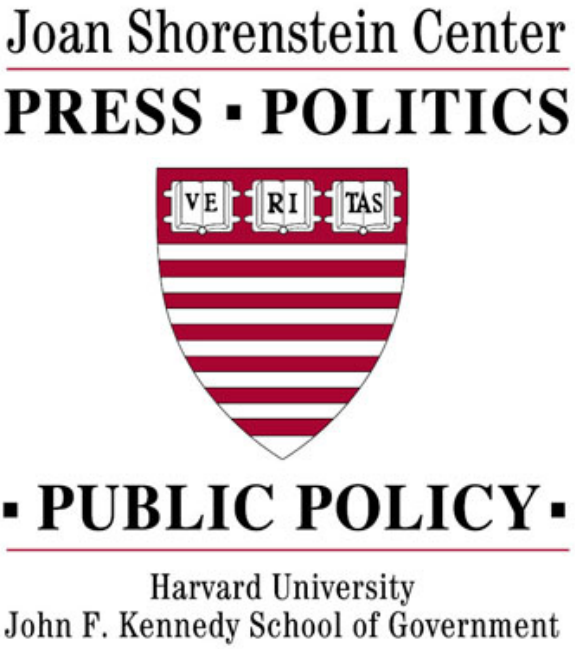
THE THEODORE H. WHITE LECTURE

WITH

COKIE ROBERTS



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White's *Making of the President* editions for 1964 and 1972, and *America in Search of Itself* remain vital historical documents on campaigns and the press.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

COKIE ROBERTS is an ABC News correspondent covering politics, Congress and public policy, as well as a news analyst for National Public Radio, where she served as Congressional correspondent for more than a decade. She is also a panelist on the weekly roundtable discussion *This Week With David Brinkley* and frequently serves as a substitute anchor on ABC's *Nightline.*

Roberts' widely-respected coverage of American politics has won her numerous honors, including the highest award in public radio, the Edward R. Murrow Award. She was also the first broadcast journalist to win the prestigious Everett McKinley Dirksen Award for coverage of Congress, and her reporting of the Iran/Contra affair for the *MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour* won her the Weintal Award in 1987. She is the former president of the Radio and Television Correspondents Association.

Ms. Roberts grew up in a world of politics. Her father, Hale Boggs, was a congressman for 27 years, rising to the position of Majority Leader. Her mother, Lindy Boggs, filled her husband's seat (following his disappearance in a plane crash in 1972) and went on to serve for nearly 20 years in Congress.

A 1964 graduate of Wellesley College, Ms. Roberts began her journalism career in Washington, D.C., as a host and producer of a weekly TV public affairs program, *Meeting of the Minds.* Over the next several years, she worked at WNEW-TV as a producer in the news division in New York City; as producer of *Serendipity,* a children's program, in California; and as a stringer for CBS News in Greece. In 1977 she returned to Washington to join NPR where she eventually became Congressional correspondent. In addition to her work at NPR, Ms. Roberts co-hosted *The Lawmakers,* a national weekly public television program on Congress and also contributed to the *MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour.* In 1988 she joined ABC News as a special correspondent while continuing to work at NPR.

She lives in Washington with her husband Steven V. Roberts, who is a senior writer for *U.S. News and World Report* and a news commentator on PBS's *Washington Week in Review.* They have two grown children.

Mr. Schauer: Welcome to you all. I am Fred Schauer, acting director of the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy. The Center is the sponsor of the annual Theodore White Lecture, on Press and Politics.

This lecture series honors Theodore H. White, who lived from 1915 to 1986, was a graduate of the Harvard College class of 1938, then began a long and distinguished career as foreign correspondent for *Time* magazine and numerous other journals and news agencies. His importance now, however, is largely because of a series of pathbreaking books on elections and on American politics.

Most prominently, *The Making of the President,* 1960, and also, *The Making of the President,* 1964; *The Making of the President,* 1968; *The Making of the President,* 1972; and *The Making of the President,* 1980. I didn't miss one. As well as *Breach of Faith; The Fall of Richard Nixon* and a quite remarkable autobiography, *In Search of History: A Personal Adventure.*

During his lifetime, White's work was appropriately celebrated. But there were two occasional criticisms, which I mention now, because neither of them has stood the test of time. One was the occasional question about objectivity, because some thought, for example, that White may have been less kindly towards, for example, Richard Nixon than, for example, John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

But in ways that are only now being recognized, objectivity does not mean numerical equality. Objectivity does not mean exact balance, in a numerical sense. That White, for example, thought that the good parts of the Kennedy campaign and presidency, "Camelot" he called it, in a still memorable term, were more particularly important is a judgment that has been vindicated by history.

The other criticism, that White was more a celebrant, at times, than a critic of the American political and electoral tradition, is a criticism that is not only becoming less valid as time goes by, but a criticism reflecting a voice that many people are increasingly seeking. That White saw the good in political life, where others looked for flaws.

That White saw the beauty of the system, as much as its pitfalls. That White saw people's accomplishments as being as important as their missteps, is a voice resonant with much of contemporary criticism of what some people think is an overly cynical and overly negative contemporary style of political reporting.

We are pleased that this year's Theodore H. White Lecturer is Cokie Roberts. Before I introduce her, at some greater length than just her name, let me mention that, after her lecture, Marvin Kalb, the regular, not acting, director of the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, will moderate a question and answer session.

And tomorrow morning, in the Malkin Penthouse of this building, there will be a seminar devoted to critique, analysis and commentary, on tonight's lecture, featuring a cast of people, quite important in their own right. Derek Bok, Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Tom Rosenstiel, the aforementioned Marvin Kalb, and Buddy Roemer, all of whom have Harvard connections, all of whom are people situated either within the press, or within politics, or within policy making, or within all three. And we are looking forward to a quite informative, lively seminar, tomorrow morning.

But now, to the business at hand, which is Cokie Roberts. A graduate of Wellesley College, Roberts is one of the country's most distinguished political reporters and commentators, specializing on Congress and public policy.

Although we think of her as a broadcast journalist, she has been prominent, as well, in the print press. She has written important op-ed columns for *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post,* articles for *The New York Times Magazine, The Atlantic Monthly* and many others.

Still, her greatest prominence is in broadcast journalism. She has been a contributor to PBS's *MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour.* And her coverage of the Iran/Contra investigations, for that program, earned her the Weintal Award, in 1987. She has also been a reporter for CBS News, for WRC-TV in Washington, and she now serves both as a correspondent for ABC News and a news analyst for National Public Radio.

She has received the Edward R. Murrow Award in Public Radio, was the first broadcast journalist to win the Everett McKinley Dirksen Award, for coverage of Congress, and is a former president of the Radio and Television Correspondents Association.

Tonight, the Theodore H. White Lecturer on Press and Politics, to speak on "Politics and the Press: Clashing Cultures," I give you Cokie Roberts. (Applause)

Ms. Roberts: Thank you, very much.

Thank you, Fred. Thank you. Please, stop. Thank you.

I, actually, don't have a legitimate Harvard connection. I spent a great many of my undergraduate days across the street, in Eliot House, however. It is exactly 12.5 miles, by the way, from the entrance of Eliot House, to Tower Court. And, *mirabile dictu,* I am married to the guy I was seeing in Eliot House, a mere 32 years ago. So, it does sort of rub off, whether you want it to, or not. Of course, it was in the era, you students will just not know what I'm talking about, but it was in the era of parietal hours and you had to be out of Eliot House at midnight and you didn't have to be in Wellesley till 2:00. It was really cold. (Laughter)

That's all I'll say about that.

I am, obviously, extremely honored to be giving the Theodore H. White Lecture. I only met Mr. White once, and that was at the Wayfarer bar, of course, in New Hampshire in the 1980 campaign. I find that I date my life by campaigns, which is probably not a good way to do it. But it is the way I remember things. And fortunately, each of my children was born during a campaign, so I can remember them. But, the '80 campaign, I remember all of us paying homage to Mr. White, at the bar, and learning, even briefly, a great deal from him.

I must say, though, in my own personal experience, I'm even more honored to be speaking at the center named after my very good friend, Joan Barone, who I knew well and intimately, and loved dearly. So, it is a wonderful thing for me to be able to do something in her honor, as well.

I'm also very honored by my predecessors, in this lecture. Walter Cronkite, Ben Bradlee, Warren Rudman, Dan Schorr, my good friend. I think of him, mainly, as the husband of Li Schorr, but, hey. It clearly was time for a skirt. (Laughter-Applause)

And I am delighted that you chose my skirt. I hear often, by the way, from older women, who are the people I most want to please, because they have the wisdom. "Dear, you're the only person who covers her knees on the air." So, I'm very aware of my skirts.

I got a Harvard assignment, for tonight, from Marvin, " Politics and the Press: Clashing Cultures." And I giggled, when he assigned me this, because I remembered one of my very earliest memories, about the press.

My father was running for governor of Louisiana, Buddy. And the year was 1951. The election was in January, of '52. So, it was, basically, the 1951 election. It was, in many ways, one of the more remarkable experiences that anyone should ever have. I'll just tell you a brief vignette from it, which will give you a sense of my growing up years.

It was, of course, in the height of McCarthyism. There were nine candidates in the field, because Earl Long could not succeed himself as governor. And one of them accused my father of being a communist and a communist could not run for Governor of Louisiana. There were rules. (Laughter)

So, he had to go to court and prove he wasn't a communist, and all that. And meanwhile, Earl Long was stumping the northern part of the state, the real Baptist part of

the state. And saying, "You know, what they're saying down there, in Southern Louisiana," which is, sin and iniquity, just by its definition, "They're saying that Hale Boggs is a communist. Now, you know that can't be true. Hale Boggs is a good Catholic boy." Much worse. (Laughter)

"And you know what they're saying down there, in the big city of New Orleans? They're saying that if Hale Boggs is elected, the Pope of Rome, himself, is going to come here and rule Louisiana. Now, you know that's not true. The Pope is a very busy man. But the Archbishop of New Orleans isn't."

It was a great campaign. And he lost. He came in third, in a field of nine. Of course, this was in an era where there were only Democrats, in Louisiana, at least, nominally.

And there was a second primary. The vote counting had gone on late into the night. My parents had gotten in around three or four in the morning. I'd just turned eight, two weeks before. My sister, therefore, was 12.

And a reporter for the afternoon newspaper called and asked to speak to my father. And she said, "Well, he's asleep. He hasn't been to bed all night. I'm not going to wake him up." And the reporter said, "Well, what does he think about the election?" And she said, "Well, he knows he lost." And then, being a very smart 12 year old, she said, "But I am only 12 years old." She said, "Who is this?" And he told her. And she said, "I am only 12 years old. You can't quote me."

And that afternoon, the newspaper came out, with a banner headline, "Source close to Hale Boggs concedes election." (Laughter)

Clashing cultures? I'd say so. Was I raised with a certain sense of, at least, healthy skepticism, about the press? Totally. Was there a sense that I was going over to the other side, when I, somewhere along the line, chose this trade? Certainly.

The only thing that kept my parents from being totally devastated was the fact that they had both been journalists, themselves, in their dear dead youths. They met on the *Tulane Hullabaloo,* where my father was editor in chief. My mother was Newcomb editor, the highest position a woman could achieve. Howard K. Smith was the sports editor.

So, it was something that they, at least, had a passing acquaintance with and, actually, my father, I'm told, really tried to go into journalism. And the editor of *The Times Picayune,* at that point it was just *The Picayune,* said to him that he wouldn't keep him on. He'd worked at the paper all through college. And the editor said he wouldn't keep my father on, if he didn't go to law school, because the editor knew that it was a better deal, even then. So, it was with some sense of understanding, if disappointment, that they discovered that this is what I was going to do, when I grew up.

So, the answer to the question that Marvin posed, "Politics and Press: Clashing Cultures," is yes, certainly, absolutely. Let me tell you a conversation that just happened, the day after this recent election, between politician mother and journalist daughter. Daughter, to mother, "You sound awful. What's wrong?" Mother, to daughter, "The country has just gone to the dogs." Daughter to mother, "It is a great story." (Laughter)

You can probably guess who the players in this little drama were. And I think it perfectly reveals the fundamental reason for the clash of cultures.

I do think that the cultures bang up against each other, because our interests are different. They just are. And I don't want to be grandiose about it, but our missions are different. It makes politicians absolutely furious, when they've spent a day on the floor of Congress, passionately defending some issue. And they care deeply about it. And all we want to know is will they finish the debate in time for us to make our deadlines. Or, better yet, dinner.

I've often said, they're right, the press is biased. We're in favor of dinner. But they, of course, see our lack of concern as a proof of our cynicism. And we see it as evidence of our objectivity. That we are not concerned with the issues that they are concerned about.

When they're honest, they'll admit they often dislike us, because they want to shoot the messenger. It's an age-old desire and it's understandable. We are the people who bring the bad news that they don't want to hear. That certainly happened this past week in Washington. It was our fault that the Republicans took the House.

They also will admit, when they are frank, that they want us, they want the media around, when it's to their advantage. And when it's to their disadvantage, they would prefer for us to just simply disappear. They can't do the deal.

It's very interesting. A lot of what they hate about us is simply that we're there. That we have turned on the light. That we are sitting in the room. And it makes it much harder to do the deal, much harder to say what you really think, much harder to get things done, just because we're there.

Some of you probably remember the wonderful story that our old friend, Charlie Mohr, from *The New York Times,* used to tell, during the 1964 campaign. He would go to cover a Goldwater rally or a speech and, invariably, there'd be some Goldwater supporter there, who would rush up to the staff and say, "Stop them. Stop them. They're writing down every word he's saying,"

There is also a question of perspective. I did read over the past White lectures, to prepare for this one. And I was struck by something in Marvin's introduction to Ben Bradlee, where he quoted from Bradlee's book, *Conversations with Kennedy.* President Kennedy said: "What makes journalism so fascinating and biographies so interesting, is the struggle to answer the single question, 'What's he like?'"

Well, putting aside the question of how President Kennedy would feel about our attempts to answer that question about him right now, I think that politicians would often have one answer to that question and journalists another. We have different standards by which we judge, "what's he like." And, again, if politicians are honest, they will admit that there's only one thing they want us to say, which is, "he's godlike." I would argue that their interest is a great deal more in hagiography, than biography.

There's also a question of inevitability of the clash. There's the axiom — I learned this axiom from that great source book, *The Freedom Forum Calendar,* which we all get free in the mail every year. I discovered, on October 4th, — see, I have been thinking about this lecture. On October 4th, it had a quotation from Reuven Frank, longtime president of NBC News, who many of you know, where he said, "The role of the press is to inform society about problems, not to solve them." That's true, *but,* and this is where I would like to differ from just simply pointing out that the cultures naturally clash. But it is also not our role to make problems worse. And that is what the politicians and the public, today, think we are doing. And that's caused the volume of the clash to rise considerably, well beyond that which is caused by the inherent difference in our cultures.

In its survey on The People, The Press and Politics, the *Times Mirror* reports that, when asked whether the media helps or hinders society in solving its problems, 71 percent said the news media gets in the way of solutions, while 25 percent said it helps.

That response didn't surprise me. It's, basically, what I would have said. I think that this is the place where my view of being the child of politicians, as well as a member of the press, does come into play.

I don't see the point of uncovering, revealing, now-it-can-be-telling some scandal, or wrongdoing, or never before told, if there's nothing anybody can do about it. If nobody trusts any institution in this society to fix the problem. And people in the public believe that we, in the media, are tearing down institutions, because we are.

When he delivered his lecture, two years ago, former Senator Warren Rudman quoted from one national magazine's description of Congress, "Trading votes for money, or pleasure, is another day at the office." And another magazine, "The notion that public service might require some sacrifices has become a quaint relic. Working in government, instead, has come to be seen as a way to enrich one's self."

I've covered Congress for a very long time, much too long. And I don't recognize those descriptions. They do not bear any resemblance to the institution that I cover. And I would agree with Rudman's conclusion, that "Our political system needs the trust of people, to function properly. And if people believe that all of government is corrupt and for sale, our democracy will suffer."

Well, right now, our political system does not have the trust of the people. In our exit polls that we took, last week, on election day, ABC News in its questions asked about trust in government. Three-quarters of the people said they trust government to do the right thing only part of the time, or not at all. Seventy percent said they were either dissatisfied with, or angry, at the federal government.

In the *Times Mirror* survey, a bare majority said government was run for the benefit of the people. A plurality said elected officials don't care what the voters think and a majority said they believe they don't have a say in what government does.

I'm not here to argue that our problems can all be solved if people trust in government. A lot of distrust in government is based on personal experience. I always think, what is most of our intersection with government? The Motor Vehicle Administration. You could do that, or hit yourself on the head with a two-by-four, for fun and games activities, in the course of a day.

There are a lot of reasons to question the efficacy of government and to question whether any government, particularly, the federal government, should be the institution to solve all of our problems. But there are times when it must, or at least must try. I think that, to succeed, the public has to have some sort of sense that our leaders have the best interest of the nation at heart.

That sense, that faith in leadership, has basically disappeared. Polls show that a huge majority of voters believe elected officials quickly lose touch with the people. That's why, before this election, they said they wanted all new leaders even if they were ineffective. And, of course, the results of the election proved the polls right. They did vote for all new leaders.

I think it's possible that the Republican takeover of Congress can go a very long way to restoring faith in the institution. This is my great hope. If voters are serious about the other wish that they stated in the polling, to see federal politicians pay more attention to the nation than the neighborhood, then that might make Congress seem less craven than it does right now, to the voters.

The election, I think, could also stir some serious conversation, instead of just bloviated speechifying, about gimmicks like the line item veto, the balanced budget amendment, and term limits. All of which rest on the basic premise that our politicians have no judgment and can't be trusted.

The Republicans no longer see themselves as the permanent minority. They might even stop attacking the institution where they serve. We'll see. The responsibility for tearing down the institution, however, does not, and this is important to keep in mind, does not just rest with them. Democrats have done more than their share of Congress bashing.

And neither party has taken steps to cure what voters legitimately hate about the Congress. They haven't done anything about the way campaigns are financed. They haven't done anything about the partisan, often childish, bickering that characterizes much of the debate. And they haven't done anything about what I see as the biggest problem in the Congress, which is the failure of leadership on many crucial issues.

So, politicians must shoulder a very heavy burden of the blame for lack of trust in the system. But so must we. It's not only that we distort, as in the examples that Senator Rudman put forward, it's that we fail to even try to tell much of the story, because it's hard. It's hard to deal with ideas. It's particularly hard in broadcasting. It's hard to tell the whole story. And we take so much out of context.

Look at the stories that have become a staple of broadcast news reports, all of the stories about government waste. These are completely accurate, for the most part. Well-documented, totally valid stories. But they leave the impression with viewers, that if politicians would just cut out the dumb stuff, that everything would be all right.

No one ever, ever, ever says the truth. Which is that you could get rid of every program that every television news report, or *Hard Copy,* or radio report, or newspaper, or magazine has written about. Get rid of all of them. Get rid of the entire space program, the entire agriculture program, every federal court, prison, the FBI, the CIA, pave over the Capitol, or turn it into condominiums. Fire the Congress. Send home their entire staff. Get rid of every single, solitary program in the federal government, with the exception of defense, interest on the national debt, social security, Medicare and Medicaid and you still have a federal deficit.

Do we ever talk about that, when we talk about waste in government? No. And what's the effect of that? The effect is that we remove the responsibility from the voters. We pander, as much as the politicians do. We don't ever say, look, if you really want to do something about this problem, *you* have to take a hit. Not just the space station.

And that's one of the reasons why I agree with the public view that the media hurts the nation's ability to solve its problems. Another is one that Fred referred to, which is the total unwillingness — one that he said that Teddy White was willing to do, but we have not been willing to do, since then — to talk about the *accomplishments* of anyone in government, ever.

Right before the election, *Newsweek* magazine conducted a true/false poll, which revealed that a substantial majority just plain had the facts wrong, about questions as to whether the country is still in recession, whether the deficit has gone down since Bill Clinton has become President, and whether the crime bill spends more money on social programs than prisons.

I can't find anyone, other than the media, to blame when people have the information wrong. When they're misinformed, it's our fault. We're the people who are supposed to be in the business of informing. It means we're simply not doing our jobs.

Then, what about the basics, the underlying concept of an institution called "Congress." You Latin scholars know it means "coming together." Coming together, a place of people of diverse regions and backgrounds. And, in this country, incredibly diverse regions and backgrounds.

Congress is the place where they are supposed to come together to mediate their differences and compromise. And how do we treat compromise? We treat it as a base sellout to special interest. The very basic notion of our representative government, we treat as evil.

All this negativism has now culminated, and I'm very curious about this, in a fundamental questioning of the whole concept of representative government. Many of you in the Shorenstein Center and in journalism have looked at the idea of what the phenomena of alternative sources of information are doing to our business, all of the call-in shows, the tabloids, the on-line computer business.

In this campaign, many candidates communicated with the voters online. I did it one night at ABC. It was the weirdest thing I've ever done in my life. I have to tell you, those people ask strange questions. We've spent some time looking at faxes, how they affect the mainstream medium. But we haven't really spent enough time, in my view, talking about how they affect the body politic.

On election day, in the polls, 20 percent of the voters said they listened to talk radio. And they were the vanguard of "throw the bums out." They went Republican by a two-to-one margin. But here's my question. How likely are they to decide in two years that the Republican Congress has succeeded, when we will still be out there, as the nattering

nabobs of negativism, giving the sense that every move they make is something to be criticized?

My guess, at that point, is not that people turn back to the Democrats. I think, at that point, they start to say that these politicians simply aren't worth the trouble. As it is, we are seeing tremendous support, overwhelming support, 80 and 90 percent, for referenda and initiatives.

Now, the theory here is this is direct democracy. My theory is it's direct money. One of my favorite stories about an initiative was in California, years ago, where the City of Los Angeles decided to tax the country clubs at their use value. So golf courses at the Los Angeles Country Club and the Hillcrest Country Club, one Christian, one Jewish, were now going to be taxed at what they could get, if they had high rises built on them.

The members of the country clubs decided to put an initiative on the ballot. This is a country club initiative. I mean, let's get this straight. All this did was protect two country clubs. They put ads on TV, "Keep California green. Vote for Proposition A." They won. It is, to me, a classic example of just how much the folk really have a say in referenda and initiatives.

But, that is where the mood is. That's where it's going. And it, along with all of the proposals, as I say, to limit the terms and the power of representatives, all part of a mood that representative government is, in some way, venal, wrong.

Any citizen can get information at the same time people in government do now. Same time we in the mainstream press do. And it promotes a sense of, I know as much as those guys do. What do I need them for? That attitude is very much reinforced by the Ross Perots of the world, talking about a national town meeting, where the voters get to decide what government does. And it sounds so fair. Power to the people. Get rid of the elite. Talk about the tyranny of the majority. There it is, folks.

I noticed, in his lecture, that Ben Bradlee quoted the famous Bristol Speech, of Edmund Burke, that we all learned as political science majors. "Your representative owes you not his industry only, but his judgment. And he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion." That could not be further from the public mood of today.

I think a lot of voters would be much happier, if they just hooked up electrodes to their member of Congress and pushed the button. And had him, or her, respond to the instant polls in their districts. This was never a good idea, but it has become a much worse idea in an era when it's very clear that the majorities are not feeling wildly sympathetic toward the minorities.

Look at, again, this election we've just gone through and Proposition 187, in California. The view of the majority toward the minority immigrants. Combine this with some recent *Times Mirror* data, showing that, for the first time, the majority of whites believe the country has gone too far in promoting equal rights for blacks. We never saw that before, but that's true now.

I think that what you see is a very dangerous road ahead, if what we're headed for is direct democracy. And here's where I think we, in the mainstream medium, need to conduct, what the nuns who raised me would call, an examination of conscience, about our role in all of this. As well as the role of the alternative information sources and the role of the politicians.

It seems to me that we have an obligation to do a better job. We need to do a better job explaining the institutions of government, particularly the Congress, because, I believe that, without them, we have absolutely no defining principle, as a nation.

We have no nationhood. We have no common history. We have no shared ethnicity. We don't all worship in the same religion. We don't even speak the same language in this country. All we have defining us, as a nation, is our commitment to the Constitution and the institutions that it created, *all* of the institutions that it created.

Without that, I don't know what we are, as a country. And to undermine those institutions is a real recipe for dis-union. We're seeing it around the world and it is easy to see it happening in this country.

One of the political people that I was privileged and had the great fun of knowing, as I was growing up in the world of politics, was Tommy Corcoran, "Tommy the Cork." A great brain truster, in Franklin Roosevelt's day. But, before he became famous, as a brain truster, he was a clerk for Oliver Wendell Holmes, that great Harvardian.

And Tommy Corcoran used to love to tell the story that Oliver Wendell Holmes told, which was about the circus parade coming to town.

The elephants always went first. And the little boys in the town would dance in front of the elephants, pretending to be leading them. But, of course, the elephants were going to march on, regardless of the little boys. And Holmes said those little boys were the politicians of any era. And the elephants were the great social movements, of the time. They would march on, regardless.

I've thought about that story over the years, because it was such a wonderful one. And I've thought about our role, in the press, in that parade. I think that I see us as the people on the side, writing it down, or recording it, as elephant noises would be good, great pictures. In our role, it seems to me, we can either throw obstacles in the paths of those elephants and slow down the great social movements, or we can try to make smooth the path; get things out of the way.

I would say, in this country, in this half century, for the great social movements, we have played both roles. I think we did make smooth the path, for the civil rights movement. We enabled it, in a lot of ways. And I think we, I, in this case, actually, would say *they*, hampered the women's movement. Those are the two great movements we've seen, in this part of this century. And the press has played different roles, in each one.

But then, that brings me to what have we done, lately? And Ben Bradlee, not in this venue, but another one, said exuberantly, at one point, "The press won Watergate." That's true, but there was also that great zone of relief, in the upset of removing the president, which was, the system worked.

My question now is, what have we won, lately? And have we made it harder for the system to world And is that clash, between politicians and the press, undermining our institutions so fundamentally that their very survival is called into question. And that's the question I want to leave you with, tonight.

Thank you, very much, for inviting me. (Applause)

Mr. Kalb: It's that time when we can ask our speaker questions. If you have a question, do come to the microphones. I'll try to get to you, in some kind of an order. Ask a question, don't make a speech, keep it neat. And that goes for Cokie, too.

We'll start right here.

From the floor: Thank you.

I'm just wondering what you think about Mike Wallace and what he did, about taping the journalists.

Ms. Roberts: I must say, I'm sort of puzzled, about that story. For those of you who don't know, Mike Wallace, apparently, had a hidden camera, which he said — the part I found most interesting about this story — was the size of a shirt button. Dear God! And taped a journalist. Now, the big upset seems to be that he secretly taped a journalist.

What is this? I mean, we are some sort of caste that can't be taped and everybody else can? I don't understand why that is verboten and taping a businessman is fine. Secret, it's secret all the time.

All I can tell you is I find it puzzling that she was sacred and the businessman isn't. That's all I can say.

Mr. Batten: I'm Taylor Batten, a second-year student, here at the Kennedy School. You said that when voters are uninformed, then really, the press is to blame. And I think

that is probably true, to a degree, but when a majority of voters don't know the representative, in their own district, and when people in Washington think that, even if Foley loses, they retain the speakership—

Ms. Roberts: Only 30 percent thought that. (Laughter)

Mr. Batten: With those kind of ideas, to what degree are the people to blame, for just being apathetic and oblivious?

Ms. Roberts: I must say, I'm not very fond of the current fashion of blame the voter. Yes, everybody has an obligation to learn certain things, before they go to the polls. But it seems to me that this is a real escape from responsibility, on the part of both the press and the politicians. People are busy. They're not spending all their days worrying about what politicians are doing, even though the person who is in office believes that he is the center of the universe. My view about the United States Senators, the minute they are elected — I don't know about the women, but I am sure of this for the men — they have painted on their shaving mirrors, Seal of the President of the United States, just so they can get used to it. (Applause-Laughter)

I think most people have lives and they're not worrying about this. And it's our job to tell them what's going on. And how else are they going to find out? They're supposed to go to the library and look it up? Please.

From the floor: Yes, I'd like to raise a question of ethics, concerning a journalist who's been accused of actively shaping the same news she was regularly reporting. Specifically, your very able colleague, at NPR, who gives wonderfully clear explanations of the decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court, Nina Totenberg.

A year or two ago, the author of a book, called *The Real Anita Hill* charged that Totenberg was responsible for one of two major leaks that led the Senate Judiciary Committee to call Hill as a witness. He went on to argue that Hill had been less credible than Thomas. A very recent book, called, I think, *Strange Justice,* argues just the opposite.

Totenberg recently gave a very favorable review of that book, in an *All Things Considered* broadcast, without mentioning her own alleged involvement, in having brought about the confrontation of Hill and Thomas, in the first place. Do you think that was right?

Ms. Roberts: First of all, I think Nina Totenberg is the best reporter covering the Supreme Court in America today. (Applause)

This question of the leak was examined, in depth, by the United States Senate. And they could not find out where the leak came from, which is a good thing for all of us.

Mr. Kalb: But he does raise a question. Do you want to address the ethics part of it, as you see it?

Ms. Roberts: I don't see it.

From the floor: The question is not mentioning the alleged personal involvement, in the story, on one side.

Ms. Roberts: First of all, I don't see why she would have any reason to do that. How do you do this? You say, somebody accused me of doing something I didn't do. It seems to me that, you just sort of put it out there. You say, here is the book. Here is the other book.

As I recall, I didn't hear the *All Things Considered* piece. I heard the *Morning Edition* piece and I heard both books talked about, in the *Morning Edition* piece. So, I don't know. As I recall, they were both talked about, on the air, and given pretty much equal weight.

From the floor: Yes, I have a question about the role of journalists, in the Sunday morning talk shows, as celebrities. Something which you may know a little bit about. If you could comment on whether you think that has an impact on the way that journalists are interacting with politicians and reporting on political events, when on Sunday morning, they are commenting on them.

Ms. Roberts: Well, I think that what happens, with those programs, is that the round table section of them, and now they all have them, I think, is the equivalent, in my mind, to the op-ed page. And that that is the place where you do get more free wheeling, as you do on the op-ed page.

So that I see it as the difference between David Broder writing in the news section and writing the column in *The Washington Post.* I don't see that it has any difference in your relationship with members of Congress. It is not hard to cover Congress, in terms of access. How can I put this delicately? You walk around Congress, with a microphone. You use it as a weapon. Down boy, down boy. Access isn't a problem here. What has two legs and is attracted to light? Newt Gingrich. (Applause- Laughter)

Ms. Trevino: I'm Lori Trevino. I'm a first year student, here at the Kennedy School.

Ms. Roberts: By the way, I've told that joke to Newt, a lot. He loves it.

Ms. Trevino: I watched the *Nightline* broadcast the other night that you hosted, with Senators Kerry and Rudman, on social security. While I was very happy to see that the issue was coming to the fore, I was disappointed that Senator Rudman wasn't able to answer your last question.

Ms. Roberts: He was, too.

Ms. Trevino: I bet he was.

Ms. Roberts: It was directed to him, and Senator Kerry jumped in and we were out of time.

Ms. Trevino: Well, I wanted to know, was he able to address it, off the air? And what he said and, also, what you think about that question. Will the Republicans be able, will they have the political will to address means testing, for social security? How can the press really have an influence on that agenda?

Ms. Roberts: I think the answer to the first question is no. Social security really is the third rail of politics. One of former Congressman Roemer's colleagues, in what was then called the Boll Weevils, said to me one day, he was in the same room with someone who talked about cutting social security and got in a lot of trouble in his district. So, it's not something you do lightly.

I think it will be a very difficult thing to address. The press' role here is to talk about it, again. Talk about where the trust fund is. What it will take. What are the possible solutions, for fixing it. But not just letting it sit there and saying, it's all fine, everybody. It's not.

From the floor: I just wanted to ask about the institutional changes that may be occurring, that bring about this cynicism and negativism, that you have been discussing tonight, in terms of the press coverage, the superficiality, the negativism, the lack of depth of the coverage.

Do you think that there is something beyond just some sort of free-floating zeitgeist of the population, or is there really an institutional change going on in the media, like, increasing concentration of news sources, or some other structural change that may be bringing about that kind of thing?

Ms. Roberts: Some of this stuff is stuff we've all talked about, ad nauseam, about the change after Watergate and Vietnam and the trust disappearing and all that. I do think that the structural change that is occurring is the one that I talked about earlier, about the alternative sources of information. I think that that is where we need to pay a lot of attention. Not that there is anything evil about it; I think it's great.

I think it's wonderful that people feel that they can participate in the process. I think that the reason that voter turnout was so much higher, in 1992, than it had been was that people did feel they had a connection. They could call up Larry King. And even though their chances of getting through were less than winning the lottery, they could still try. They had a sense of connection. I think that's terrific.

The problem with it is that if you combine that with the mainstream, just sort of blasé, "we're so smart and all those guys are bad guys," and I think that you do get to these fundamental questions about our own republic. I don't know that the structural changes in the mainstream press go beyond the ones we all talk about. I do think that there is a sense that if you say anything good about somebody, you're a patsy, in some way. That you're a panderer. That you're in bed with the enemy, all of those things.

If you write something that says, as I have, for instance, that the Republican takeover of the House could be a very salutary thing for the institution, people start to look at you like you're crazy.

From the floor: You mentioned that some of our institutions are heading towards possibly being undermined, specifically, the presidency.

When Bill Clinton is described in the press, it's not what he did, it's him, as a person. It seems to me like there's a sense that his credibility, as a human being, has been undermined. I can't help but sense that that's partly the press' doing. What do you attribute that to?

Ms. Roberts: I am, frankly, less concerned about this question of talking about a president's personal life, than I am about the fundamental undermining of major institutions. And, basically, saying they don't work. They can't work. They can never work.

I think that, with the president of the United States, unlike any other office, we vote for the guy. I mean, I would love to say we vote for the woman, but, hey. Unlike a parliamentary system, that person is going to be there.

We want that person to make the right judgments, in our view, in the course of the four years. And we can't know that by issues. We can't know that he's going to be for welfare reform, two years and you're out. That's not what we vote on.

We vote on sort of a sense that this is somebody who will do the right thing, regardless of what comes along in those four years. And there are things that we have no ability to predict. Suppose, in 1988, we had voted on the issue of who was going to dismantle the most weapons, with the Soviet Union. By the time those four years were over, there was no Soviet Union.

I think that we, as voters, want a president to be someone that we can trust, under all circumstances. So, for president of the United States, I really do have a different standard. My view is, you tell everything you know and let the voters decide.

I think it's completely different, for any other office, because there are many other checks on 100 senators and 435 members of the House and 50 governors, and all that. I think, president, you just put it out there.

Mr. Kalb: But Cokie, everything that you know, as opposed to every rumor.

Ms. Roberts: Oh, no. Absolutely. Evidence, evidence, evidence. Absolutely. We do not report rumors. I spend a lot of time saying that to young people, young people in the trade, and having them look at me like I'm a little crazy.

From the floor: Hi. I'm a first year, in the College, and I'm only 18. I have not yet experienced what it means to have a great president, as a leader. I grew up in a Democratic household, so Ron Reagan doesn't count. I was just wondering whether, with the current relationship between the press and politicians, can a great president arise from this so-called ash heap? Will there be a phoenix?

Ms. Roberts: Well, you grew up in a Democratic household, so Ronald Reagan doesn't count. He does, for a whole lot of people. So, I think that you've got to say that he was, in the minds of the majority of Americans, somebody that they trusted and counted on, regardless of what the press said. So, I would not blame this on the system.

From the floor: But, for the rest of the question then, will it take a great crisis, for the next great president, for the next, say, FDR?

Ms. Roberts: Well, it always did, to some degree. There was always the question of men, ordinary men, rising above their ordinary circumstances, to take on a crisis and become extraordinary men. I think that that can continue to happen, but I also would disagree with your premise. I think that, in today's world, a man, or woman, could be considered great, regardless of the press coverage. I don't think that it's necessarily going to do everybody in. People with character, that is, admired by the American people, are admired by the American people.

From the floor: Should the voters discover, or confirm that they can't turn to the Republicans any better than they could to the Democrats, do you think before we sink into teledemocracy, that there is a chance for a third party?

Ms. Roberts: I think there is, there's a tremendous interest in it. This year, for the first time, we saw much, much higher numbers of people saying that they were interested in a third party. They didn't like either party. They are downright anti-partisan, not just a-partisan. But the campaign finance laws make it very hard, at the presidential level.

Unless you have somebody with the wealth of a Ross Perot, or the credibility of Colin Powell, I don't see it easily happening. I can see it much more easily happening, below the presidential level.

From the floor: Could you speak, for a moment, about women in Congress? Do you find that their approach, or that their effect is any different, compared to men? And do they seem to add any credibility to the legislative process, in Washington?

Ms. Roberts: I love to talk about women in Congress. I've been closely related to a woman in Congress and it is something I am happy to talk about. The fact is, women in Congress make an incredible difference. What they discover, regardless of who they are and what kind of campaign they waged and where they sit on the ideological spectrum, they discover that, once they arrive in Washington, that they are not only the Congresswoman from the Second District of Louisiana, just for an example, but they are also the representative of 53 percent of the population.

They find that they are the people who have to carry the issues of concern, of families and of women, in all kinds of areas, particularly economic areas. They have to carry that water. They do it very consciously. They meet in a caucus, where they sit and they say, okay, we'll try to get you on Banking, we'll try to get you on Ways and Means, which, I gather, is now Revenues and Treasury, or something. We'll try to get you on Energy and Commerce.

And very, very consciously they try to spread the women in Congress among the various committees and subcommittees. Because, what happens when they are there, just by being in the room, they can make an enormous difference.

My mother tells the wonderful story, of when she was on the Banking Committee. There was a credit bill coming up and she just walked out and added the words to anti-discrimination in lending. She added the words, "or by sex or marital status." What it had had before, of course, was race, religion, et cetera. She came back in and said, sweetly, "I'm sure you just forgot to put these in." And that's how we got equal credit, for women.

It's still been a hard time enforcing it. In fact, there is a funny story about that, as well. When I bought her house, evicted my mother after 26 years, she bought an apartment downtown. And she was having a hard time getting her mortgage approved. She finally called up and said, "Look, my income is a matter of public record. What is the problem here?" And they started hemming and hawing and she finally said, "I find it passing strange that I'm having this trouble. I feel that it is probably because I'm female and elderly. And as the author of the equal credit law, I am deeply concerned about this." She got her mortgage that afternoon. (Laughter)

I'll tell you just another brief funny story. Trying to get mammograms covered by Medicare was the issue, for a while. Now, of late, there's been a lot of attention on the question of funding for breast cancer research.

First, it was under catastrophic health and then, that was repealed.

Then, it was coming up under budget agreement. It was just a terrible problem. There was no woman on the sub-committee, on health, in the Ways and Means Committee.

So, a woman lobbyist, who was not on this issue at all, — she was lobbying for major corporations, but this is the other thing that happens. The women who are in the hallways start lobbying on these issues, as well. And we, in the press, write about it. — This woman went to a man on the subcommittee, on health, and said, "I need you to take in this mammogram coverage for me." He said, "Oh, I can't do that. I did the last women's thing." He said, "Everybody's just going to think I'm soft on women." And she said, "Nah, just tell them you're a breast man." (Laughter)

He did. It worked. (Laughter)

So, yes, they make an enormous difference. In terms of credibility, in the legislative process, I think that that's not overstating it.

Mr. Kalb: The question was about women in the legislative process. But it's also true that women in journalism —

Ms. Roberts: Highlight those issues, yes, we do. For most of us, particularly if you cover an institution like Congress, normally, what you cover is plain as the nose on your face. You know, the bill on welfare reform is on the floor and you cover it. But, there are lots of days when there is not the obvious thing to cover.

One of the reasons that I feel so passionately about diversity in the newsroom, is that on those days, it's what the interest of the individuals in the newsroom are, as much as anything, that dictates coverage. Which is why we need to have old people and young people and people of various races and people of both sexes and people who have just a variety of different interests. But, it is true that, when you cover a legislative body and you are female, you are more likely to cover issues of interest to women and children than if you are male. It's just simple.

From the floor: I wonder if you could comment on why it seems so difficult for the press to report on the substance of legislation, versus the kind of the politics of what goes into making it. The Congress passes several hundred pieces of legislation in a year.

I think, if you polled people in this room even, people couldn't name more than half a dozen that were in the media. And most of those were ones that didn't get passed, to begin with. Things do get done, by the Congress, but very little of it gets reported, in the mainstream press.

Ms. Roberts: Well, of the hundreds of things that get passed, a lot of them are National Daffodil Week. So, you know, we don't have to spend a lot of attention on that. But, I agree and disagree, with your premise. I think, basically, your premise is correct. That we tend to cover conflict. Who's up? Who's down?

The main thing we do is not cover it all. In television, our coverage of Congress is either scandal, or it is conflict with the President. The President proposes. The Congress says no, or the Congress fights with him. That is, it's always in relationship to the other institution, down the avenue. Hardly anything is ever, ever, ever talked about, about the institution itself, and the workings of the institution itself.

So, I do agree with that premise. It is also true, though, that what happens is, when we cover it once, or even a dozen times, we think we've done it. And often, people aren't paying attention, at the time we cover it. So, say, at the beginning of a political campaign, we're very likely to do a series of stories on the candidates and the environment, the candidates and defense, the candidates and women's issues. What you would consider substantive stories.

By the time people are paying attention to the campaign, we're in the horse race. So we are, by that time, doing the who's up, who's down, who's won, who's lost. But I do think that it is true that we do much, much too little of just explaining the story.

I'll give you a very good example of something. The Americans with Disabilities Act, there was no conflict. The Democrats and Republicans agreed. And the White House and the Congress agreed. Because there was no conflict, it wasn't covered. And what emerged from the Senate was a truly terrible bill, because nobody covered it.

And finally, the House started paying some attention to it, just because they were the last ones to bat, and realized it and started fixing it. But it was the absence of coverage that had allowed it to just go through, without people paying enough attention to the problems inherent in the legislation. So, the interest groups weren't as involved, as they normally would be, because they weren't as aware of it.

Not all interest groups are evil. A lot of interest groups represent you. And the members weren't as aware of it. I mean, it was really an interesting example of the lack of conflict, meaning lack of coverage, meaning lack of good content. And I do think it's one of our great failings.

From the floor: You touched on the emergence of a Ross Perot–inspired, information populism, if we could call it that. The idea that, with all of this computer technology, who needs the media.

From the floor: Or the politicians. In light of that populism, though, do you think that the media will take on a more analytical role, rather than a reporter's role? How do you see that changing?

Ms. Roberts: Of course, to some degree, that's already happened. And there's a lot of criticism about that. The Clinton administration, for instance, is very critical of the media for doing that. They say that you look at the evening news, no one tells you what happened that day. They tell you how the president did that day. They do some sort of score card, on the president. Now, what we would say is, by the time somebody turns on the evening news, they know everything already.

From the floor: Well, the elite know everything.

Ms. Roberts: Well, that's what they would say.

From the floor: So, what's the balance that we need?

Ms. Roberts: You're with them.

From the floor: No, not necessarily. But I'm asking you what you think the balance is.

Ms. Roberts: See, I don't think that's true, that only the elites are in that position, because there is so much information out there. It's not just computers and things that "elites" have. It is local news. I mean, by the time you turn on the network news, you have often seen a full hour of local news. There's the car radio, on the way home.

There is so much information out there. In an office, any kind of office, even a factory, you now have all kinds of newsletters that come through, ticking away through the day, giving you information. So, our assumption is that most people know the basic facts, by the time we go on the air. Now, we still give them the basic facts, but we do try to then add to that, with some analysis.

There is a lot of discussion about whether that's appropriate, or not. In radio, you always did it, by the way. Radio always had analysis, in its spots, with the news. So, for those of us who started, well, actually, I started in television, but who fell in love with radio, we're comfortable with it. But I do think that that is one of the things that's happened.

I think, though, in this other question —What did you call it? I loved the name of it. Populism what? Techno?

From the floor: Techno-populism.

From the floor: Or information populism.

Ms. Roberts: Information populism. The other possibility is just stop paying attention to us, altogether.

Mr. Kalb: Cokie, I just want to make a brief sort of announcement. Some of you may think that you're smelling smoke. Let me just say, there is no fire in this building. There is nothing to be upset about. Everything is fine, except there is a fire in Inman Square. And it's a rather large fire. Some of the smoke is wafting in this direction. So, when a door opens, or through the vents, you may be smelling some of that. But, for those of you who may be a bit nervous about it, there is nothing to be nervous about.

Ms. Roberts: Unless you live in Inman Square. (Laughter)

Mr. Kalb: If you're in Inman Square, that's another story. If your apartment is there, you've got a problem.

Ms. Roberts: On the other hand, if you live in Inman Square, you might want to leave now.

Mr. Reynolds: My name is Ned Reynolds. I'm a first year public policy student here. You've cited the *Times Mirror* poll figure, that 71 percent of Americans think that the press gets in the way, of solving problems. And you've acknowledged that the press has to shoulder a good portion of the blame, for Americans' contempt for government and the efficacy of government. But how do you think you and your colleagues, in the press in Washington, can do your jobs differently, to turn that situation around?

Ms. Roberts: That's a good question. I think that part of it is just a question of attitude, to just give the guy a chance. One of the things I have really noticed that's interesting is that when you ask questions for information, on a program like *Nightline,* the viewers love it. It's your colleagues in the press who want you to be doing the "gotcha" stuff.

That's who you are showing off for. There is really not a lot of need for that. Most people want to see those programs to learn something. What they don't want to learn is that you're a tough interviewer. So that there is a lot of getting yourself out of the way, in these situations. I think that's not hard to do. It might be easier for girls, than for boys. (Laughter-Applause)

But I think that we need to spend some time thinking about it and reexamining our role, which is why a forum, like this, is useful. And that doesn't mean that you're going to become some goody-goody. I mean, look, I'm as guilty as anybody, of saying things like, the Senate deserves Oliver North. (Laughter) They did.

And sometimes, when you're saying something, you know what you mean and other people don't. And you do need to be more careful about that.

I have plenty of complaints about the institutions of government. As I say, my main one is a failure of leadership, which I think has been tremendous.

But I also do think that a little examination of conscience, on our part, and spending some time trying to do it a little differently would make some sense.

From the floor: Ms. Roberts, first, thank you for a very interesting talk and something to think about. Second, my question is, would you comment, a little bit, on the view of the media of other countries, particularly mainstream media. How do they view the American press? How well are they doing their job?

Ms. Roberts: Well, I think they're terrible, for the most part. I mean, not to put too fine a point on it. The truth is, anybody thinks we're bad, spend 15 minutes abroad. In most countries, most media are either government-owned, or party-owned. I have not lived abroad since the Soviet Union disappeared, but many news organizations were funded by the KGB. The sense of independence, which we sometimes take overboard, doesn't exist.

There's also the whole spectrum of newspapers — I think, mainly, of England, in this reference — that just make it up. It's fiction. It's fun to write. When I was living in Greece and discovered that people were writing fiction for the English afternoon papers, I kept

saying to them, shoot, I'll take your copy. English is my first language. So, I think that, comparatively, we do a much, much better job.

From the floor: Hi. I'm a first year and I wanted to ask you.

Ms. Roberts: I'm thrilled with all these freshmen here. Aren't you nice people.

From the floor: You talked about having gained the House and the Senate, that there may be a smoothing over in the national consciousness, trying to bring back a bipartisanship, between both, the presidency and the Congress, possibly. I come from Kansas and I remember when Nancy Kassebaum voted for the crime bill. And Dole voted against, to vote with his party. I also remember how Dole attacked her, across the state, for that.

I was wondering if you think that the idea of uniting Congress and, furthermore, maybe even uniting the idea of working with the House. The House and the Senate working with the White House. If that's going to be impeded, in any way, through two things.

One, Bob Dole. And B, the idea of the Republican party voting together and, therefore, the party members who don't vote with the party being torn down in their own states.

Ms. Roberts: I don't really think I said anything about bipartisanship, because I don't expect it to happen. There are people who are very interested in it. I think, in fact, that the voters are more interested in it. If you did have the people in the center and both parties working together, that that would be something the voters would be very interested in. Because that's the way they are. But I don't really see that happening.

What I was talking about was that I think that we might see a change in attitudes, internally, about the institutions. One of the things that's happened, with divided government, is that, for so long, the Republicans thought they owned the White House and the Democrats thought they owned the Congress, and people stopped understanding the prerogatives of the institutions. So that, it became a partisan thing, for Republicans to hate Congress and Democrats to protect Congress. That's terrible for the institution.

Now, I gather Mickey Edwards has been here, this year, and he was one of the great defenders of Congress, who was a Republican, a conservative Republican. He was one of the people who really did bring that sense of the importance of the institution closest to the people, to the forefront, in his party.

By and large, that was the partisan view. It was bad for both institutions. I think that one of the good things that happened, when a Democrat took the White House, is Republicans started feeling less sanguine, about giving that much power to the President. And Democrats started feeling a little more sanguine about it. And now, with Republicans taking Congress, I think they're going to start looking, again, at the institution of Congress, and feeling much more interested in protecting its prerogatives, with a Democrat in the White House.

How interested are they going to be in a line item veto, when they, as a Republican Congress, have worked their will on spending bills and it's a guy with a D after his name who gets to draw the line. Probably not tremendously interested. So, I think that was my point.

If, in fact, they fall into wildly partisan bickering, which, I think, is very, very likely, given 1996, and how people judge Bill Clinton's strength to be, at the moment, which could be completely different, in 1996. I think that that will also have its effect on the institution. It was the other question that I was talking about, more, rather than the question of bipartisanship.

Mr. Kalb: Cokie, we have time for one more question. It goes to this young woman, here.

From the floor: Thank you.

Many have argued that the media has been sucked into a sort of junkyard dog journalism, due to economic factors, the breakdown of the mom and pop newspapers, decline in circulation numbers, and what not. Which has led, in turn, to voter mistrust of the media and, also, of lack of information. Do you have any suggestions on how we can reverse the trend of the junkyard dog media, or the junkyard dog journalistic trend and the economic forces that seem to be pulling the media down?

Ms. Roberts: Well, one thing that I think it's always a mistake to do is to think that the time we live in is different from all others. We have had plenty of junkyard dogs running around, for many years. Some of them were some of the great journalists of our time, or past times. So, I would not say this time is different from all others.

There is tremendous concern among newspapers, I know, about people not liking them. Now, there's a danger there, which is, do you then start to pander to your advertisers, or to the Garden Club, or whatever it is, in order so that everybody likes you. That's not a useful way to go, either.

I was recently talking to somebody who was working for a small newspaper. He had just come from some conference, on small newspapers. One of the things that they are finding is that there is too much conflict. And there is too much negativism. And that they don't like what they read. They just feel like it doesn't represent what they have personally experienced, when they have been at the same event. They were at that school board meeting and that's not what happened there, as far as they're concerned.

I do think that there is an attitude now, of trying to fix some of these things. But I think that the fundamental question about, and people in this august institution know a lot more about this than I do, but the fundamental questions about newspaper ownership and all that are serious questions. I think, in some ways, what they've done is less of what you're talking about.

I think that having big chains of newspapers and monopoly newspapers have blandified them, more than having the old. We used to have great newspaper wars in a city. I remember, during the '84 convention, being in Dallas, I guess. It must have been Dallas. And the *Morning News* and what is the afternoon paper, *Times Herald,* were still just battling it out.

And during the Republican convention, Geraldine Ferraro had her marathon press conference. It was great. You picked up the *Morning News* and it said, you know, the evil witch, Geraldine Ferraro, who never paid a tax in her life. And you picked up the afternoon paper and it said, Saint Geraldine, who paid more in taxes than Ronald Reagan has ever thought about in his entire career. There was a newspaper war. You don't see much of that, anymore.

I think that monopoly has had the effect of sort of ironing out the differences, because people feel this sense of responsibility that is noble, but boring. (Applause)

Thank you, very much. It is nice to be with you. (Applause)

Mr. Kalb: I just wanted to thank Cokie Roberts, for sharing her insights with us, for coming up here. On behalf of the Shorenstein Center and the Kennedy School, thank you, again, very, very much, indeed. Our conversation continues tomorrow, at 9:30, in the Penthouse. Thank you all for being here.

Mr. Schauer: Thank you all for coming. For those of you who haven't heard me introduce myself enough already, I'm Fred Schauer, acting director of the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy.

As befits a university, we like to accompany our formal lectures and formal large events with follow-on commentary, critique, discussion and the like; that is what we will be doing this morning.

But before we turn to that, I just want to offer a brief series of thank yous. Over the last several days, a large number of events have happened around here. Trying to run these events, trying to keep people from wandering off, trying to make sure that everything happens the way it is supposed to happen, is something like, in the immortal words of Jim Hightower, "loading frogs on a wheelbarrow." In light of that, I want to recognize a couple of people, primarily, Edie Holway, she is the one who makes sure that everything happens, that all the frogs get into the wheelbarrow. (Applause)

In addition, the Center operates with a moderately small staff. The only way these things can happen is if people are quite willing to put their roles and their job descriptions on the shelf for a few days and do what has to be done.

All of this has happened because Nancy Palmer, the assistant director; Jennifer Quinlan, the financial director; Michele Johnson, the administrator of the Goldsmith Awards program; Gail Joseph, faculty assistant; Pippa Norris, Kennedy School lecturer and the associate director for research of the Center, and Richard Parker, Kennedy School adjunct lecturer and a senior fellow at the Center, have all, for several days, forgotten all of those titles and just done what is necessary to make sure that all of this happens and I want to thank you all for that. And I hope that we can continue with what has so far been, I believe, a highly successful event, and series of events.

At this point, I want to offer one slightly personal and quirky thank you. I have been a specialist in the First Amendment, free speech and free press, for approximately 25 years. I don't know whether to thank Heather Campion, Marvin Kalb, or whoever may have started the fire in Inman Square, but last night is as close as I will ever come to hearing someone shout fire in a crowded theater. It was a special event for me. (Laughter)

Let me turn to the business at hand. Our panel this morning, in alphabetical order.

Derek Bok is the Three Hundredth Anniversary Professor at Harvard University. For 20 years, he was the president of this university. In the fall of 1968, one of his first acts as an administrator was to welcome me and 539 others to the Harvard Law School. He is a former dean of the Harvard Law School. I think of him from those days, as a specialist in labor law.

More recently, he has written a number of important books about the most pressing problems of our time, including higher learning, universities in the future of America and most recently, the cost of talent; how executives and professionals are paid and how it affects America.

To my immediate left, is Kathleen Hall Jamieson, who is a professor of communication and Dean of the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania. She also started doing something somewhat different from what she is now most known for; she started as an analyst, interpreter and scholar of classical rhetoric and classical argumentation.

But what took place thousands of years ago in the forum or the agora, now takes place on television and radio and she is now most known for similar kinds of important analyses of political communication and political rhetoric in television. Her books include, *Eloquence in an Electronic Age, Packaging the Presidency, Dirty Politics, Deception*

and Distraction in Democracy. And in a few months, a book about women in leadership will be published, called, *Beyond the Double Binds.*

To my penultimate, probably the wrong word, two places to the left, is Buddy Roemer, graduate of Harvard College, graduate of the Harvard Business School, former fellow of the Institute of Politics, can't get enough of this place. He served three terms as a member of Congress, from Louisiana, and is a former Governor of Louisiana.

And perhaps most relevantly, I want to put a little pressure on Buddy. Last night, my wife sat at the table with Buddy and said, "This guy is really, genuinely funny." The pressure is on, we expect you to be, in addition to being thoughtful and knowledgeable, genuinely funny this morning as well.

Mr. Roemer: I'm leaving now.

Mr. Schauer: To my far right is Tom Rosenstiel, media writer and media critic for the *Los Angeles Times,* based in the Washington bureau. He has been with the *Los Angeles Times* since 1983. Before that, he was with the *Peninsula Times Tribune,* in Palo Alto, California.

He has also been a reporter, associate and intern coordinator, early in his career, with Jack Anderson's *Washington Merry-Co-Round.* And he is the author of *Strange Bedfellows: How Television and Presidential Candidates Changed American Politics,* published in 1992. And a contributor to *The Future of News,* published by The Johns Hopkins Press, three years ago.

In terms of ground rules, all of the people here, including our distinguished guest to my immediate right, Cokie Roberts, have probably been on far more of these panels than I have. They all know the ground rules, that they are expected to speak three to five minutes longer than they are allotted. This is an institution that, if nothing else, knows its decision theory. In addition to knowing its decision theory, it knows how to calibrate rules in light of the antecedent behavior patterns of the people that the rules are designed to govern.

Therefore, in light of the expectations of the members of that panel, that they can go three to five minutes longer than the allotted time, obviously, the answer to this problem is to tell them that they are allotted no time at all. (Laughter)

I would like to do this in alphabetical order. So, the first not to speak, or to go for three to five minutes over his allotted time of nothing, will be Derek Bok.

You're on.

Mr. Bok: Thank you.

Well, I think we were treated last night to an exposure to two problems that are important to all of us and certainly ought to be important to the media, in the sense that it is supposed to inform the public. And that is, in the first place, that the public really has quite an appalling view of government and of politicians. And although much of it is in the realm of opinion, wherever it can be checked against the facts, it tends to be quite inaccurate.

Second, the public also gives dangerous signs of being highly misinformed on a number of policy issues. Or at least they seem to have a certain number of views that it is hard to imagine holding unless you were misinformed. (Laughter)

One of them — a majority of the public believes that we should be spending more on health, although we are already spending 300 billion more than the next most profligate country that I know. The majority, until recently, felt that we should be spending more to help farmers, a view which very few people who have studied that problem in detail would share. A majority feel that toxic waste dumps are our greatest environmental hazard, even though a series of scientific panels has disputed that, and so forth.

And these are not only areas of apparent misinformation, but very costly. Because, you could see how the government responds to them and the cost is great.

So, what can the media do? And it is at that point, where I begin to get puzzled and confused. Because the discussions that I hear on the subject always sound as though reporters and commentators were completely independent, autonomous human beings, capable of making whatever judgment they wanted, as to how to present the news.

That strikes me as not true, can't be true. They are part of organizations that are under great pressure to maximize circulation and audience. Reporters want to be noticed, they want to be widely read. Networks and newspapers need large audiences. And that is not bad, that is not crassly commercial. In a democracy, if the media are supposed to inform, we want them to maximize their audience and not to say wonderfully informed, elegant things that very few people pay attention to.

So, one comes to, what does the audience really want? And I'm sure we can ask the audience what they want. And we can, at one level, receive with sincerity, that they hate this negativism and so forth. But, I have a suspicion that we have negative news and a lot of horse race journalism, because they really do work, they really do attract readers.

And I believe that if political advisors go organize focus groups and come away and then run negative ads, it must be that they have found that negativism really seems to work better at grabbing people's attention and influencing them than other forms of communication.

And if newspapers and networks, that are always looking at their circulation and their ratings, prepare the kind of news programs that they do, I would guess it must be because they find that that is what maximizes and holds the attention of their audience. And if that is so, and the media have to respond to their audience, for all sorts of reasons, and if the audience likes conflict, horse races, scandal and negativism, then the real question is, what can the media do in that environment, to stop contributing, as I'm sure they are.

As our speaker so elegantly said last night, how can they stop contributing to increased cynicism and ignorance? And the answer, I think, cannot be simply that they should be better citizens and stop so much negative writing and so much coverage of horse races. That only threatens to lose the audience and that is not good for democracy.

The answer must be to think much more, and much more creatively, about how can we make substantive stories and positive stories about government and political affairs more interesting? How do we make 364 days of conscientious law making as interesting as the 356th day, when the chairman of the committee is found taking free tickets to the Redskins game from someone remotely connected in a commercial way to the work of the committee? How do we make the substance of health care as interesting as the fight within the White House as to how visible Hillary Clinton really ought to be on that issue?

So, I would conclude simply by posing the questions, what are the prospects, the realistic prospects, for making the substance of government and politics more interesting, capturing the interest of the audience? How much are we experimenting on that score and what have we learned? And how can we encourage more initiative, more experimentation, more creative thought, to try to discover how to put more substance and balance into reporting, without doing what is commercially impossible and probably democratically unwise, and that is, to sacrifice audience in behalf of civic virtue?

Ms. Jamieson: Last night, when Marvin said that although there was a fire down the street, and we did smell smoke, we ought to stay in the crowded theater, we had, I think, a test of whether or not the cynicism hypothesis holds true at Harvard. (Laughter)

To the extent that the audience trustingly believed that in fact we were in no danger, although our senses and the report of a fire down the street would suggest that we are, I would suggest that we really don't have cynicism at Harvard. If there is cynicism, it must be someplace else, or alternatively, that we ought to entrust Marvin with some form of national leadership. (Laughter)

Because it seems to me, that what politicians routinely do, is to tell us that there is no fire when there is one, or that there ought to be a fire someplace. And we ought to act on that information trustingly.

The metaphor for me is talk radio. We just concluded a study of 360 people, whom we watched watch the health care reform debate for nine months And at the end of that relied on talk radio, and by this, we mean primarily; Rush Limbaugh and Limbaugh clones, because there isn't much talk radio that isn't conservative in this country.

And we asked them how well informed they felt. We had been watching their level of information across the process. Of all the people we watched, they said they were the best informed. And of all the people we watched, they were the least informed. And they were also the most cynical about governance.

Derek asks the question, if the audience wants negative politics, if the audience wants strategic coverage, how do we solve this problem? We asked people in, with eye cameras attached to them — these are the sorts of bizarre things that we do at the Annenberg School— (Laughter)

—to choose alternatives that were given to them on a computer screen. And so we gave them a strategy headline, and an issue headline and asked which one they would choose, paper and pencil, and of course, they all said they would choose the issue headline.

When we gave them the headlines, in fact, they were as likely to gravitate towards strategy as issue, but they were not more likely to gravitate towards strategy as issue. That suggests to us that the producers of news may falsely believe that the public is not interested in issue-based information, when in fact, there remains an appetite for it. As a result, they may be giving the public a lot more of something that it does not necessarily want, at least in that quantity. There clearly is an appetite for some of it, the question is for how much of it?

When we personalized the issue headline, so that it had something to do with someone's real life, so, for example, we suggested that mammograms might not be accessible under one health care reform bill or another, the likelihood that people move, with their eyes, rather than with their pencils, to that headline, increased dramatically. Our suspicion is that if you wrote and spoke news about people's lives, you could probably reverse the numbers substantially. The people would be gravitating, in fact, towards the issue content over the strategy content.

We have conducted a series of experiments over the last three years, and I would like to briefly share the results with you. Because I think they answer the question, what could the press do differently?

We did a first set of experiments about campaign coverage. And what we found, I think in a way that is not subject to dispute, because these are real people with real news coverage, feeling it in naturalistic settings, not in academic settings. There are no college sophomores anywhere in these studies, these people are matched to the National Election Studies — a sample of how many people were in what demographic group, as a result of the last election.

But when we exposed people to issue-based coverage that focused on problems and solutions, as opposed to strategy-based coverage, which focused on tactics, polls and outcomes, what we found was about a campaign that they did not know about. This is a replication of a mayoral campaign in Philadelphia, the study is done in six sites outside Philadelphia. Those exposed to the strategy-based coverage were more likely to be cynical about the process, were less likely to say they would participate, if this were an election in their area. And they were more likely to be remembering things that did not have to do with governance, when they were exposed to new material in the campaign, in the form of a carefully edited debate, in which they did not have access to strategic information, since we had edited it all out.

Now, that is the good news. The bad news is the issue people were not a direct reverse of that. They were proportionately, less cynical. They were proportionately more likely than the control, to be willing to participate. And they were more likely to remember things that were relevant to governance, but not all of those findings were statistically significant. The tendencies were there. But we could demonstrate that the strategy coverage, when it was dominant, was damaging.

We then took the same set of experimental models over into the health care reform debate, across a nine month period with three interventions, into pools of 360 people, again, matched to the national sample, demographically.

We first gave these people 15 articles that we had pre-selected to either be strategic, or issue-based, or about process, that is the sort of thing *The Washington Post* writes a lot about, or about the groups involved in the debate. And then we had a control which got a mixture of material that had nothing to do with health care reform at all, and one article, so they would have some baseline, to answer questions.

We then gave all of our groups a post test, in which they watched a debate that was edited, so that there was no strategic material in it. A debate between Gingrich and Gergen, by the way, in which Gingrich and Gergen pre-supposed each other's goodwill and integrity, presupposed that there was a problem and that Congress would act to address that problem.

And what we found interested us a lot, because we had picked what we felt was the best print in the country on health care reform, up to that point, and this was mid-marchy. We found that all of those in the conditions that had read health care reform, 15 articles per condition, we had an increase in cynicism against the control. Those in the control were less likely to be cynical. And these were people who did not read about health care reform, except for the single baseline article, they were less likely to be cynical in the control group. That was astonishing to us.

We expected to find, as we had about elections, that the issue condition would at least be benign, and possibly, have positive tendencies. To see the issue condition and cynicism, was a very real concern. When we went back and looked at the coverage, we realized this: what was good to us, because we are media elites, presupposes high levels of baseline information that was not accessible to those people in our study.

And as a result, they could not hold track of what the nature of the problem was that was being addressed and what the alternative solutions were. The issue coverage, by focusing primarily on attack and counterattack, destabilized them, by suggesting that the status quo was inadequate and that all other alternatives were inadequate.

And because of the convention of journalism that focuses on the negative, what you saw on both sides of the quotes, which we thought looked like differentiation, was to this public instead evidence that venal politicians did nothing but attack. We, at the same time, were monitoring the discourse itself. It's possible of course that all the politicians were doing was attacking, in which case, the reporters were simply reporting what was out there.

We found two instances, I think, which were revealing — this was in the period before the study — and I will close with this remark. We took a speech by Hillary Clinton and a speech by Bob Dole, both speeches focused on advocating their alternative. There was a Dole alternative, it was the Michael Bill, although he had signed on to everything else that was Republican as well. Only in about five percent of each speech did those individuals attack. But when you read the news accounts, and when you watched broadcast news, you would have thought that each person devoted the entire speech to attack. The inference of those who did not hear the speeches, meaning they were not C-SPAN viewers, was that the politicians were venal and self-interested, didn't care about the problem, cared only about destroying the other side.

Our conclusion about journalism in the health care reform debate is this: we need to find a way to increase the advocacy that is covered, to minimize the attack that is covered, particularly when you have clear and differentiated alternative positions, as we did in health care reform.

In health care reform coverage, the Michael alternative, which is the consensus Republican alternative, which had more support throughout most of the debate than any other bill, was virtually invisible, as was the single payer alternative, the alternative to the left of Clinton. So, we never did give the public the opportunity to see the alternatives because the press did not focus on looking at advocacy instead of attack.

Secondly, we need to encourage the press to focus on areas of consensus, not areas of conflict. At least, consensus ought to be covered. Across our nine-month study, we did not find people who were able to say that there is basic agreement in Congress that we ought to have coverage for pre-existing conditions, portability, some subsidy for the poor and a decrease in the complexity of the available paper work and some form of purchasing alliances, be they voluntary, or be they mandatory. Because that will let economies of scale work for small business.

The fact that those areas of consensus existed in Congress, but the public didn't know about them, in my judgment, made it harder for the so-called mainstream coalition, in the final days of the debate, to put forward a consensus piece of health reform. More consensus, less conflict, more advocacy, less attack, more confidence that if one offered the public that, it might be inclined to read and watch.

Mr. Schauer: Thank you. Buddy?

Mr. Roemer: I'm a politician. I've run for three offices in my life. I ran for the Constitutional Convention of Louisiana in 1972 and won. And a handful of us rewrote the state constitution. Then, I ran for the United States Congress in 1978 and lost, ran again in '80 and won, in '80, '82, '84 and '86. And then in '87, I ran for governor of our state and won and then my last race was in '91, I ran for re-election and lost. So, I say all that to show you that everything I say is to be taken very skeptically. (Laughter)

Mr. Roemer: My assignment from Fred is to comment on what Cokie said last night, not necessarily what I think. We will get into what I think perhaps, in the question and answers.

But I thought Cokie did an extraordinarily good job of making two points that I find relevant. I really appreciate Cokie's ode to the Constitution last night. We can get fancy, and some of you have, I'm very impressed, with the analysis, but read the Constitution, it says so much about America and so much about its politics.

Two, Cokie asked the question, and I wrote it down, is the survival of our institutions in question? Always, Cokie, always; there are no guarantees. I happen to be very optimistic. I am excited by the elections of Tuesday; I found myself alone in the room last night and at the dinner table. And my excitement is not that it was a Republican or Democratic takeover, who cares. But that we are going to re-bit the animal. (Laughter)

Mr. Roemer: I told you I was alone in the room. I find myself alone in most rooms in which I go. (Laughter)

The thing that excites me is that there will be no more proxy votes on committees, can you believe that? We are about to change the rules of the people's institution. And I don't want to get far flung, left or right on the issues of how to deal with welfare. What we are doing now doesn't work, so maybe we ought to re-examine it. But, that's for another day. I'll just speak as a member of the institution, as somebody who loves service in Congress; it's the best job I ever had. No heavy lifting, all the work was indoors. If something went wrong, you could blame Reagan. I loved Reagan, you know, those three-by-five cards.

I love the institution. It is such a revealing place, as Cokie said last night, in the stories that she told about her mother and her father and her personal experience, I thought it was extraordinary, Cokie.

Now, one final thought, as a politician. I think press coverage has never been better. It is uneven, it is sometimes horrible. I would love to be surprised by a reporter who had knowledge of economics. (Laughter)

Mr. Roemer: I'd love to be surprised by a reporter who had political experience. I'd love to be surprised by a news story that had depth. But that has always been true. We have always had too much to do and too little time to do it. And I think that no matter how you look at the press coverage across America now, there have never been more options, there have never been more choices, there has never been more depth.

I mean, I love C-SPAN. When I come in off the road in Louisiana or — I have an international trade company — from Mexico City or Europe, the first thing I do is turn on C-SPAN. That shows you what a nut I am. But I can stay in touch with what is happening in the world.

So, I don't want the press to take a beating, but could it be done better? Sure, I mean, this university could be done better. I came to Harvard when I was 16, off a cotton farm in North Louisiana, I love it. I spent a lot of years here. And I come back every chance I get. But man, political correctness? Geez. This university could be a lot better in my opinion, but that is just one guy's view. But I love it yet.

And I would say the same thing about politics and the press. Could it be better? Yes. Is it getting better in some areas? I think so. And I think what happened Tuesday, regardless of the personalities, is that we are going to see new faces in high places. And I think America is going to take an interest.

Last point. I'm 51 now, and I'm not near as smart as I was when I was 16. But one thing I have learned to my satisfaction is that the people are better informed than we in politics are and the press are. Let me say it again. I didn't say we the people are all powerful, or all knowing; they are better informed about their family, their community, their neighborhood, their dreams, their fears.

Everybody I meet wants the same thing, they want to be heard. My job is to listen. And the greatest reporters of the written word, or the television picture, are those women and men who have the courage to listen. I don't know if listening is taught at Harvard, but it ought to be. Thanks.

Mr. Rosenstiel: Well, I'm at a disadvantage here. I don't have any quantitative research and I'm not funny. (Laughter)

And my resume is kind of short. I think Cokie did a superb job of outlining the problems in the press. And Buddy, with your optimism, you could be an editor of a newspaper; they seem to think that we are doing a great job, too.

What I would like to do today is to talk very briefly about why we have the problems that Cokie was talking about and some suggestions as to what we can do.

I think there are four reasons that we are mired in the incompleteness and cynicism and negativism and failure to explain institutions that Cokie was talking about. The first one is, obviously, the echo effect of the press, that we magnify every trend that we cover, including today, the public cynicism.

I think a second, and more important reason, in some ways, is the fear that the press is gripped by, right now. The press in general are terribly afraid of their growing unpopularity, and of technology and an economic future that is uncertain. It is driving the press to swerve unpredictably, away from our own standards, often without realizing it, swerve towards sensationalism and O.J., swerve towards rumor mongering, that we never used to engage in. And at other times, to swerve towards a kind of new subjectivity, in which we don't report things, we report what we think about them or what we think will happen next. Or try, in sometimes ill-conceived ways, and sometimes

good ways, but too often in ill-conceived ways, towards a new kind of interpretive journalism.

The third big factor that I think is causing these problems today is that the media have become more important in the culture as other institutions have become weaker. Where once morality was largely taught in churches and in living rooms, and to some limited extent, in the penny press, today, people learn their morality from watching Oprah or Rush, or from sitcoms and from *Prime Time Live* and *Dateline NBC.* That is increasing the press' responsibility and magnifying its weaknesses. And it puts us in a position where increasingly, people are looking toward the press to solve the culture's problems.

The fourth factor of course, as we have talked about many times, the press is now disconnected from the communities that it serves. Too often journalists are transients, who come from places like Harvard, and work in places like Wilmington, for two years, so they can move on to the next market up, the next market up, next market up.

And the days in which you went to high school, then got an internship, got an apprenticeship on the newspaper and stayed in the old neighborhood, and drank with your buddies from the old gang, are gone. So, we don't know nearly as much about the neighborhoods and the fears and all the things that Buddy was talking about, as the people that we are writing for do.

There are a lot of people in the Washington bureau of the *L.A. Times* who have never really spent any time in L.A., including the two people who run the Washington bureau of the *L.A. Times.*

So, what to do about these four very powerful forces, these four elephants, that are pulling the press in dangerous directions. Well, first, the press has to be much more intellectually rigorous, much more, about what it is doing.

To some extent, the old definitions of what makes a story are inadequate today, because of our added responsibility. More about that in a minute. But basically, the idea that, look for the most exciting, look for the conflict, look for the most controversial element, put that in the lead. Even the kind of definition that Reuven Frank offered in Cokie's speech, that we are there to outline society's problems and not solve them. I think that is an inadequate definition today. In a minute, I'll tell why.

The second thing I think we need to do in the profession is we need to have the courage of our profession. When I was on *Nightline,* not too long ago, and said that the press was out of control over O.J. Simpson, including my newspaper, I was accused by the executive vice-president of ABC News, for Standards and Practices, of being an elitist. We have reached the stage where having standards, or wanting to impose standards, is a form of elitism. I don't think having professional standards is elitist per se. I think your standards may be elitist, but imposing them is professionalism, not elitism. And there is a difference and we are forgetting it in my business.

Finally, I think we need to sort of redefine what journalism is. Cokie used the analogy of the elephant parade, or the circus parade, and we are on the sidelines describing it, that's not bad, I like that. Ted Koppel, another colleague of Cokie's who is also very bright and very thoughtful, has likened journalism to cartography, to mapmaking. I like this analogy a lot.

Our job should be, as we view it, making maps for people every day, to guide their way through the culture. And when you overdo O.J., or negativism, or anything else, you are distorting the map. Like the mapmakers who didn't know what the world looked like, and put sea lions and sea monsters and doodles and stuff, in the corners. We have the technology now to make that map pretty accurate; we are not using the technology that way.

Instead, we are using the technology to make the map more garish, because we are worried that people don't like maps any more. And I think that if we can think harder, in

some ways, start over in our thinking about what should the map look like and what is a map, a journalistic map, I think we would be making a good start.

Mr. Schauer: Marvin Kalb is sitting at the end of the table, thinking that I have forgotten about him. I didn't. As this event was originally structured, Marvin, who is the non-acting, regular director of the Shorenstein Center and the Edward R. Murrow Professor of Press and Public Policy, was going to lead this discussion, despite the fact that he is on sabbatical. A situation that I described last night at dinner as a shallow sabbatical, rather than a deep sabbatical, which means that he comes back fairly often, does things, and is constantly in contact. We were delighted that he was going to moderate this panel. Unfortunately, Marvin has to leave a little bit early, so we have switched roles.

And therefore, as opposed to moderating, which is a somewhat easier or less substantive job, Marvin now takes on the somewhat harder job of being a member. I'm not going to impose upon Marvin the same constraints I imposed on others. So, although Marvin, like all others, gets no time whatsoever, he can go longer over the no time whatsoever, than the others, to add his thoughts. And then we will ask Cokie to respond to all of this and then move it into a larger discussion.

Mr. Kalb: The original idea for these follow-up seminars has always been to bring together a number of people who have listened carefully to what the Teddy White Lecturer said the night before and then try to offer some kind of critique. And year after year, we have had wonderful presentations and sometimes even, wonderful critiques. But we are also dazzled by the quality of the speakers, quite consistently, year after year.

But, I would like to say that after listening to Cokie, and I listened very carefully last night, I would have liked more answers to the question, why? On a number of occasions, for example, Cokie, in her talk, said that there is an unwillingness on the part of the press, for the most part, to talk about accomplishments. And Kathleen talked about this as well, this feeling that if you associate yourself with a negative, it is an easier story and is easier to get on the air. After all, journalists are professionals and a lot of their impulse is either, in the broadcast area, to get on the air, or if they work for a newspaper, to get on the front page.

So, why is that the case, that they are so unwilling to discuss the accomplishments of professionals? Cokie says that we are tearing down institutions of government. But why is that the case? If the best of journalists come up here, year after year, and month after month, and engage in, I think, important and substantive seminars and discussions, why is it that so many of them then go home, whether that be Washington, D.C. or Seattle, Washington, and really return essentially to doing what they have done before? And in some cases, though hardly last night's, not pick up the essence of the recommendations that they themselves have made, or try to address directly, some of the criticisms that they offer about their own industry.

Tom Rosenstiel lined up a series of very significant problem areas. There is a fear of technology. There is a fear of being too disconnected. There is a fear of engendering too much unhappiness on the part of your reader and viewer. There is too much tabloidization. But again, why is that the case? Why is there not more personal responsibility and tough editorial decision making today, in newsrooms?

I told a story yesterday, of National Public Radio's discussion of the Gennifer Flowers story, on the Friday after the Thursday that that story broke. That Thursday night, *Nightline* did a whole piece on it without any independent reporting. But they served as an echo chamber for a rumor. Cokie last night said that should not be the basis of news presentation. But it should be substantiated information.

And the following day, in the NPR newsroom, for *All Things Considered,* the producers asked the question whether the program should proceed with the story of Gennifer Flowers. And the executive producer justified her decision to proceed with that

story by saying, it is out there. It is part of the ether, we all understand that it is there and we have to go along with it.

And Linda Wertheimer said: "That doesn't mean it has to be in here." And I thought that was a terrific comment on Linda's part, and really said so much about the nature, not only of journalism, but any business that you can be in.

I suppose the same thing, Buddy, would be in politics as well. It does not follow that if something is out there it has to be in here. There is a place for individual decision making. And journalism is filled with top flight professionals, who really know what the right thing to do is. They live with it and it is in their gut. And time and time again, some of the best, excluding all of those in this room, don't do it. And the answer may be all of the things that Tom has ticked off and money and ratings. And it all ends up sounding like, again, one large cliché.

But it always comes down to why individuals themselves feel it necessary to go with the mob. And if there is to be some turn around in all of this, it has to start with people. And the individual professionals who are in the business.

Thank you.

Ms. Roberts: Well, I don't really have a response. And also, I think I have talked plenty and I think it is time for other people's questions.

But I do think that one of the things, in answer to your last question, Marvin, why if it is out there, does it have to be in here? We have talked about this a lot in the last year. Because, it is not just Gennifer Flowers, it's Lorena Bobbitt, and now it is O.J. and all that.

And I think part of the reason for that is everybody now knows everything. So that, it used to be that maybe a few tabloids would cover something but not that many people even read it. Now that it is all there in the ether, you start to look silly if you don't cover it. If you are the only person who is not addressing something about this story that the whole country is talking about. You separate yourself in a way that I think your editors feel make you look foolish.

So, I think that that is a big change that has put some of these stories, that I think we would consider tabloid stories, into the mainstream press, in a way that they were not in the past. I also do think that it is not complicated that pack journalism happens, and that if everybody is doing it one way then everybody else does it that way.

I have great hopes for some of this stuff that it will be like cop shows, or doctor shows, or you know, lawyer shows, or any of those things that go on in prime time, that some of these "news shows" will go away in the same way. Because they will lose their popularity in the same way that the doctor shows did.

And I am very interested in what Tom talked about, about being disassociated from the place that you serve. I think that is a real key that I haven't thought a lot about. I suppose one of the reasons that I feel so strongly about the institution of Congress, is because it is the town I grew up in. It is like writing about my hometown. And I do think there is a need for reporters to do that much more.

We have national newspapers that we never had before. You can get *The New York Times, USA Today* and *The Wall Street Journal* anyplace in the country. They are almost like the networks of newspapers, where you are disassociated from the local community and I do think that is a problem.

And I have a question, Kathleen, for you. And that is that I saw some data that the people who are most negative and most cynical and most oppositional to government, are people who are C-SPAN viewers. And that it is not just people who are seeing the filtered coverage produced by us, but the people who are seeing the unfiltered debate in the Congress, who are even more anti-government. Have you seen that data?

Ms. Jamieson: We don't see it reflected in our study because when you are dealing with 360 people, you don't have enough C-SPAN viewers to break the subset out.

Ms. Roberts: Just Buddy. (Laughter)

Ms. Jamieson: Although, one difference in the traditional studies of C-SPAN viewers is when C-SPAN viewers are asked to elaborate on why it is that they hold the positions they hold, they are highly knowledgeable. So, some would say, when C-SPAN viewers reject the system, it is because they are being realistic. When talk-show viewers reject, because there is no informational base behind it, one might say they are being cynical.

Ms. Roberts: That's all I have to say. I'm much more interested in what other people have to say.

Mr. Roemer: Cokie, let me just say, in my earlier statements I agreed with you. Let me disagree with you on a couple of things and see—

Ms. Roberts: You're were being much too — un-Buddy.

Mr. Roemer: That's right. I take after your momma. (Laughter)

One thing you said last night, when asked a question from the audience, regarding celebrity status and then your function as a reporter. And your answer, I heard you say, that you could in effect compartmentalize the two, that you could be a celebrity one moment, on a Sunday morning show, and then on Monday, you could be a reporter, digging and reporting and that there was a disconnect there. I don't feel that way, Cokie. And I wonder if you could elaborate.

And number two, this whole business about listening, Tom said, disassociation with your community or your neighborhood, or with the people. And the way I said it was, that we have either forgotten it, or don't practice the art of listening. You said a few minutes ago, in a response to a question here, that Marvin said, you said, well, if the crowd is doing it, then we have to do it, or words to that effect, in your newsroom. That is what I mean, that's what I was trying to say about listening. We can listen to the American public, or to my communities in Louisiana. That doesn't mean you agree, but you begin by understanding the other person and then you can explain yourself. If you try to explain yourself first, you lose.

So, my second question, my first has to do with celebrity versus reporter. The second one is, have you personally done any serious looking at this question of following the crowd, measuring the crowd and then using your judgment about priorities in your reporting?

Ms. Roberts: Well, I don't see what your problem is about separating, so you have to explain that more to me. It seems to me, I get up on Monday morning and go to work, I get up very early on Monday morning and go to work. Tell me what you think the inability to separate is. First of all, I have a lot of trouble with the word celebrity.

Mr. Roemer: Yes, I know. And we are on personal ground here and so I'm going to treat it kindly.

Ms. Roberts: This should be an interesting experience. (Laughter)

Mr. Roemer: I know. I know. You are a star, Cokie. With all the heat and light that goes with that, and you take that to every story. And I wonder if you see, I'm not saying it's a major problem, but the question last night, was there a connection between your celebrity status and your ability to report as a journalist, on the events that swirl through our lives, is there any connection? Does one bleed over or touch over into the other? That was the question last night. And I heard you say, no problem.

Ms. Roberts: Well, I didn't hear the question that way, but it's possible that I got it wrong.

Is it true, that when someone is recognized and you go into a story, that it can alter the story; of course that is true. I am not at the Dan Rather stage, where, you know, you walk into a room and you become the story. I am happy to say.

But, it has advantages and disadvantages is the answer. It is easier to get people to talk to you, in a lot of ways. And I don't mean members of Congress, as I said last night, they are not a problem.

Mr. Roemer: That's easy.

Ms. Roberts: I mean strangers. Look, what I do during election years is wander around shopping malls with a microphone in my hand, talking to voters. That has become much harder because shopping malls won't let you in any more. And this really is a serious problem because these are the main streets of America. They all say that they are private, and they don't want you harassing their customers. And you explain what a polite, nice person you are and they say they have insurance problems. God, insurance gets blamed for everything. (Laughter)

And they kick you out. It is easier to do those kind of interviews if people know who you are, and they will have a little bit of fear of you, not the voters, but the people who run the shopping malls.

And then the voters, I think I have had the experience where they are more willing to talk to me rather than less. So that, the listening function becomes an easier function. And I couldn't agree with you more about listening, that is something we don't do enough of because we talk too much.

Mr. Roemer: The danger, Cokie, is would you take Rush Limbaugh seriously if he were a reporter?

Ms. Roberts: But he doesn't pretend to be a reporter.

Mr. Roemer: But to me, it is a problem. I want you to reexamine it, Cokie. That's all I'm saying.

Mr. Kalb: Cokie, I just wanted to ask a question. Yesterday, you said, I think in answer to the same question, that the last part of *This Week* with David Brinkley, in your mind, could be compared with the Op-Ed page of *The New York Times* or *The Post* or other newspapers.

And that is an interesting kind of analogy. And maybe, for those people who get confused then, and the point I think that Buddy is getting to and underlining here, if you can't sometimes decide what is straight reporting, and what is, oh, this-is-what-I-think analysis, then maybe those areas of the program could be better designated, so that there is no confusion in the viewer's mind. And Brinkley does this, "Now is our time to kind of... " — he does that in a very easy, typically David kind of way.

But, I think what I'm getting at is that in some way, one of the problems with television news is the overlap. Whether it be for celebrity purposes or genuinely sticking your own point of view in a news story. The distinctions ought to be clear and maybe there is a way of doing that so there is less confusion in the mind of the viewer; it's just a thought.

Ms. Roberts: I think there might be, on the other hand, I have very little hope for it succeeding. Because, what I have discovered is that people don't separate much, what they hear you say one place or another. They don't separate you from somebody else, I mean, NPR listeners think Linda, Nina and I are the same person. (Laughter)

I don't like talks to be on the radio, on NPR, because I think that people think that I am reporting, they don't know that it is a talk at the Shorenstein Center. And so, it is very hard for people to differentiate what they see and hear.

Mr. Rosenstiel: I just want to jump in here and add one speculation. That is, that the bigger problem here, in terms of confusion in the audience's mind, between reporting and commentating, is not Cokie or Sam, who they see in different roles. But the proliferation of people who are essentially anonymous in their reporting jobs, then going on these talk shows and being very loose in their opinions about what the president should do and what he shouldn't do.

And then they go off and do the reporting that nobody ever sees. And that helps create an impression that these people are just as opinionated in their writing between the lines, as they are, and flip, as they are in their commentating work on the talk shows. And I think that contributes to a problem that we have now, in the proliferation of media,

where Rush Limbaugh is media, but he is not a journalist in the sense that he is interested in being disinterested.

And one of the problems that we have in this new culture, where we flip between talk shows and our reporting, is that we encourage the confusion and don't stand up well enough for what the difference is between legitimate journalism, which people like to call old media or mainstream media, and the sort of new media, which is really a different business, in much of its purpose.

Mr. Bok: It just seemed to me that there is one aspect of this that we haven't covered, I just want to mention it. A lot of what we are saying sort of presupposes that everybody is watching and listening as they always did, and the question is, whether the quality of what we are giving them is what it should be?

But, the other side of the problem is that people aren't watching as much. I mean, there is a lot less attention being given, by all the measures that I see. Many fewer people are reading about politics and government, or listening to it. And there, if you are going to look at that, I think one has to get outside, just what is going on in the newsrooms and the editorial rooms of the country.

You've got to get at what happens in an area where the media, probably more than anything else, but probably the other forces of society too, are really working, all the time, at trying to find how can we discover more exciting ways to capture the attention of the audience. More interesting football games, more funny sitcoms, more channels, more opportunities of every conceivable sort, to grab hold of the audience. Is our message really what is most valuable to them? Are we succeeding at getting their attention?

And the question is, how well can the media succeed at its tremendously important task of informing people about difficult, inevitably difficult, complicated, sometimes, even inevitably tedious subjects, at a time when they are being subjected to this relentless competition for the attention of the audience? And that seems to me to be an enormously difficult challenge to load upon you or your colleagues, but one that nonetheless has to be thought about.

Mr. Schauer: I find it interesting — certainly, in Derek's first comment and in his last, and one of the things that a number of people brought up in one way or another, is the difference between thinking about what is wrong, and thinking about how things could be better, which all of us are good at doing. There is very little thinking about what has caused the situation, that is, where we now are and therefore, thinking, in the term I like to use, about the incentives that might be used to change that.

It is intriguing, not surprisingly, that we have here a panel of empirical researchers, classicists, historians, political scientists, journalists, as you might expect, two lawyers. No economists, not a single economist, no game theorists, no psychologists, no sociologists. Whether it be in terms of thinking about the academic disciplines that may inform this issue, or the nonacademic perspectives that may inform this issue, it seems to me that there has been a great deal of thinking about what is wrong now, and what a better world would look like. And very little thinking about the incentives and dynamics that would link what is wrong now, and what a better world would look like.

My sense is that until we involve the perspectives of economists, psychologists, sociologists, and the like, to analyze the pressures, motivations, drives, and everything else, of the people that are producing what some people think are a problem and some not, we are not going to make as much headway in thinking about the problem as we want.

I'll just give an example. There is, Cokie mentioned, and several others mentioned as well, the problem of pack journalism. There is out there in the world of economics, an interesting and pretty rich literature on what is quaintly referred to as herd behavior. If in fact there is out there, whether in a highly technical or in a less technical way, a range of thinking about coordinated behavior, herd behavior, gaming behavior, and all of that,

maybe we ought to start trying to think about incorporating those perspectives into the kinds of discussion we are now having.

I'll stop at that and I want to open the floor to questions which we can then use as a vehicle for further discussion.

For the benefit of posterity and those who are operating the electronic equipment, would you please identify yourself when you ask your question or make your comment.

Kim?

Ms. Campbell: My name is Kim Campbell and I am a fellow at the Shorenstein Center and a politician, a Canadian politician, a former politician.

I want to say first of all that the comments are excellent. And something that strikes me is the link between a number of things that have been said. Tom Rosenstiel talked about the lack of intellectual rigor, as did Buddy Roemer, and it seemed to me an interesting comment. There is no formal training for reporters. Some have a good education, some do not. They are covering increasingly technical and difficult issues. As the scope of government expands, the kinds of things that legislators are dealing with are getting more complex.

What we are finding and reporting, and Tom Patterson makes reference to this research, is that the actual length of time in which public policy makers are quoted themselves, whether it is on television or radio or print, is decreasing. The sound bites are very much smaller. The written quotes are very much smaller. So, we have people who are not trained in the disciplines, have no particular depth, they may be covering a whole range of things, trying to mediate the message for people, whom they will not let speak for themselves. And so there is a clinical problem there.

Secondly, the fact that they cover stories confers a legitimacy on that story. It is not a matter that it is unfair.

When you talk about it, it becomes real. It is one thing to see it on the front of *The National Enquirer*. I mean, I see wonderful things there, you know, Elvis returns with miracle weight-loss diet. (Laughter)

But if you start talking about it, you confer it. I'll give you an example. When I travel in my own country, people approach me, I have a celebrity status because they have seen me on TV, they feel they know me. And when you are a public person, you carry that around. When I came here last term, I felt that way about Marvin Kalb. God, there is Marvin Kalb! (Laughter)

Everybody trusted Walter Cronkite. Well, what if Walter Cronkite was wrong? And I think this is something that television has transformed.

The relationship between the person conveying the message and the message itself, has changed dramatically in television. And I think it imposes a kind of ethical challenge on journalists to recognize it. You add credibility to stories when you cover them. It isn't just a question of them being out there and you feel you have to talk about it.

It is interesting when you talk about the audience for C-SPAN, what I always thought was amazing was how many people watched meetings of our local city council on television, or people who watched Parliament. I had to teach at Johns Hopkins once, and somebody from New Mexico wrote me a fan letter because they had seen it on C-SPAN. And you think, those audiences defy all the conventional wisdom of what people want to watch on television. And I think there is a hunger out there, for people to hear what the real people are saying. And even if it creates an informed cynicism, at least it is an informed cynicism, not a fearful reactive cynicism.

In Tom Patterson's book, which I think is a superb study of all we are talking about, he makes a very interesting construct between the questions that people asked Bill Clinton on open line radio shows, and the questions that journalists asked him. When journalists interview him, they are asking questions that basically, Americans aren't interested in. When they get a chance to ask him directly, they ask him the kind of

questions that go to the heart of their concerns. And I think those are things that we have to do today.

You are not letting policy makers talk. There is a barrier between the people and their representatives. People who are trying to mediate the message don't really know what they are talking about very often. So, they become the stories. All they know how to talk about is what they see with their own eyes, who is up, who is down, or what they feel subjectively, about a story.

Mr. Patterson: There is a question, I think, as to whether news audiences may be hearing too much from the journalists. One statistic from the 1992 campaign, is that on network television, journalists spoke six minutes for every minute that the candidates spoke.

I think that goes to a structural change in journalism, I think it has to do with this development of interpretive reporting that Tom was talking about. Because it really does give voice to the journalist. But it does more than that, I think it also elevates news values, it makes them more central to reporting. And I think it is one reason why we have seen an increase in normal conflict, the degree of game centeredness in these stories, the negativity. I think it elevates a lot of uncertainties to absolutes and not a lot of subtlety, in most news reporting.

I'm wondering if, within the way that journalists do their thing, just trying to get politicians and others more centrally into the news, to put that voice back into the news. I think journalists have trouble dealing with issues and accomplishments, for all sorts of reasons. Maybe the voice that should carry that message should be the politicians.

Ms. Roberts: Let me just tell you something though. I work on two programs where you put politicians up there, *This Week with David Brinkley* and *Nightline.* Getting them to come on those programs is worth your life. I mean, they would much prefer not to have to do that, where they are as exposed as that and as out there as that. They are more comfortable with the ten seconds too. And that is something that we haven't talked about.

Mr. Patterson: But how about in the regular news stories, if they are eager to get to the microphone?

Mr. Roemer: You're in middle ground, Cokie. I mean, the comparison is 10 seconds or a minute and 10 seconds. Neither are adequate. If you have to choose, take 10 seconds.

Ms. Roberts: That's not a minute and 10 seconds.

Mr. Roemer: What Tom is saying is that there are other choices. I've said it before, I'm going to say it again, people want to be heard. And the institution, the person, the news organization that does that, they are on top.

Ms. Semetko: Holli Semetko, I was a former fellow at the Shorenstein Center and I'm now at Syracuse University.

Just to follow up on the points made by Kim and by Tom, and to raise a point that you mentioned yesterday in response to a question about how we compare, how U.S. functions, as compared with abroad. And I was kind of disappointed with your answer. Because you were, it seemed to me, flag waving for the United States. There is nothing wrong with flag waving, but I think there are problems with U.S. TV in particular, that if you look abroad, we can see that these things just don't exist. It is not the same way everywhere.

So, we don't have a problem, although the sound bites have shrunk, let's say, over the last 20 years. We still don't see the lack of visibility of politicians or their voices in the news, in European countries, as we would here. Now, there may be a political cast to the way some broadcasting institutions are organized, but we are not getting news that is incredibly biased. We are also getting politicians in a position to air their side of the story more often.

So, this point that Tom raised about journalists having their say for six minutes and politicians having their say for one minute, this isn't a trend that you would see in European countries. There is still much more deference, on the part of journalists, to politicians, to let them air their views and have their say.

And I'm wondering if there is something in the journalistic culture that has been brought on by this star, celebrity status, that is fueled by the economic trends that you referred to, there is this need to attract an audience and the celebrity status of the reporter attracts the audience, in many of those cases.

Mr. Rosenstiel: I wouldn't attribute the decline of the politicians' voice in mainstream press accounts to journalists' celebrity status at all. I think it has to do with this fear of the news cycle that by 6:30 at night, everybody knows everything. That everybody knows everything by dark. And I think the problem with that is that everybody knows some things by dark. I mean, it is possible that everybody knows what happened in the O.J. case by dark. But it is very unlikely that anybody knows much of what happened in Congress by dark. And we need to be much more judicious in making these decisions. We shouldn't assume that because the news cycle has accelerated that the news cycle for everything has been accelerated. And that is a mistake we make, in a kind of knee-jerk way.

The only other thing that I would like to add to the comment before is that yes, if you look at the nightly news, sound bites are shrinking, et cetera, et cetera. But in this universe that we are talking about, politicians were heard in all kinds of venues and the news is no longer the nightly news. It is the *Today Show,* it's Larry King, it's all these other things. And these guys' voices were heard ad nauseam. And one of the poignant comments I heard at the end of the '92 campaign was from a much over-polled voter, in Macomb County, Michigan, who said, I just want these guys off the TV screen. (Laughter)

So, yes, we in the press need to think about what we are doing. But, you know, one place where Tom and I may be divergent in our analysis is that our influence in some ways — the influence of Peter Jenning's show, he has the number-one rated nightly news show in the country, is shrinking, because these other things are out there now too. And also, our sins, while they are great, are not necessarily as great in influence as they once were.

Ms. Jamieson: I just wanted to add some empirical evidence to what Tom has said. The academic finding that says sound bites are shrinking is based on three nightly newscasts, period. And there is some additional research based on the number of words that are available in stories, in newspapers.

But, if what you do is count the average length of sound bites and you include NPR, you include the morning shows, you include *Nightline,* you include *MacNeil/Lehrer,* there is no question that the length of time that is available for politicians has dramatically increased in the last 20 years.

Ms. Roberts: The percentage of people watching the nightly news has decreased tremendously.

But you know, you are saying two different things. One is, that they should be more serious and put the politicians on more. And two is, they should get to the most number of people. And the issue that Derek has raised, keeps raising, is that those two things probably don't go together.

Ms. Campbell: If the sound bites were decreasing because they were covering many more stories, that would be one thing, but given the existing time frames, the balance, who is communicating the message? And when somebody is interpreting these, the chances are they are not getting it right. And yet there seems to be an enormous aversion to letting you say your piece.

Ms. Jamieson: That's on network news. On the health care reform debate, the average news segment, across all available channels, is over five minutes long. With individuals talking directly about the issue themselves. And that is largely because of *MacNeil/Lehrer,* NPR and the morning shows.

There were morning show segments on which the advocates on alternative sides had over an hour of direct time, in which they were taking questions, and they were not being cut off in their answers, to explain their positions. Now, the viewership is smaller, but you can't really fault the news media if they have made it available and the public doesn't consume it. One ought to fault the academic community, that has created the most educated electorate in human history, that isn't disposed to want to pay attention to substance.

Mr. Rosenstiel: Let me just add one other thing and then I'll shut up. I don't mean to defend the nightly newscast, for being too interpretive, because I think that we have gone way overboard on that. But, if market research were driving the newscasts, they wouldn't cover politics at all. And there is an enormous amount of pressure, in fact, in '92, to not cover that campaign at all, on the nightly news.

What we are hoping for on one end, and what we are getting, is in the middle, is not what we might get on the other extreme. If the bean counters had their way, they wouldn't even get their 30 seconds.

Mr. Boyd: I'm Bill Boyd, I'm a fellow at the Shorenstein Center. Cokie, I wondered, last night, when you talked about coverage of women in Congress, if you could expand a little bit about coverage of women in general and tie it to this patch of questions — when you do cover something, does it give it credibility? I'm asking the other side, when the media don't cover something they symbolically annihilate it. How can we get past the thing that since the complete ability to ignore women in general is there, minorities as well, the press is doing something of annihilating them as news figures, as substantive, contributive to the society?

Ms. Roberts: Well, it has gotten better. But I'm not saying that it is anywhere near where it should be. And one of the reasons that it has gotten better is the presence of women in news rooms. Women as producers, women as editors, women as correspondents, saying, you know, hey, we have got to include women in these stories. How come we don't ever have a female guest on this program? And we all do that endlessly. To the point where we drive the men quite crazy and that's a good thing.

But look, it was an enormous fight to have. When you had, as recently as a couple of years ago, the executive editor of *The New York Times* saying that women were not in the news section of the *Times* because the *Times* didn't cover tea parties, we all started wearing buttons that had a tea kettle with a slash over it. (Laughter)

But this is a mindset that is there. I mean, as I said last night, I believe strongly in diversity in news rooms, for all of these reasons. But I do think it has gotten better. I do think that we are insisting more.

I think that an interesting phenomenon, again, something that is not that well watched by itself, in fact, it probably has a rating point of .001, the program on CNN, that was *Cryer and Company* and is now, *CNN and Company,* where every single solitary day, they have three female experts on any given subject — which they did throughout the Persian Gulf war, because they believed that to be their story — has gone a long way. What really happens then, is that producers of other programs look at that and grab those women and put them on other programs.

I do think the sensibility has increased and that the Chinese water torture that we all do over the heads of our editors and producers is having some effect. But it has been a very long hard fight.

Mr. Schorr: A word in passing about celebrity television journalism. After 25 years with CBS and five years at CNN, not on television much, I walked out of a restaurant to be met by a man who said: "Didn't you used to be Daniel Schorr?" (Laughter)

I want to make a couple of points about this conversation, in fairly headline form, because of time constraints. One is that the reason why a meeting like this, discussing what is basically journalism, never seems to rub off anywhere, is that the people who are in this room are not the chief offenders. Therefore, we are really talking about something else.

We are not sufficiently differentiating the ways in which what we call journalism has branched off into other things. Partly because on television, everything in the end will require some of the attributes of television, which means some of the attributes of entertainment. Even on Brinkley, on Sunday morning, where the audience at least is saying, in a certain sense is saying, "Hey, did you see the way Cokie put down Sam? Wasn't that terrific?"

Ms. Roberts: The girls like it. (Laughter)

Mr. Schorr: And there are entertaining qualities. But more than that, it is the worst parts of what we are talking about and will seep up into the so-called respectable press, and are not simply a function of things happening by accident. I am willing, with anybody here, to say of the media, we will not forgive you your press passes.

But I think that we also must note the fact that there are a lot of people in the business of trying to manipulate us. That some of the scandal doesn't happen accidentally. There are people who for political or commercial or other reasons, are busy poisoning the wellstream of journalism. And that being so, all this talk about not mediating too much and letting the news just happen to get on there is misplaced in a way. I think, in a way, we need more mediation. I think responsible journalists today must be gatekeepers, or try to provide antidotes.

And if it is a matter of saying a little bit of this and a little bit of that, it is not really that there is negativism in reporting, but there are a lot more negativisms in the manipulation of the press. It was no accident that we had an unprecedented amount of negative commercials in this recent campaign.

And it isn't only in commercials. Anyone of us, we will get a call on some day, somebody who has a reason to tell you: "You want a juicy story about blah? Go out and get it." And it is done with a purpose.

So, I simply wanted to say, don't tell us to stand back and let it all happen on CNN, on C-SPAN. People will look at the events, see the whole thing and find their own way, it doesn't happen that way. They need the press, respectable press, as their guardian and their protector, against a lot of poisoning of the main wellstreams of information.

Mr. Kalb: But they don't have to do it. There is no requirement that it is done that way. If somebody comes to you and says, here is a really terrific juicy story, that you use it.

Mr. Schorr: But then that story might get out there anyway.

Mr. Kalb: Well, it gets out there, but again, it doesn't mean that it has to be broadcast.

Mr. Schorr: Typically, a story that begins in *National Enquirer,* it gets on *Hard Copy,* gets on the alternative kind of television. And after a while everybody is talking about it, it does make it rather impossible to ignore it.

Mr. Maffei: I'd like to address this question that Dean Jamieson is a researcher and Cokie Roberts is a practitioner. Tom Rosenstiel drew the difference between professionalism and elitism, and there certainly is a difference. But I'm still wondering if elitism is the problem. And if part of the reason why the American public is so cynical about our institutions is because the press, and to a certain degree politicians, are cynical about them? And if you agree with that, what can we do about it?

Mr. Schauer: Before you answer, that is Dan Maffei, second-year Kennedy student.

Ms. Jamieson: The problem with doing research is getting the directionality right. Because when you find two things co-varying, you have got to figure out what is producing what? That is what is nice about being able to do experiments. And what we saw in the experiments was that the cynicism increased after the exposure to certain types of press structures. So, it doesn't mean that the press causes the whole problem, but it means that the press can, in fact, aggravate a problem that may already have some dispositions out there.

The thing I would like to point out, before turning this thing back to Cokie is, we talk as if there is cynicism about the politicians and the process, there are three polls that say that the public is more cynical about the institution of journalism than it has been in recent memory. In fact, journalism is approaching Congress and the Presidency, in people's lack of trust in the journalistic process and in journalists.

The larger question, I think, is, is there a point at which the Fourth Estate can no longer function because people are cynical about it, as well as about what it covers?

Ms. Roberts: But is your question that the politicians and the press are cynical about the public and that therefore — well, yeah, I think to some degree that's true. I think that there is a sense of, these are sheep to be manipulated. But I think that it is less true than somebody sitting in a penthouse at Harvard would think. Because, we are all creatures of A, market forces on the part of commercial broadcasting and B, voters on the part of politicians. And you get too cynical and you get defeated, or turned off, by them, I mean. So, I do think that a bigger problem is pandering, not being cynical.

Ms. Gentry: Hi, I'm Carol Gentry and I am a reporter for the *St. Petersburg Times* and I'm here on a fellowship.

I wanted to make a couple of quick points and then ask a question. The negative culture of the newsroom is without a doubt. And I know this, after 20 years as a reporter, because I remember when I read the Clinton health plan, as a health care reporter, I felt that was my job. And I mentioned to several people that there were some great parts of that plan, some real important things and clever ways of addressing things that I hadn't seen before. And I was regarded as someone who had committed some faux pas, to say something positive about the Clinton health plan, because the group think was, there was nothing worth mentioning, positive, about the Clinton plan. I also had the feeling that no one who reported on it, at the Washington level, had ever read it.

But my question is, and I think Dr. Jamieson perhaps and Cokie, could address this, what could we, as health care reporters, now write? It seems to have dropped off the radar screen and nobody is writing about health care as a problem anymore. Everything has been solved because it is over. But nothing has been solved, it is not over and what should we be writing?

Ms. Jamieson: First, I think the Republicans are going to bring health care reform to the floor, in the spring, so I think they are going to put in the news agenda for you.

But in the interim, I think one has to focus on two questions. The first is, what is happening to coverage? Because what we learned during the health care reform debate was that as the debate progressed, the number of people covered declined. The coverage problem is very real and it continues to get worse.

And secondly, we need to continue to focus on cost. Cost has come down, as the system readjusts. It has not come down to the rate of inflation. If reporters will continue to tell us what is happening with coverage and cost, we will be better positioned to discuss the issues, when plans come forward and address them substantively. Because those are two of the central problems that we need to solve with health care reform.

Ms. Roberts: I don't really have anything to add to that. I think more people read that plan than you realize. And that there was a sense in Washington that this is something that is going nowhere in Congress. I mean, I think that that is a different view.

Instead of the people who are covering the issue as an issue, and most news organizations had both. They had somebody who was the health reporter and somebody who was the political reporter. And when you looked at it politically, you said, huh? What is the deal here?

And by the way, that is also true for the Michel Bill and single payer. When you talk about those things, those were also things that were not going to go anywhere. Now, what I do think our coverage distorted wildly in health care, everybody's coverage, was this sense of who is up, who is down? The Clinton Bill versus the Cooper Bill, versus the Chaffee Bill. And anybody who knows anything about legislation knows that is not the way that it happens. It happens where everybody sits down in a committee and tries to count the votes on that committee and figure out what is going to come out of that one.

The only numbers in the health care debate that matter were 218 in the House and 51 in the Senate, and they never got to them. They never got to those two essential numbers. And I think that the notion of looking at the plans and seeing what had the possibility of getting to those numbers was the job of the political reporters. The job of the health reporters was to tell you what was in the plans.

Ms. Jamieson: One quick comment. We watched very carefully, on press coverage, on single payer, because you have got a Canadian model and you also had substantial liberal support. You also had, on the other side, the Michel Bill, which had the largest number of signatures for most of the process.

And reporters kept telling us, when we asked them, why aren't these two things getting coverage, what Cokie just said to you, they are not going to go anywhere. Five bills were reported out of committee, one of them was a single payer bill, it was the extension of Medicare, part B, in the form of part C. The press didn't cover the fact that it had come out of committee, I assume, because it thought nothing could have happened. And when it did happen, it didn't recognize that it did actually happen.

The single payer folks were really seriously disadvantaged in this process. And when there were no headlines, when in fact they got their bill through the committee structure, essentially that part of the discussion never occurred with large enough public impact. It didn't occur at all in the press for anybody who favored single payer to begin then to rally potential support behind it.

The implication of that ultimately was, when Proposition 186 in California, in this last election cycle, came up, there wasn't any base of public knowledge about what single payer could do, or that it has passed Congressional scrutiny enough to have gotten reported out of committee. It again got virtually no coverage because it couldn't pass in California. And as a result, we didn't have the discussion there. In that instance, I think the press did a serious injustice to the political process.

Mr. Hurwitz: I'm Sol Hurwitz, I'm president of the Committee for Economic Development in New York. And I'm pleased that three people seated around the table are now, or have been, closely associated with our organization, Walter Shorenstein, Frank Stanton and Derek Bok.

I'm rather surprised that sitting here on the site of America's finest educational institution, no one has mentioned the problem of America's public schools, and how the education of our students affects what is placed on the media and how people react to that.

A number of the panelists, Cokie Roberts and Tom Rosenstiel mentioned the phrase, everybody knows everything. Everybody now knows everything. And I think the problem is that everybody has heard about everything. Everybody thinks they know about everything. But clearly, everybody does not know about everything.

I was also taken by Tom Rosenstiel's comment that standards, imposing standards, is a form of elitism. And when you think about the problems of America's public schools,

that is clearly the case. I think standards in American education have been eroded, particularly at the elementary and secondary school level.

And the habit of absorbing content, careful analysis and making choices is not a habit that is developed very well in the large majority of America's public schools.

In fact, standards seem to be going the other way. And I think that technology has a great deal to do with that. Because today it is possible for students, instead of preparing term papers with careful written analysis of problems, to develop this in video form. And what often happens is that students slavishly imitate the worst forms of broadcast journalism.

So, I think that the problem doesn't begin with the moment that the newspaper is opened, or the TV is switched on, it begins much earlier. And I think a lot of attention needs to be paid to the eroding standards in America's public schools.

Our organization has recently issued a report called, "Putting Learning First," which is a call to America's business leaders, educators and American society to redirect the priorities of America's public schools toward learning and achievement.

Thank you.

Mr. Schauer: Let me say something in response to that. In addition to the dimension of education you raised, educating a citizenry on how it might respond to the news and how it might respond to public affairs, you also raise another question that is constantly lurking over the table when we talk about things like this. Maybe Dan Schorr's comments make the problem most clear.

There is a problem of what I and some social theorists might call social differentiation. That is, there are different people that are in different businesses. From the perspective of producing information or producing news, there are distinctions that are quite clear to the insiders, that are hardly apparent to the consumers or readers.

Any journalist worth his or her salt, can talk about the importance of drawing a distinction between editorial and reporting, between news and entertainment, between news and news magazines, between news and books, between news and education, because there are socially differentiated professions that are differentiated as they are producing them. But if all of this runs together for the recipients of the information, if the typical reader of a newspaper thinks that there is far less importance to the distinction between news and editorial, then the fact that they are on different floors of the building where they are produced says a great deal about who ought to be at this table and how we ought to be thinking about these issues.

It may be that the world has socially differentiated the task of information production. It seems to me a mistake to assume that the differentiation of the task of production produces a commensurate differentiation, as the consumers of the information are perceiving it.

Derek?

Mr. Bok: I just want to make a brief comment to the last statement which I think raises a very interesting point. There are other institutions in society that have something to do with the way in which the audience pays attention to information about the politics and government. I don't believe that standards, in terms of the basic intellectual competence, are going down; I don't find any evidence to suggest that.

But I do find something else that I think is very important and relevant to this discussion. I don't think there has ever been a time when basic competence has received more attention in the public schools than it has in the last ten years. Not that we have figured out a good way of getting our students to do it. But it is getting a higher priority than it has in the past. It is getting a higher priority because of its relevance to a single issue, which is global competitiveness and better jobs in a highly competitive world economy. Which is fine and very important.

But what is really lost is any sense that there are other kinds of education which are important, of which civic education and developing basic understanding and interest in political affairs counts for something. That was never done very well in the schools but it certainly used to get more emphasis than it does today.

And I think the CED and other institutions could do a favor, not by saying that competence for global competition and jobs isn't important, but by reminding educators that that isn't the only thing. Because schools are terribly sensitive to what they see the public setting up as the priorities to which schools should respond. And if somebody doesn't place more emphasis on schools not only as a place for basic competence, but as a place for civic understanding and interest, the schools will continue to neglect it.

And I think if they do that, a less educated and less interested public is going to make it impossible for the media to do all the kinds of things that we are talking about and hoping that it will at this meeting.

Ms. Norris: One of the basic themes of this discussion was that the American public is less informed and more cynical. And my question is really about by what standard they are judging them? If you look at issues like health care, crime and so on in Congress, it's very complex to understand. If we say, could the American public be better informed, we all agree, of course they can. Is the public better informed now than in the 1950's and '60's and I think we probably would agree, on balance, yes, there is more information and more people are absorbing that. Although, of course, there are also great divisions between those who are very well informed who tune into C-SPAN and those who tune out of politics, and so you know there is that kind of differentiation.

The third point is, is the public now more cynical or just more critical? And if we say more critical about what is going on, this could well affect the basic political problem in Congress and getting legislation through.

So, my question is, are these trends necessarily quite as bad as we were suggesting earlier?

Ms. Jamieson: The baseline information from the 50's and 60's doesn't let you answer that question particularly well. And that is unfortunate, because the way in which we covered politics in the 1950's and '60's was in fact different. If we had the quality of research now about that period, we would be able to answer the question in some interesting and provocative ways.

What we have seen as we have looked at the various cynicism measures is that the academic community has not yet refined its notion of what constitutes cynicism, to the extent that it can answer that question intelligibly.

We are trying now to make a distinction among these categories of cynicism. Cynicism about individuals who are in the political process. Cynicism about the process that they are specifically engaged in, but not the system as a whole, so this Congress, but not the institution of Congress. Cynicism about certain products, cynicism about health care reform debate versus assault weapons debate. And then, cynicism about the system as a whole, competence in institutions.

And competence in institutions remains consistently quite high, in periods in which you have got cynicism about those other kinds of elements. And so I think the question is at what point do you worry that cynicism about the individuals, about the products that they are producing, about the processes through which they are currently doing that, ultimately creates larger systemic cynicism that destabilizes democratic institutions?

At the point at which people become cynical about the press, as an institution, which they appear to be becoming, I think we need to worry that we may be approaching that point.

Mr. Bok: I just wanted to say that I do think there is some information that may not go all the way back to the '50's, on two points. One is, are people reading the newspaper and paying as much attention to political and government related events? And as I look

at it, that has fallen off substantially. And the media have responded to that by giving it less coverage.

The second thing is, are people being more cynical in terms of their interpretation of how politicians behave. And there certainly are a lot of polls which indicate a serious rise in the number of people who feel, not only you can't trust them, but they are in it for themselves, they are enriching themselves and so forth.

If they were critical, you would just say that they are catching on to what is really going on. But in many respects, their views seem to diverge in a negative direction from what we know to be the facts. And in that sense, it seems to me, one can say there has been a growth in cynicism.

Ms. Fanning: I'm Kay Fanning, former fellow at the Institute of Politics.

There is no question that there is a disconnect between the people, particularly people in the middle of the country and the political process and the press. The Kettering Foundation has done a number of studies on this which indicate that people are not only just cynical, they feel that they are left out of the process. The press, big business and politics are a construct that they have nothing to do with.

The press has gone from giving the facts to analysis, because the facts come so fast now, over the airwaves, from analysis to judgment. The progression from analysis to judgment has turned a lot of people off. The commentators, particularly the television commentators, but also those in the newspapers, decide instantly whether something is a success, or whether it's a failure. And if it is a failure, it is not discussed any more, as we were talking about health coverage.

And there is a movement, which I'm sure some of you are aware of, called public journalism, a couple of us here have just come from a conference on public journalism, where there is an effort, particularly by editors and newspaper people in the heartland, or in smaller and middle size newspapers to bring the public back into the process, not only listening but in terms of a discourse.

Many studies show that most people are not at the extremes, they are not at the far right or the far left. They are not all pro-choice or all prolife, that a great many people are somewhere in between.

But television, particularly, doesn't allow for that. And many of you, I know, have been interviewed to go on some television show to discuss an issue and you are asked where you stand on it. And by golly, if you say you stand somewhere in the middle, they don't want you. Because it is too complex, they want somebody who is for or against.

And I just would like to make the point that it is seems to me that it is the great middle ground that is being totally overlooked.

Mr. Rosenstiel: I think public journalism is an interesting experiment and without trying to define it for anybody, basically, it is just an attempt to restore the authority of the press, by reconnecting it in different communities.

I think the problem with the interpretive wave of journalism is not that we shouldn't interpret, but we need to be much more judicious about how we do it. A lot of what we see in Washington is what I call soufflé journalism. Where the president said this today, and the Republicans said that and, "This raises new questions about the president's blah, blah—." (Laughter)

Ms. Roberts: And only time will tell.

Mr. Rosenstiel: Right, and only time will tell. (Laughter)

And, basically, what is occurring is in a desperate, sort of almost mindless effort to have something to add to this, the press gins up a kind of phony political analysis, in about 20 minutes, to impose a larger meaning on the event.

Mr. Schorr: Twenty minutes or 20 seconds?

Mr. Rosenstiel: Twenty minutes in my business, 20 seconds in yours. And it doesn't mean anything, we don't know what it means and we are just sort of doing this for the

sake of doing it. We need to know when to be expository and when to be interpretive. And we have moved to—

Ms. Fanning: Or when to be judgmental.

Mr. Rosenstiel: Well, the interpretive has become very sloppy. We have gone from analytical, as you say, to interpretive, to judgmental. There are no lines between that. If we get out of the information business, people don't care about what we think. They only care about what we know and this is fatal. This is a form of slow suicide that we are committing, I think.

Mr. Schauer: A perfectly good example might be this good idea called, Ad-Watch, which seems rapidly to be degenerating into strategic commentary. And the percentage of an Ad-Watch that is, is it true or false, is going down. The percentage of it that is, is it strategically effective, will it work, is going up.

Mr. Tehranian: I'm Majid Tehranian, from the Program on Information Policy, at Harvard. And I wanted to come back, Fred, to some of the questions that you raised at the conclusion of the panel. I'm a political economist and I study international communication. And in my studies of various media systems, I have come to the conclusion that the structure is the message. In other words, an issue that seems to be largely unexamined, except by implication.

In other words, as Cokie pointed out last night, the Soviet press or the Soviet media was the voice of the government, primarily propagandist. The commercial media, inevitably, because of its nature, wants to have the largest possible audiences and maximize profits.

The public media, like NHK or BBC or PBS, primarily has an elitist taste, caters to elitist culture and views. And the community media, that is anew formation, as a consequence of the abundance of channels, is reconnecting with local communities and local interests. So, if that analysis is anywhere close to the reality of different media systems around the world, it seems to me that the answer to so many of our problems is structural pluralism, which currently in the United States, we don't have. I think it is even in the interest of the commercial media itself, that is currently losing some of its legitimacy and credibility to pay attention to this particular problem.

BBC once said the function of media is to illuminate, to elevate and to ventilate. It seems to me that the commercial media is focusing primarily on the ventilation. And so much of the focus on the negative side of the issue is to respond to the frustrations of the public. So, reconfirming some of the biases that the politicians and the journalists and the state officials are all rotten.

I disagree with Cokie on the question of information populism. A good example of this is Internet. Internet has become electronic media for community participation. And we have numerous examples of discussions, intelligent discussions, of a variety of public issues, in which people in fact—

Ms. Roberts: Rich people.

Mr. Tehranian: Well, yes, I admit, there are 30 million people on Internet currently globally. It will fast reach a nation of hundred million by the year 2000, if not more. So that it is a significant number and if this hype about the electronic superhighway has reality to it, I think technology can be — I'm not a technological determinist, I'm not saying we have a technological fix here. But it seems to me that technology can help us from getting from one-way media to interactive media.

Ms. Tellon: I'm Tanya Tellon, I'm a third year law student here.

I had a question which I guess I can phrase as a statement, which is that I wonder how much of the personal attacks, in talking about a politician's character, is a part of the function of the feminist critique on the line between public and private. And that sexual harassment is not just personal, it is illegal. And that Clarence Thomas' alleged use of

pornography might be relevant on how he rules on the constitutionality of legal restrictions, or how much of it is a puritanical sensationalism that we engage in.

Ms. Roberts: Well, I'll just quickly say that I do think that some of it, the personal is political, is part of what we are talking about here. And I do also think that the coverage of people's personal lives changed dramatically when women started riding on the bus. That we pruded things up a lot. Until then, it was guys out together, carousing together, drinking together, when everybody still drank, and they even smoked. The rules were, what happens on the road was never talked about at home; I don't tell your wife, you don't tell mine and we certainly don't tell the folks.

Women have had a substantial impact on changing that and you can decide whether it's good or bad.

Ms. Charren: Peggy Charren, I'm the founder of Action for Children's Television.

I want to point out that one group missing from this wonderful panel is the CEOs of a distribution system, a way of getting us our information. And at the risk of sounding like Johnny One-note, I bring that up because those are the people I have problems with.

I have been trying for years to get a whole lot of news programs for children and teenagers on television. There is now Linda Ellerbee on Nickelodeon, there is the occasional wonderful special on ABC, when something enormous comes up, like the Gulf War crisis.

On the other hand, it took years for *The Boston Globe* to have their nifty page now, for children, that isn't a mini page of cartoons. It really is a way to get children used to reading the newspaper.

And it is outrageous, that there is so little on television helping kids understand that a news day is a day in history. And what happened, where it happened and why it happened. If we get kids into the habit of thinking about that and knowing about that, they may be better gatherers of the news when they grow up. Even if the ratings are less than makes the CEOs happy, they are, after all, at least broadcast stations, public trustees, and this was supposed to be the penalty for getting the free use of the spectrum.

Mr. C. Roemer: I'm Charles Roemer, I graduated from the college in '92 and now am a political campaign manager.

My question is an easy one, it's a soft one, might be a good one to end on. (Laughter)

And I'm not the cynic my dad is, yet.

Ms. Roberts: That's right. Clearly, your father has not had enough of an influence on you. (Laughter)

Mr. C. Roemer: My question is this, how does your personal background, being that your family has always been in politics, how does that affect your reporting? Does it make it softer sometimes? Are you less likely to be reactive, I'm curious, and do you have an example where it may have affected your reporting?

Ms. Roberts: The answer to that is that I think it has been, mainly, very helpful. Because I know things I don't know I know, you do too. The only other people who know them are other political kids.

And it has created, for me, what I was talking about earlier with Tom, that question of seeing that the Capitol is my hometown, and therefore being protective of the institution of Congress, which I think is a useful role in the American press today, because it is highly unusual.

Yes, there are some times when I have said, I know that person too well to cover him or her. I think that when my mother was in Congress, it worked mainly to her disadvantage, because I was covering things like women's issues, where she was very involved. And instead of giving her the lead voice on it, I would go to someone else because she was my mother.

So, I would occasionally say to a colleague, look, you have got to do this story, my mother is the central focus of the story and somebody has got to do it. So that would

happen occasionally. But more often than not, she would be left out, because I was the correspondent.

And yes, there are stories that I did not cover. I did not cover Danny Rostenkowski's problems because he is an old friend of mine and I felt it was more advisable to rescue myself from that. I did cover Jim Wright's problems, he was not an old friend of mine, and it was a problem for my mother that I covered them. But then he was gone and it wasn't a problem any more.

It affects everything you do, but I would argue that everybody's personal background affects what they bring into the news, which is why I am a Johnny One-note, or a Jilly Onenote, on the subject of diversity in the newsroom. Because I do think that everybody brings to the news their own personal interest as well as experience. And I keep emphasizing that because I see it so much in the news room.

My other big interest is religion. And I will cover religion stories that other people are not interested in. I covered the extraordinary Bishops' synod in Rome a few years back. Somebody said, why is a congressional correspondent covering this? I said, look, it is very similar. There is a lot of marble, a building with a big dome, and guys who say one thing and mean another. (Laughter)

Which unwittingly gets me to my final point. Which is that I, last night, chose to emphasize the press responsibility for cynicism in the society. Because that was the venue I was in. But I would like to end by talking about the politicians' responsibility.

My colleague Dan Schorr brought up something that I think is very important. If we don't mediate, in some ways, lies will be out there, on C-SPAN, it's not just on Rush, and all of those things.

Mickey and Buddy know perfectly well that they have gone onto the floor and said one thing and come into the speaker's lobby and told us something else altogether different. And it is not that they are lying, exactly, it's just that they are shading.

And I have had the experience over and over and over again, of having a member of Congress say something to me, and then go on *MacNeil/Lehrer* and say something completely different. And when I would argue, at the time when I was working at *MacNeil/Lehrer*, with the producers, saying you need a truth teller in this segment, not just those two senators who are telling you stuff that is totally political and not what is really going on. They would say, but we have got the players; they had the players, but they didn't have the truth.

And I think it is very grandiose, obviously, of us to call ourselves truth tellers, but often that is the case, that is the role we are forced to play, because other people aren't doing it. And I think the political industry, and it has become an industry, has become much worse about this.

When you talk about civic education, Derek, what is one of the reasons that people don't participate and don't have an interest in civic education; political consultants are one of the reasons. They are out there, and my daughter is one at the moment, and I have been fussing at her for months. Also, she lost a lot of races this year.

But the fact is that they are the ultimate cynics. They are not at all interested in their candidates even, they are just interested in the win/loss ratio and getting the ads out that are going to work. And what they do, I think, is discourage volunteers from campaigns, they hate volunteers. Volunteers get in the way of their ability to manipulate.

So, I think there is an enormous amount of manipulation of the press going on, an enormous amount of manipulation of the public and an enormous amount of, at least attempts on the part of politicians, to not only shade the truth, but to use the press to their advantage. That has always been true, but in the broadening of the number of outlets, it has become much truer.

I will pick up the phone to check on what is happening for Brinkley this weekend, and I will be told that so-and-so has refused to come on, because he won't go on with so-

and-so. And so-and-so has insisted that he have eight minutes straight and that if somebody comes on after him, that he will not talk at all. And that so and so will only speak if he can do it in the window, because he doesn't like being in the room with us. And so-and-so will only do it if he can be in the room because he doesn't like being in the window.

And the amount of contortions that we go through to try to put these people on the air is unbelievable, because they [politicians] have a strong sense that they are in the position that they can manipulate and I think that they have done at least as much as we to contribute to the cynicism. Particularly, in the running down of their own institutions and the running down of our institution. So, that is my final word. (Applause)

Mr. Schauer: I want to officially, in a moment, thank and give a little gift to each of our panelists. I just want to fill in an omission from earlier. The public face of the Shorenstein Center, whether on the telephone or at the front desk is the one person I didn't mention when I thanked the staff earlier, Julie Felt is probably the contact that most of you have with the Center. She has had to step out of role a little less than others over the last couple of days, but she is as much a part as anyone, of all of this happening.

There is a sense in which giving certificates to the people of this variety has a sort of coals to Newcastle aspect, maybe I should say, crayfish to Louisiana, or whatever. Nevertheless, I do think it is important that we recognize the contributions of the people who have given their time, and their thoughts to this.

Derek Bok. (Applause)

Kathleen Hall Jamieson. (Applause)

Buddy Roemer. (Applause)

Tom Rosenstiel. (Applause)

And for making the whole two-day event such a great success, thank you to Cokie Roberts. (Applause)