that is infallible. The Air Force meanwhile has privately done a test, to show that the Navy's weapon has failed a number of times.

Now, this can be a slippery slope. But some areas, if various powerful bureaucracies are leaking information on which other bureaucracies have more or less put an arbitrary "secret" stamp, then it is useful. Especially if the reporter takes the time to get the picture from the other side. I think there is a great deal of very useful information that comes out because an opposing bureaucracy leaks information that has been concealed.

Ms. Wertheimer: David, you wanted to say something?

Mr. Shribman: I think Ellen is right in continually bringing us back to the question of “who is using whom?”

We don’t operate in a sterile laboratory or operating room. If there is a 7,000-page health bill, to take a current example, not only don’t we have the time or inclination to read it, we don’t have the taste sometimes because it is so difficult to read and understand.

We all know that some of the juicier stories about that health plan will come from some of the interest groups. The most likely way to find the juicy element involving, say, mental health cuts in the plan, is to talk to the mental health lobby.

Reporters are helped by interest groups, in a sense, because they’ll notice something on page 4,129, line seven and call them up and say take a look at that. In something as big as the health plan, a lot of people are looking for very specific things. If they find them, they are going to call you up and want you to make a big deal about it. Yes, we are being used — and we, in essence, use these interest groups as well. It is a very nasty symbiosis that we are involved in here.

From the Floor: I’d like to ask a question about who is using whom with the journalism industry itself. How much collusion or cooperation is there among journalists to try to get their editors to publish important stories and to feature them or not feature them?

Mr. Page: Hearing your question, I think about atrocities that are going on in the world right now, but that aren’t getting that much attention. Dan mentioned a “video-driven” foreign policy — that’s certainly true when we care so much about Somalia and so little about the Sudan, right next door, where there are massive atrocities going on.

Last week I saw two pictures in the paper. One was of Cuban refugees landing in Florida, celebrating, being warmly welcomed; the other was of Haitian refugees, the next or same day, who had to swim ashore after being kicked off their boats by their smugglers, then being promptly taken into custody and being told you are probably going to have to go back. Those pictures are in the paper *Tight now*, and they are not moving us to action in Haiti.

Ms. Wertheimer: I personally think there is very little of that kind of cooperation now among reporters. I think it did exist when there was much more mutual trust, when there was some sort of national interest to be served. I think serving the national interest is very low on the list of things that you would consider when you consider whether or not to publish or broadcast these days.

Let’s just change direction a little bit and talk about one of the other areas that Dan covered last night. And that is that foreign policy is “picture driven,” that things happen, we see them on television, and think they must be very important.

We have a president right now who’s widely criticized as having failed in major ways in foreign policy. He is also perceived as whining when he says: “Look, I’m doing great with Europe, I’m doing fine with China, I’ve made big improvements with Japan. Why are you on my case about these insoluble but small problems?”

Ms. Goodman: What I think we are wrestling with here is the post-Cold War world. In the Cold War world our foreign policy, bizarre as it might have seemed at times, was a given; the friend of your enemy was your enemy, and it was us and them.

Then, when that broke apart, some people thought that there was one superpower left that could do anything. In fact, there is no post-Cold War policy, and the government is struggling with that new reality.

We attempted, I think, in Somalia, to go from a kind of *realpolitik* to a moral notion that we could do no wrong if we went to help people who are hungry.

We are in a period of great flux and change and we are lurching from one set of pictures to another. And we are also, by the way, not in charge. Americans, I think, can

feel that it is our world to do with as we like and that we should have a policy and the world should fall into that place.

But the truer reality is that we are not in charge, and must deal with things from ethnic chaos to starvation with no single policy to put on them.

Mr. Shribman: Well, in a way I think the president has gotten off easy. The phrase, "a far-away country of which we know nothing," is among the most terrifying in the history of diplomacy. That was Neville Chamberlain's description of the Sudetenland in 1938. It turned out to be a fairly important place in the history of the world. You can't really tell in advance what is going to be important and what won't be.

Certainly you can't find any European diplomat in Washington who thinks anything except that the Clinton administration is the most disorganized and disoriented American administration since the war. So, I'm not sure that he is getting a bad rap.

Mr. Schorr: Let's come back to the issue of a "media-driven" foreign policy.

President Clinton has said the most disappointing thing during his first 10 months in office was that the British, the French and the Russians wouldn't let him bomb the Serbs. Remarkable, of all his disappointments, that he would say that.

Then he overpromises, instead of listening to Peter Tarnoff, his Under Secretary, who says, "there is a lot we can't do anymore, we are not that big and powerful." Instead he reacts politically, forced to by the fact that Americans are saying, "Can we not do something about the savagery that is going on there?"

And the same thing happened in Somalia. Pictures, as I suggested last night, pulled us in and then other pictures drove us out of Somalia. Haiti is much the same thing. The problem is, what does a president or government do, when the wisest and most careful counselors come up against political operatives who say: "Listen, you can't resist those pictures out there. People are going to say, what is wrong with you, that you can't do anything about that."

Pictures, in effect, come in and force a president to take account of human rights problems elsewhere. Although you might say that all it does is lead to actions that in the end aren't in anybody's interest.

The fact of the matter is that with Reagan on Libya, with Bush on Iraq, with all of these places where you went in because of what you considered to be political imperatives, in none have we really resolved any of those problems. In certain cases, especially in Bosnia, they have gotten worse because the Bosnian Muslims relied on American promises, which it turned out that the president really could not, or would not, deliver on.

Ms. Goodman: I think Dan is right. What I was trying to say before is that in the post-Cold War era, the national interest has become what the nation is interested in.

Ms. Wertheimer: Which is not the same thing.

Mr. Page: I'd like to expand on Dan's question by pointing to another point Dan made last night about how *domestic* policy is often driven by pictures. Particularly the current agenda with regard to violent crime.

At a time when statistics show crime either flat or decreasing in cities like New York, for example, the public perception is that it is on the rise. Crime is an issue of perception and presidents must respond to perceptions.

My answer to Dan's question might be that this is part of the evil that goes along with the good of modern media. Instantaneous communication is a fact. Presidents must respond, but differently than JFK responded to the construction of the Berlin Wall. They don't have the time to make the calls around the world before saying something to the American people.

Ronald Reagan's success was not so much his policy as the perception he gave the American people of policy. The perception after the *Challenger* blew up, say, that everything was still basically okay. It was a tragedy but we could move on.

Bill Clinton is learning how to get his message across in persuasive ways as he goes along. Dan's commentary on NPR the other day about the NAFTA victory indicates the growing perception that Bill Clinton may have reached some kind of a turning point with NAFTA.

But Bill Clinton's administration is a reflection of Bill Clinton; it is scattershot. He had the same problem while he was Governor of Arkansas. That is why he got voted out. He got voted back in when he focused in on two issues, education and jobs. He has had the same problem as president. He came in scattershot. When he brought in David Gergen and focused on the economy and health care, his numbers turned around.

This is a learn-by-doing presidency, but we are in a learn-by-doing era. It's a post-Cold War era, in foreign *and* domestic policy. The media are a part of that and the president has to respond to those changing realities.

Mr. Bagdikian: I think Dan is right. We ought to talk about the media part of this equation.

One of the big changes in the last 40 years has been the decline of print media as the agenda setter for news. When I started as a Washington correspondent, the TV people asked us: "What are you leading with?" It wasn't that we were more noble or wise, although I have my prejudices about that.

We were in a *word*-driven medium, and so was the rest of the country. It is one thing to read a story about children starving in a distant country, and another to see a picture where people can identify with the children far away as they would with their own. Today, TV is in ferocious competition all the time, every minute, and it is picture-driven. The networks are in competition among themselves, and sometimes with their own affiliates. Each local station is in competition with every other local station in its market. And what are they looking for? They are looking for dramatic pictures. Talking heads are anathema.

I think there is a whole new "culture of news," which comes out of selecting the most gripping footage these fierce competitors can find. And I think that what's selected as "socko" footage for the six or ten o'clock news can change American perceptions and therefore American foreign policy, something we with words were never able to do.

Mr. Parker: I just want to raise a question. I'm not persuaded that foreign policy is increasingly "picture-driven." It is important to distinguish between *core* foreign policy issues, national security, economic security issues and those issues which do not meet that test.

I'm hard pressed to recall where, discussion over, for example, the role of NATO in Western Europe in the years ahead, or the relationship between NATO and CSCE, have been driven by pictures.

It is extremely painful to look at pictures of starvation in Somalia; but it was just as painful when we saw starvation on the Indian subcontinent in *Life* magazine in the 1940s. Those pictures — then and now — did have some influence on American activity in terms of supplying humanitarian aid. But what's the novelty here?

I've yet to hear the examples that persuade me that, in terms of what I would call core foreign policy issues, television is playing such a central role. I'd invite the panel to give me those examples.

Ms. Wertheimer: Well, one way in which it does, is the kind of judgment that is rendered about the president's capacity to conduct foreign policy.

Mr. Parker: I don't think again that is impeding his ability to act within the European stage at the moment.

Ms. Goodman: Maybe the central question — about whether the country becomes more isolationist — comes from a vision of the world as chaotic, as out of control, as we try to do good and it ends up being bad. That sense of the world as chaotic produces a foreign policy, at the psychological level, that is more and more isolationist.

Mr. Parker: But is that where we're headed? Isolation — versus engagement — is an old and sometimes hackneyed dichotomy that journalists bring to the table constantly. For example, in the NAFTA debate the question wasn't about U.S. economic isolation or involvement, it was the terms of U.S. engagement in the world. I never liked Ross Perot, but the president won on NAFTA by being the most progressive Republican president in the 20th century. His majority in winning came from Republican members of the House, and he lost against the majority of Democrats.

Mr. Page: But don't fool yourself into thinking that images aren't important though. Michael Dukakis is one of many politicians whose careers fell because they said, "Well, those pictures aren't really important. What is important is these larger issues."

Mr. Parker: You wouldn't catch me doing that. That is not my point. I'm trying to draw the panel back to this question in your original point, which is how seminal are these pictures?

Mr. Schorr: A fair question. Part of the answer to the question lies in whether one accepts your definition of what is peripheral and what is core.

Take NAFTA. I think history will write that the turning point for the president came not from all his give-aways, but in that debate between Gore and Perot. You got their images. The White House cleverly decided that Perot was the image that they wanted to take on, and that turned out to be a big plus for them. We now know from polls that people went home and found their constituents were beginning to think differently about this. And you asked them why, and it was: "Well, you know, Gore and Perot, you look at them and you really think that Gore has it and Perot doesn't have it."

Mr. Bagdikian: Whether fortunate or not, isn't it true that on television, manner is seen as a clue to probity and personality.

Mr. Bagdikian: And that produces very real effects. There are some used car salesmen that you don't trust and others that you might. It is their larger manner, history. But it all becomes concentrated in this very short period of moving tape — and that personifies something. So, I think it does have a very real effect in crystallizing the public mind. I don't think it can be dismissed so easily

Mr. Parker: Again, I'm not dismissing it. I want someone to identify for me those American core foreign policy interests that are profoundly affected by TV.

Mr. Bagdikian: Perhaps Somalia and Bosnia and maybe Haiti are at the core of what our post-Cold War foreign policy is evolving toward, which is, a highly fragmented set of crises compared to the one polarized crisis. And that these are the most graspable images of that.

Mr. Parker: Actually aren't these cases at the margin, when the core issues are global trade, national security and regional trade and regional security issues. And it doesn't seem to me that television is playing a driving role as those are being sorted out. In fact, many of those issues are being sorted out outside the light of press coverage.

Ms. Wertheimer: One of the things most of us who work in broadcasting feel very strongly is that the power of television as a witness is really awesome. Television looking at an event in progress, like the Los Angeles riots, is an astonishing phenomenon.

It is much more difficult for television to talk about and convey, with anything like that vividness, ideas. And so we struggle with that all the time and that is the sort of picture-driven aspect of television.

Mr. Bessie: I'd like to step back just a moment. Ellen seemed to be suggesting that a spirit seen as isolationist is spreading in the country.

But how do you compare that influence against the really basic factors — social, economical, psychological — which have brought us to another isolationist period?

Images may be a catalyst. The sense of seeing an American soldier dragged in the dust may create in people an impulse to say what the hell are we doing there? But jobs, immigration, et cetera, are, in my opinion, much more fundamental.

Ms. Goodman: I think things are moving in both directions. I think the isolationist instinct at this point is largely military — it is the impulse not to get involved in other governments, and not to get us killed. It is not an economic impulse in the same way.

Mr. Schorr: It is an interesting question that you raise. I have been thinking about it and maybe I don't have the full answer today.

For example, today, the president is in Seattle, trying to conduct a policy towards China. In the course of conducting his policy towards China — is China a core?

Mr. Parker: Sure, absolutely.

Mr. Schorr: You understand that for the past four years, both the Bush and the Reagan administrations had to fight uphill for their policy on China against the pictures of Tiananmen Square?

Mr. Parker: Absolutely, and yet it has not stopped them, nor has it altered that program.

Mr. Schorr: It slowed them down.

Mr. Parker: It slowed them down, but President Bush was sending secret emissaries to Beijing within months after the massacre, and U.S./ China trade and investments have increased steadily throughout the period including the year immediately after Tiananmen. So, while we may have moral outrage as a society, it hasn't stopped a growing trade or a string of presidents from ignoring public outcry.

Mr. Schorr: Let me offer a speculation, although it hasn't happened yet; I would believe that a few more big television pieces about skinheads in Germany, and Americans will start thinking differently about NATO too.

Mr. Parker: Again the public might start thinking differently, but whether, in fact, U.S. relations with Germany and NATO are altered, goes to the heart of my question to you. How does TV affect *core* policy interests?

Ms. Wertheimer: I keep coming back to Ellen's comment about what is in the national interest is what interests the nation. It is appallingly, apparently true, every once in a while.

Mr. Herman: On television versus the printed press, Dan was saying it was implicit that CBS was not going to handle the story that eventually ended up in the *Village Voice*.

Mr. Schorr: It was not implicit, it was explicit.

Mr. Herman: And that the reason was that television is licensed by the FCC, and therefore has certain obligations and is under the control of government in a way that the printed press is not. A question to you and to Linda. What is it about, specifically, about National Public Radio, that makes you feel secure and comfortable expressing yourself freely and candidly. Public radio, like commercial and public television, is also licensed by the FCC and in addition is subsidized indirectly by Congressional appropriations.

Ms. Wertheimer: In our case, we own no stations. So, therefore we are not licensed in any way. Our affiliates that purchase our material are licensed, but we are not.

Mr. Schorr: Well, I'll add on the other side: when I went to CBS, which owned two publishing houses, and said, look, *The New York Times* had the Pentagon Papers, wrote the story and when it was all over New York Times Books published all or most of the Pentagon Papers for the historic record.

We have this report of the House Intelligence Committee: I've reported on it extensively on the air. It is not a question of it having been suppressed in terms of content. But when the time came, because the House had voted to suppress it, I said, "Listen, I've got a copy, why don't we publish it?"

Dick Salant, who was my boss, had gone upstairs, and said, "What should we do about this?" The answer was, "You are out of your mind." This happened to be a moment when cable was looking for legislation to expand in great force, and publishing this would put CBS into a confrontation with Congress, at a moment when they were wooing Congress to listen to television networks.

This wasn't a matter of FCC regulation, this was simply a regulated medium, where Congressional decisions would have a billion-dollar impact, on CBS and other networks. And here I was, proposing to take on Congress, in the name of CBS. And as Bill Paley explained to me much later, I could not threaten CBS because of one story I thought so important.

That doesn't arise in the case of *The New York Times* or *The Washington Post*. Yes, in the case of the Pentagon Papers, efforts were made to get restraining orders and all the rest of it, but those are pure First Amendment conflicts. In the case of television it becomes a big business interest.

From the Floor: I'd like to take up a point that Dan mentioned last night and Ellen mentioned earlier about politicians going over the heads of the national news media. Whether you look at it as going over the heads or, more benevolently, as communicating directly with the voters, something is happening via entertainment or info-tainment talk radio, national town meetings, computer networks, 1-800 numbers.

What is the reaction of the national news media to this? Specifically, is it increasing the cynicism of the news media in Washington, when Ross Perot and Al Gore go on Larry King? And secondly, how is it affecting the making of public policy?

Ms. Goodman: Well, as the only person, aside from Ben, who isn't from Washington in this group, my impression is that it has the Washington press corps really pissed off. It's as if they've lost a large piece of their power, and they hold it against Clinton. I think it's been very apparent that the Washington press corps has regarded itself as the permanent establishment and felt this newcomer Clinton came in and didn't kowtow to them appropriately—in fact, thought that he didn't need them and could talk around them. And they showed him.

I think it is entirely appropriate for a president to speak directly to the people — whether he is doing it on a street corner or over the airwaves — and a lot of my colleagues really don't. David can't wait to jump in and get mad at me.

Mr. Shribman: I was about to say, Ellen, that this isn't purely an American thing. I did either a foolhardy or extraordinary thing a couple of months ago and spent a couple of days covering the Canadian election.

I found all the other correspondents following Jean Cretien and Kim Campbell were very upset that both candidates were going on the equivalent of the Larry King show, and were holding press conferences only for regional reporters, and not for national reporters.

The Ottawa press corps, who were waiting for their 47 days in the sun, during their blessedly short election, were very, very frustrated.

Ms. Goodman: One of the ways you can see how pissed off a lot of the Washington reporters are, is by the tag lines on all the Washington stories. They almost invariably have a kind of snide twist to them.

Mr. Page: I think that is changing, though. As a pundit based in Washington, I think you are absolutely right, Ellen. Initially there was a greater deal of pissed-offness among the Washington press corps because the administration was speaking over their heads. But, to paraphrase Mark Twain, reports of the Washington press corps' demise are greatly exaggerated.

David Gergen changed that to a large degree. The antipathy that had developed between George Stephanopoulos and the Washington press corps virtually evaporated overnight. And my impression, when Gergen came in and gave some focus to the administration, was that this whole thing about "focus" was really about "clean up and clarify." Tighten up the message you are giving to these reporters.

The Helen Thomases, the Sam Donaldsons, Wolf Blitzers, all the rest who are here every day — you have to deal with them. When you try to go past them, that frees them to dig up their own story.

Then they're going to send out a bunch of messages that you don't want. So, part of the way that we use each other is through this kind of relationship between the regular beat reporters and the White House.

I think the reporters, now, are getting along with this administration much better and the administration is understanding the reporters much better.

Ms. Wertheimer: Why am I not comforted by the notion that the imagemeister has made everything better?

Mr. Page: I didn't say better. I said more comfortable.

Mr. Bagdikian: What does it tell us if Gergen, who organizes the feeding, suddenly just gets nice, orderly people who ingest what he gives them? As opposed to going beyond the few selected voices, to get information on their own?

Mr. Page: What does it tell you, Ben?

Mr. Bagdikian: It tells me that once inside the Beltway as a journalist, you forget that there are people on the other side of the Potomac River.

Ms. Wertheimer: Let me share something that was suggested to me several years ago. A lot of these problems are caused by something that we all take as a positive good: the non-partisan quality of the press. If the press were to return to the bad old days of acute partisanship, a lot of this kind of thing would be much more understandable.

If you know that this is very much a Republican newspaper and this is very much a Democratic newspaper, you know where they are getting their leaks, you sort of know what to do with that information. And you make some judgments about it. I would just offer the success of Rush Limbaugh as a suggestion that maybe we might be evolving back in that direction. Would that be a horrible thing?

Mr. Bagdikian: In the late 19th century, there were managerial papers, right-wing papers, socialist, labor union papers, ethnic papers. It meant that issues got into the whole community, which I think don't get in now. What we have now is a shrunken spectrum of political ideas, social ideas, and even information, which delivers a highly filtered, homogenized picture as seen by a very specialized financial, governmental, corporate and institutional establishment.

As a result, the actual ideas in society, the needs and demands in society tend to get lost in any effective way. I don't want to go back to the 19th century, but I think there is something to be said for voices of significant groups who don't have a place in the standard media today.

Ms. Wertheimer: There is a person back here who has lost all circulation in his hand, it has been up so long.

From the Floor: I'm very interested in an idea Mr. Schorr touched upon last night: How fairly is the administration being treated? Take the *Rolling Stone* interview where the president started swearing at William Greider — I mean he obviously feels that he has not been treated well.

Mr. Page: I guess this in a way touches on the fairy tale I was referring to earlier that the public believes. That is the fairy tale of an objective reporter. Reporters are human beings. We are not objective creatures, we are very subjective. All information that goes through media is filtered through human beings and so their personal relations are going to have an impact on coverage. A savvy newsmaker understands that. And from their point of view that is why we are in such a "Road Runner versus Wile E. Coyote" game every day.

The Ed Rollinses and the Roger Aileases and the David Gergens are a reality in an era when your media is as much a part of your job as your foreign policy or your domestic policy. This is why again, I don't want to overplay the value of pictures, but you can't underplay it either. It is all a part of the game.

But, again I think that the relation between the media and news-makers is probably cozier than it ought to be.

I also think there is nothing new about this.

Ms. Goodman: Well, I think it is ego run amok, and there are many days when I think there should be term limits for Washington journalists. (Applause)

Mr. Page: This again has become a modern chestnut. You know, I ask the same thing about term limits for politicians, how long should the term be?

Ms. Goodman: Maybe the same amount that we have for many university presidents: 10 years?

Mr. Page: I have a different suggestion. Instead of term limits, let's move Washington to Manhattan or Chicago or some other real city, where people in government have to live the kind of lives that most Americans live. Washington is a very unreal place.

Ms. Wertheimer: Of course, the problem is that you would have to move it every couple of years.

Mr. Bessie: What we are now talking about had considerable effect on Teddy White and on his work. When he did *The Making of the President 1960*, he was not, in any sense of the word, a national figure. The book really benefited enormously from an accident: his acquaintance with the Kennedys and the Kennedy camp.

Well, as a result of the success of that book and the subsequent '64 book, he was no longer the boy reporter from Boston. There was an advantage in access, there was a great disadvantage in having become a personality. I raise that simply because it is a problem that all of you sooner or later have faced, or will face.

Ms. Wertheimer: You are absolutely right. It is a problem that I think every person at this table grapples with.

Ms. Goodman: It is a much greater problem for television reporters and it is a much greater problem for reporters than for people, basically, like Clarence and me who sit in our little rooms trying to make sense of things.

Mr. Bessie: Yes, but look what it did to Walter Lippmann.

Mr. Bagdikian: I have a simpler suggestion than term limits for Washington correspondents: Shut off all air conditioners in the District of Columbia. It will go back to what it used to be, when in July every member of Congress who could, and many correspondents, had to leave to some other place where they began bumping into people that they didn't see at the cocktail parties and briefings all winter long.

Mr. Patterson: What I wanted to talk about a little was whether we are giving news values their due in this sort of discussion. I think there is, for example, more news in criticism, than in praise. And in many ways, the unauthorized leaker is the critic of the administration or a critic of some institution in society.

I wonder too, how much the news really is driven by pictures as opposed to problems? There has always been great news value in problems and it is nice if you can also attach pictures to those problems. But in many ways, the news lurches from problem to problem more than it does from picture scenario to picture scenario. There is not very much news in policy going well. But there *is* news in problems.

One thing that's happened in recent decades is that this whole process has been speeded up. It is not only that communication is more instantaneous; as the Washington press corps grows more people out there are looking for problems.

I'll offer just one example: the Clinton presidency. If you were the Governor of Arkansas, you could afford to concentrate on one or two things. That is very difficult if you are president of the United States. I mean, the nation's problems don't come in ones and twos.

It is also the case that news values make it awfully difficult for presidents to keep the focus on a particular issue or two issues.

I don't think that the national interest is necessarily what interests the nation. But to some degree there is some truth in that statement. And I think the normal issues and values that have anchored public opinion have weakened.

Increasingly that agenda is driven by what they are saying through the press. Increasingly people associate what they see in the news with what government does. I think that makes it very difficult for a president to govern and I think news values are part of this situation as well.

Mr. Page: You know, one thing I wanted to talk about earlier keeps coming up again and again. Maybe I'm doing this through a prism of my own prejudices, but the picture-driven media are so inadequate to give us the "big picture" of what is really going on these days. I see this as driving NAFTA, our foreign policy priorities and our domestic policy, too.

It has been probably best encapsulated by Robert Reich, who calls it "jobs anxiety." I think that is just the tip of the iceberg of larger divisions in our society today that the media have not given us a real handle on. They give us snapshots. They give us pictures of racial strife, urban riots in Los Angeles. Or a conflict between men and women.

We see drugs as a black problem, for example, because TV cameras are located near black neighborhoods. Bill Bennett says 70 percent of cocaine purchases is by whites, but they tend to do it indoors. Blacks and Hispanics in the inner city tend to do it out of doors, where it is much more visible. Thus, it becomes a TV story.

Bill Clinton responds by going to a black church to talk about crime, last week — once again reinforcing the idea that crime is a black problem.

The real story is that black problems are a barometer of a larger division in our society between haves and have nots. Those who have at least two years of education beyond high school are the only people in our society, since 1972, whose income has gone up in real dollars. And that is also the line where the NAFTA debate happened to fall — between those people who are the movers and shakers and those who get moved and shaken. That is the real story of our society today.

Thirty percent of college students, perhaps not Harvard, but 30 percent of college graduates, according to *Time* magazine, will be under-employed five years from now. We tell college kids to have a plan for their lives. Well, 30 percent of them have to know that five years from now they are going to be waiting tables or an equivalent to that.

For the first time, young people can't afford a house of the quality of the one they grew up in. These are massive changes in our society right now. The fact that it is post Cold War is only the tip of the iceberg.

These divisions may not stop foreign trade. Money is going to flow. The trend is towards a unipolar world, militarily, with the U.S. at the top and a tripolar world economically. That trend is happening whether NAFTA had passed or failed. We in the media do either speed up or slow down those processes.

And can cause more conflict along class lines — or help to patch those conflicts over, and move us ahead more quickly into the 21st century. I see *that* as the real problem that we are grappling with in so many ways.

Mr. Schorr: I was talking to one of Marvin's students earlier who said if Marvin were here he would have added a spiritual quality to this discussion. That in his classes you get the sense that the First Amendment and the First Commandment are very much the same thing.

This reminded me of what would it be like in a world of sound-bite journalism, if Moses came down from the mountain today with the Ten Commandments and faced a stakeout of reporters and cameras? People telling him that they wanted to have it very briefly because there was only 35 or 40 seconds for this story.

And Moses would say: "You want it very briefly? The good news is we got it down to 10. The bad news is adultery is still in."