THE FIRST ANNUAL
THEODORE H. WHITE LECTURE

WITH
WALTER CRONKITE

Moderator
Marvin Kalb

Joan Shorenstein Center
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Harvard University
John F. Kennedy School of Government

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John F. Kennedy School of Government
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

PART I
THEODORE H. WHITE LECTURE
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Dean Robert Putnam: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the First Annual Theodore H. White Lecture on Press and Politics at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

This lecture series commemorates an individual whose extraordinary contributions to political journalism set a standard for contemporary campaign coverage. The Theodore H. White Lecture will be awarded each year to a journalist who best epitomizes Teddy White's personal dedication and professional skill and accomplishment.

Like the Godkin Lectures, one of the first lecture series at any American university, the Albert H. Gordon Lecture in International Finance, the Tanner Lectures in Human Values and other significant Harvard lectureships that are delivered in the Forum at the Kennedy School, the Theodore H. White Lecture promises to be an important and an influential commentary on the press and politics into the next century and beyond.

In addition, the Kennedy School honors Teddy White this evening because during his life, Teddy White honored the Kennedy School. Before his death, four and a half years ago tonight, Teddy White was a member of the visiting committee of the Kennedy School and he was an early architect of our Joan Shorenstein Barone Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy.

To introduce tonight's distinguished speaker, I give you the Edward R. Murrow Professor of Press and Public Policy, Marvin Kalb. (Applause)

Mr. Kalb: Ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure this evening to introduce Walter Cronkite. I've never introduced him before. (Laughter)

For many years, as the anchorman for the CBS Evening News, Walter used to introduce me, with a difference, though, worth noting. On a good night, I usually got a minute or a minute-fifteen to report on a momentous issue of world affairs. Tonight, Walter gets 45 minutes. (Laughter)

As the first Theodore H. White Lecturer, he deserves no less.

When I first started canvassing opinion among journalists and scholars about a year and a half ago, on who would deliver the first White Lecture, overwhelmingly the choice was Cronkite, and it made sense.

These two reporters, while emerging from different backgrounds, were both similarly devoted to the craft of American journalism. They began their careers during World War II, Teddy in China and Walter in Europe. It was another world. Roosevelt was president. Hitler was a clearly profiled enemy. And journalists were uncritically supportive of the war effort.

After the war, Teddy shifted focus. He covered the reconstruction of Europe and wrote *Fire in the Ashes.* Walter returned to Washington where he discovered the strange universe of wires and microphones, radio and television.

During the early '60s, White and Cronkite shared the same CBS studios during primaries and conventions, each in his own way breaking new ground as they criss-crossed the country during the age of Camelot.

Teddy wrote *The Making of the President,* the first of his Pulitzer Prize–winning series of books that changed the nature of the coverage of presidential campaigns.

Walter began an unprecedented 19-year-long tenure as anchor of the CBS Evening News, covering every major story, domestic and foreign, from the assassination of President Kennedy to the war in Vietnam, from civil rights and Watergate to the Iran hostage crisis. His coverage of space was exceptional. Some of us remember his excitement, "Go baby, go," when he covered a launching. And so it came as no surprise when he signed up to be the first journalist in space.

In August, 1960, the Russians sent two dogs into space, Belka and Strelka. On their return, they held a news conference in Moscow, which created quite a stir, as you can imagine. Late that night, two British reporters for The Daily Express and The Mail, in feverish competition as usual, stretched their imaginations, one reporting that he had just drunk champagne with six Soviet cosmonauts about to be launched into outer space. The other, not to be outdone, topped that fiction with a story that plans to orbit six cosmonauts mysteriously scrubbed tonight.

Aware that my editors in New York and my colleagues in London might take this madness too seriously, I filed a story knocking both The Daily Express and The Mail accounts and went to bed.

At five a.m. the phone rang. "Yes," I grumbled. A whispered voice said, "Marvin, hang on, Walter will be right with you." Walter! I leaped out of bed and stood there bolt upright. Suddenly, I heard Walter's marvelous broadcasting voice. If there was any doubt in my mind a moment before, it was gone; we were on the air.

"Marvin," Walter said, "there are reports in London that the Russians are about to send men into space. What is it that you hear in Moscow?" I looked out at a dawn mist over the Moscow River. No one was stirring. In the distance, I could see a single car crossing the bridge.

"Walter," I said portentously, "there's a deceptive quiet in Moscow tonight...." (Laughter)

There are a thousand such stories. White, with his notebook, and Cronkite, with his camera, helped us understand America and the world during a tumultuous period of history. They respected not only each other, but the enhanced power of journalism, especially television news, to influence and sometimes to shape and warp the direction of presidential campaigning in politics.

Teddy made a gallant effort to explain the intersection of press and politics toward the end of his life with increasing disappointment and difficulty. Tonight, Walter continues the effort.

Cronkite has been called many things: the most trusted man in America, the most authoritative personality in the history of television news, the most objective newscaster in America, the second greatest living American, that from Henry Kissinger — who has rarely had any doubts about whom he considered the first. And in many living rooms around the country, Walter was known simply as Uncle Walter.

Cronkite set the tone for the industry. He had the credentials and the credibility. Even when his reporting infuriated presidents, and on occasion it did, they respected him.

Bill Moyers, who once served as Lyndon Johnson's press secretary, recalled in a 1987 speech that he had once had a bitter quarrel with Cronkite about a particular broadcast, perhaps about Vietnam, I don't know. Johnson, the next morning, questioned Moyers about the details. "Bill, did you call Walter Cronkite a biased stooge of William Paley?"

"Yes, Mr. President, I did."

"And did you call him an incompetent hack who is nothing but a toadie for the eastern establishment press?"

"Yes, Mr. President, I did.

"And did you call him a liar?"

"No, Mr. President, I forgot that one." (Laughter)

I've worked with many excellent anchormen. Walter Cronkite was the best of them all. We might not have agreed on every single editorial call, but he was always fair, always the gentleman and always the consummate professional. He was never so self-important or aloof that he couldn't take a call from one of his correspondents, even in those hectic minutes before going on the air.

In my view, Walter could always recognize a fact and spot a trend. As an example of his foresight, let me read a brief paragraph from a speech he delivered in November,

1987, during the early emergence of Gorbachev, glasnost and perestroika. Cronkite said: "In a single generation, in the lifetime of almost all of us here, we have plunged into five eras, anyone of which by itself could be a whole age of man, the Atomic Age, the Computer Age, the Space Age, the Petrochemical Age, the Telecommunications Age. Can any of us believe that this scientific revolution will not be followed by economic, social and political evolution coming with the suddenness and fury of revolution itself?" That was Cronkite two years before the Berlin Wall cracked and revolution swept through Eastern Europe.

Ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the Joan Shorenstein Barone Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, I have, as they say on Capitol Hill, the high honor to present the first Theodore H. White Lecturer, Walter Cronkite. (Applause)

Mr. Cronkite: I think you all must understand the reason that I called Marvin out of bed at five a.m. Moscow time, is that I had complete confidence that he would ad-lib something portentous, no matter what he really knew.

This is the first Theodore H. White Memorial Lecture at the Joan Shorenstein Barone Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy. Theodore "Teddy" White, certainly one of the great journalists of the 20th century; Joan Barone, surely one of the most dedicated and perceptive laborers in the sometimes grubby vineyards of daily television journalism — I was fortunate enough to know them both well and my life was certainly the richer for it.

Joan always will be remembered by those of us who had the opportunity to work with her, and now, thanks to the generosity that provided this Center at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, she'll be known and remembered by generations who perhaps will be inspired by her example.

Teddy White will be remembered as long as there are books and microfilm and libraries to house his many contemporary histories, for he was a superb reporter and writer. He was tireless in pursuit of the facts and relentless in extracting them from those who possessed them. Through the thick lenses of his eyeglasses, he saw his story with superhuman clarity, and, with extraordinary peripheral vision, he glimpsed the nuances that escaped many of his contemporaries.

Teddy White also almost ruined political reporting. His first *Making of the President* book in 1960 probed inside the machinery of the Kennedy-Nixon campaign of that year. Teddy exposed all of the nuts and the bolts. He told a fascinated world how the gears meshed and how the engine worked. He told us who the real mechanics were and how they tinkered with this part or another to make the machine run better or, at least, differently. And his book became a best seller.

While the journalist pack, previously in panting pursuit of the issues that presumably had motivated the campaigns, skidded to a stop like Woody Woodpecker. In a cloud of dust, it reversed course and went chasing off after technique instead of substance. Thirty years later it's only beginning to look back on the track of substance.

Teddy's books were very important additions to our political literature. They brought into the spotlight's bright glare practices which tend to thwart and distort the electoral process. But Teddy himself never suggested that campaign tactics and technique should be more important than the substance of the issues. It's not his fault that we, his followers and admirers, since his example, have concentrated on the sizzle rather than the steak.

In emphasizing political manipulation rather than issues, we of the press probably have contributed to the public cynicism about the political process. It's reasonable to assume that this, in turn, has contributed to the shameful decrease in the percentage of our qualified electorate that goes to the polls at all.

The fault for this lies with all of us — the politicians, the press and the public that tolerates an educational system that turns out a population which in large numbers is too illiterate to participate meaningfully in a democracy.

And some fault may be placed squarely on television; its use, its misuse and its non-use. Politics stuck its toe into the television age at the party convention in 1948. It really entered the television age four years later when there were a substantial number of stations and sets to receive it.

As the 1952 Republican convention opened in Chicago, most of the best-known radio reporters were still contemptuous, to a degree, at least, of this new-fangled picture business. They became more interested in television, of course, as their own pictures began to appear and public recognition followed.

The revelation came early to one of the sagest and best of them all, Eric Sevareid. He was walking down the corridor of the convention, behind the convention hall one afternoon when a comely, well-dressed lady approached.

"Oh, you are Mr. Sevareid," she gushed. Eric, shyly scuffing his toe on the concrete, admitted he was, and the lady went on: "My little boy was the Boy Scout who just gave the Pledge of Allegiance opening this session of the convention and he went into the men's room 10 minutes ago and hasn't come out. Would you go in and see if he's all right?" (Laughter)

The impact of television, believe me, was immediately apparent to that entire convention. As a matter of fact, the late great reporter Don Hollenbeck was in the line waiting to get into the men's room — another one, not the one with the Boy Scout, presumably. And Don was wearing his man-from-Mars equipment with which CBS had provided him, a backpack — a huge one — earphones, a silly little skull cap with an antenna sticking out of the thing.

And the fellow up at the head of the line turned around, saw Don there with all his paraphernalia and screamed, "For God's sake, not television here!" (Laughter)

The presence of television began to influence politics from the very beginning. That 1952 convention was a brief moment of glory in television's infancy before the politicians discovered its vast potential and set out to master it.

Millions of Americans saw for the first time democracy in action at its bedrock foundation as it chose its presidential candidates.

The public saw on television the issues, the big ones and the little ones, debated in the platform committees; they watched the critical battle for delegates waged, not alone on the convention floor, but also in the credentials committees; they were taken to the keyholes of the smoke-filled rooms where decisions were being made.

And they watched the chaos of proceedings on the convention floor with its open debate and its parliamentary maneuvering and the masters, Sam Rayburn and Joseph Martin, wielding their gavels with a heavy hand, but frequently an ineffective one. The public got a wonderful sense of participation in the political process, a wonderful civics lesson.

That was not only the first, it also was the last time the American public would have such an opportunity. By 1956, the parties had begun to sanitize their convention proceedings. In time, platform and credential hearings were moved further from the convention, both in time and geography, in part, it can be assumed, to discourage television coverage. The list of speakers was vetted "to avoid confusion," we were told. The delegates were even told what they should wear and how to behave to present a more dignified appearance.

To please the television cameras, chaos, to a large degree, was removed from the convention halls, and so, to a large degree, was democracy.

From that day forward, the image on the orthicon tube has been the most important aspect of a political campaign, and politics and television have gone skipping hand in hand down this primrose path.

By the 1956 campaign year, the public's fascination with television had created a new phenomenon entirely. The people frequently showed more interest in the television reporters than in the candidates.

In that year of 1956, as a matter of fact, I was one of the few reporters to accompany Estes Kefauver's bus through Florida on his campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination.

He was stopping at what must have been the smallest whistle stops in the history of campaigning. Two old men playing checkers by the side of the road were enough to command his attention and a half-hour lecture.

If the crowd was larger, however, a problem began to develop. I wasn't even an anchor yet, but when I got off the bus, many of the curious would surround me rather than the candidate. The senator finally said:

"Walter, I, Senator Estes Kefauver of Tennessee, am the candidate. Would you mind getting off the bus last so the people at least have a chance to meet me?" (Laughter)

Kefauver, who, despite his coonskin cap and his country ways, was a smart, sophisticated politician, was one of the first to bend television to his use, to grasp the importance of staging a photo opportunity.

At the Democratic convention that year, he violated an old custom that candidates did not appear in the convention hall before the nomination roll call was completed. He caused a stir by showing up to escort his aged father to a box seat near the podium. Naturally, all eyes were on him, including those of the nation's television cameras.

The politicians learned fast and early on, began trying to manage their television appearances for maximum advantage. They, of course, ran headlong into broadcasters intent upon transferring to television the journalistic ethics they had learned on the newspapers from which, in large part, they had come.

Early in television's pioneering decade of the 50's, the then majority leader of the Senate, Lyndon Baines Johnson of Texas, was finally persuaded to appear on our CBS Sunday morning panel, which, I believe, we still called *Capitol Cloakroom,* shortly to become *Face the Nation.*

Johnson showed up at our studios on schedule for a pre-broadcast briefing 15 minutes before air time. He sat down with us, the panel, and pulled from his pocket a sheaf of papers. And he handed a page to each of us and said: "Boys, these are the questions you'll ask me." (Laughter)

Well, as moderator, I tried to explain that we didn't use pre-arranged questions, that the guests never were advised as to what they would be asked. And he said: "That's all right with me," picked up the questions, put them back in his pocket and started to walk out.

Naturally, I chased after him and I naturally compromised. I said: "I'll tell you what, we can't ask the questions, but we'll limit the questions to the areas that your questions encompass." That worked fine up to the first question.

Cocky, smart Bill Downs of CBS asked that first question, and it was a tough fastball far afield from anything that Johnson had even suggested in his questions. The future president peered at Downs through squinted eyes, finally got his clenched jaws open far enough to say he wouldn't answer the question. Well, the rest of the half hour went just about like that: monosyllabic answers or none at all from the guest, and an increasingly nervous panel, and moderator, I must say.

Well, it wasn't exactly television's finest half hour, but historically, it may have been significant as a harbinger of the relationship that still exists between politics and television. It's a stand-off between an attempt to use the medium and the medium's determination not to be used, and they meet, naturally, on the common ground of compromise.

Politicians will risk embarrassment if it's the only way to get television exposure.

Television is willing to bend the rules occasionally to assure a good show.

This is manifest in the sound bite, the popular target of TV's critics. Network television's effort to satisfy the short attention span of a hyper-kinetic, speeded-up world has led to super-truncated headline reporting on the evening news.

In her excellent research paper presented here at the Shorenstein Barone Center, Dr. Kiku Adatto disclosed that in 1988 the average block of uninterrupted speech by a presidential candidate on the network newscasts was 9.8 seconds. Nine point eight seconds! The paragraph I've just read took me 16 seconds.

Clearly, no meaningful explanation of issues is possible in that sort of oratorical burst which occasionally doesn't even include a noun or a verb. (Laughter)

Further, the figures show that in 1988 there was not a single instance, not a single instance, where a candidate was given as much as one minute of uninterrupted time on an evening newscast, not once.

Compare these figures with the newscasts of 1968. Then, the average sound bite was 42.3 seconds, four times as long as the last campaign, and 21 percent of the sound bites by presidential candidates ran at least a minute.

Dr. Adatto, in what may have been an unintentional commentary on the twisted values of our hyped-up world, adds a note that "the 1968 style of coverage enabled not only the candidates but partisans and advocates from across the political spectrum to speak in their own voice, to develop an argument on the nightly news."

What an indictment it is of today's abridged reporting that we can consider the days of 41-second sound bites the golden era of rational political discussion!

Naturally, nothing of any significance is going to be said in 9.8 seconds but the only importance of this to many politicians seems to be a positive one. He, or she, is not required thereby to say anything of significance; issues can be avoided rather than confronted.

Furthermore, the politicians have long since learned that in the days of television, pictures are more important than words anyway. Image is everything.

So, along with providing the sound bite, a major imperative of the campaign is to provide each day the so-called "photo opportunity," the photo bite, if you will, that will show the candidate in the most favorable light and has a good chance, of course, of getting on the evening news.

It seems to be impossible for television to beat the politician at this game. Lesley Stahl did a CBS report in 1984 meant to show that the Reagan campaign's skillful use of visuals, sound and photo bites, was a cynical manipulation of television. She used numerous examples from previous television coverage. The White House loved the piece. As they told Lesley, the replay of pictures of Reagan at his best far outweighed her critical words.

Besides the evening news broadcasts, the other important points of interface between the campaigns and television today, of course, are the debates and the commercial spot announcements. Both are approached by the politicians with cynicism, which results, I submit, in increasingly serious damage to their credibility with the public.

Debates are to be avoided if possible. If not, they are to be minimized. Substance is to be avoided, if possible. Image is to be maximized.

The debates are a part of the unconscionable fraud that our political campaigns have become. And it's a wonder that the networks continue to cooperate in their presentation. There has grown up a belief on the part of the sponsoring groups and the networks that it's worth any compromise with the candidates in order to get them on the air together at all. This is highly questionable.

As long as we accept this as a fact, there is little likelihood that we ever will get meaningful debate and that television will be used as it should be used to inform and educate our citizenry.

Here is the means to present to the American people a rational exposition of the major issues that face the nation, and the alternate approaches to their solution. Yet the candidates participate only with the guarantee of a format that defies meaningful discourse. They should be charged with sabotaging the electoral process. (Applause)

The networks' part in this is to acquiesce in these phony debates. It is difficult, of course, for a single network to remain aloof for fear of appearing callous to its public service responsibility.

On the other hand, if the networks refused to carry these joint appearance panel shows they almost certainly would force a highly publicized examination of the whole question of the candidates' use of television. The result well could be irresistible public insistence that the candidates meet in meaningful debate.

The networks may have considerably more clout in this regard than they have shown any willingness, so far, to use.

Twin evil to the debates are the 20- or 30-second or one-minute commercials. They are misused to sell the candidate with slogans but, even worse, to permit others to scurrilously attack the opponent while relieving the candidate of that very dangerous responsibility.

All of this, the photo opportunity, the manipulation of the sound bite, the control of the so-called debates, the barrage of expensive commercials, all of this comprises the turning of political campaigns into political theater to be played out on television's home screens. The producers, directors and stage managers of the spectacle are the candidates' managers, their handlers, their political consultants.

Many have become so prominent, and so arrogant, that, without shame, they have moved onstage themselves. They have become television personalities in their own right and they appear frequently to brag of their contributions, even to claiming authorship of some of the candidate's best ad-libs.

They can twist a fact with such speed and dexterity that they have come to be known as "spin doctors."

Now, can a potential voter really take a campaign seriously after being escorted by television backstage to be shown how the managers transform and manipulate their candidates into actors?

Television news competition being what it is today, its editors are unable to ignore such theater, however.

So, they do the next best thing. In the interest of journalistic integrity, they make sure that the audience knows that they know that they are being used.

They have been fairly good at this. Frequently during the '88 campaign, the reporters following the candidates pointed out the carefully arranged management of the events, the advance teams, the recruitment and preparation of "spontaneous" crowds, the care and feeding of the candidate, all these were shown us, not once but several times. Mention was made openly of "photo opportunities" and "sound bites."

It was a noble effort, but it was flawed. In order to be effective critics of this political theater, the television reporters frequently had to replay the offensive material, thus giving it more exposure and, probably, greater attention than it deserved.

Like Bush's Willie Horton ad, the defamatory commercials got so many free replays on the news programs as to become almost a cliché in themselves.

Candidates found early on that to respond to a negative commercial or statement was only to invite its being repeated on the evening news.

Dr. Adatto's research found that networks showed 125 excerpts from candidates' commercial spots in '88. Interestingly, there were no such excerpts shown in '68.

An already skeptical public might gather from all of this that nothing succeeds in our increasingly immoral world like excess, and in politics, like dissembling.

The politicians' attempts to control television have led to some unfortunate confrontations. In the Wisconsin primary of 1960, the viability of a Catholic presidential candidate was still being tested. We persuaded John Kennedy to appear on our election night broadcast from Milwaukee, and in the course of the interview, I naturally asked his opinion of how the Catholic and non-Catholic vote was going.

He obviously was agitated. And only later did I learn that his campaign manager, brother Bobby, claimed that he produced Jack for our broadcast under a promise that the Catholic issue would not be raised. I was never informed of such a promise, if indeed one was made by our producers.

John Kennedy soon thereafter called on CBS President Frank Stanton to complain about our coverage with a warning whose implication was unmistakable. He noted, I have been told, that if elected president, he would be naming the members of the Federal Communications Commission to which CBS was, in many ways, beholden.

Dr. Stanton courageously stood up to that threat, as he did on so many other occasions, in defending television's free press rights.

Apparently then-Senator Kennedy cooled down in his opinion of CBS a little bit later because he did agree to go on a television program which I had devised, which is kind of interesting to contemplate today. At that time, issues were so much discussed that personality of the candidates was hardly brought up at all. And I conceived of a broadcast which today sounds ridiculous, but it was new at the time, that we would do a broadcast getting the candidates on and talk about nothing except questions that would expose their personality, if you please. Strange today to think of that, isn't it? (Laughter)

Kennedy turned me down at first, but Nixon accepted, and therefore, Kennedy was forced to come in. Nixon even volunteered to go first which obviously was not the preferred position since the man who went second was going to get some idea of how the broadcast went.

My first question to Nixon, incidentally, was: "Now, Mr. Vice President, you're a skilled politician. You must know that there are a lot of people that say they don't know what it is, but they just don't like you. What is it you think they don't like about you?"

Unfortunately, he answered it like he was reading off of a teleprompter, well, it's number one, number two, number three.

The whole broadcast went like that. It killed the whole idea of spontaneity.

At any rate, the following week we were doing Senator Kennedy from his home in Georgetown. And we did the whole thing. We finished it. And he got up and with a very perfunctory good-by, went upstairs. I went out to the truck out in front to take a look at the tape before we replayed it shortly thereafter.

And our producer came running out of the Kennedy house all in a dither saying that the Senator says we have to do the program over, it has to be done over. He didn't like it. He felt that we placed him in a position on his couch that wasn't favorable to him, he wants to do it over.

And I said, well, you have to explain to him that we said it was unrehearsed and so forth on the Nixon broadcast, we are going to have to have a disclaimer that he's asked to do it over and he's not going to like that. I explained all that to him, but he says he wants it that way.

So, I went upstairs to his bedroom, which incidentally, I'm sure you'll all be proud to know, had a big Harvard banner on the wall. He was lying on one twin bed, shoes off, jacket off, tie undone. And I walked in and he said, "Are you ready to go?"

And I said, "No, I'm ready to argue some more."

And he said, "Well, no, my mind's made up, I want to do this."

And I pointed out again, "Look, we are going to have to have these disclaimers. The public's not going to like it, you know, they are going to feel that it's unfair, that you are taking unfair advantage."

He said, "I don't care about that, that's the way I want it done."

So I said, in frustration, "Well, all right, Senator, but I think that's the lousiest bit of sportsmanship I have ever seen in my life." I turned on my heel to walk out.

I got to the door and he called me back and said, "Wait a minute, go ahead and use it." (Laughter)

I guess the sportsmanship thing got to him. (Laughter)

The pressure that politicians, including government officials, put on the media is most likely to be effective at the reporter level where personal friendships or the threat of losing a valuable source for a future, more important story may be persuasive.

Of cases where political pressure reached the highest level — that is between high officials and network officers — in my two decades as anchor of the CBS Evening News, I know of only one instance where the pressure worked at all. And that was when Charles Colson, representing Richard Nixon, complained to CBS President William S. Paley about our evening news two-part series on the Watergate scandal.

Because of astute diplomatic handling by our not always diplomatic News President Dick Salant the only result was a slight reduction, I'm happy to say, in the time we gave to the second of the two broadcasts.

This is an extraordinary record, I think, in a medium that is licensed by the government. It suggests a successful separation of television and state, at least in a formal sense.

That line is crossed, however, in the informal relationship between the press and its sources. To an extent much greater than ever before, the press has become part of the Washington establishment.

This probably is at least partially a result of the improved economic status of news people which, in our society of distorted values, makes them more socially acceptable. Reporters today are better educated and far better paid than ever before.

The inherent danger, of course, is in reporters and editors getting so close to their sources that they are more inclined to protect them than to expose them.

This growth of mutual trust also probably has contributed to the increasing use of the anonymous informed source, a practice which should strain the public's faith in the credibility of the press.

The economic improvement in the lot of the press generally has had another insidious effect, perhaps affecting its political reporting.

There was a day not far distant, you know, just before World War II, when nearly all of us news people, although perhaps white collar by profession, earned blue-collar salaries. We were part of the "common people."

We suffered the same budgetary restraints, the same bureaucratic indignities, waited in the same lines, suffered the same bad service. We could identify with the average man because we were him.

That perhaps still exists on some levels of journalism and in some communities. But certainly in Washington and the major cities where the press most intimately interfaces with politics, the press today is elitist.

This has come even as daily journalism has become more responsible in the restricted sense that it has become more unbiased, more impartial, more informed, more factual and more accurate. Newspapers and television are a far cry from the days up to World War I when editors practiced personal journalism and proudly shaped their news columns to reflect their own views.

Perhaps this removal of the journalists from a deep, passionate, personal concern with the problems of the majority and the simultaneous disappearance of a daily dialogue between competing newspapers arguing the issues of the day, together have contributed substantially to the apathy which has afflicted our electorate.

Among the Fourth Estate elite, there are none more economically elite than the television anchor people. Their, should I say "our," highly publicized salaries have elevated them, that is "us," in the public's mind, and perhaps occasionally in our own minds.

They do have tremendous power. Never in the history of journalism have single voices reached so many people on a daily basis. By their presence at an event, they accentuate, perhaps even on occasion distort, its importance.

Their power, however, is not unlimited. They are restrained by a series of checks and balances which even our founding fathers could not have conceived. An anchor's attempt to skew the news in order to peddle a particular point of view would run against, first, the ethics of the program's writers and producers and, if their questions weren't brake enough, then the news department's front office and, finally, the network executives.

Their power most frequently cited is that of selecting each day the agenda of items for public consideration, but even that power is circumscribed by the fact that no one anchor is a monopoly and the agenda will be set by consensus of all television and the press.

Despite the know-nothing accusations of Spiro Agnew and his ideological confederates, there is no agenda-setting conspiracy among them.

What confuses the public and, sometimes, the politicians, is that the press inadvertently sets the agenda simply by the way it defines news. As long as most journalists, in print or broadcasting, believe that news is that which affects the most people, either intellectually or emotionally in their minds, in their pocketbooks or their hearts, they are going to play the same stories about the same way.

A problem with the exalted position in which the anchor is perceived by the public is not his direct influence on the daily news report, but the tendency for him or her to slide from observer to player.

Sometimes this is the unintended result of a purely journalistic exercise. We at CBS News are still cited erroneously for deliberately dabbling in diplomacy with our broadcast that brought Egypt's President Sadat and Israel's Prime Minister Begin together. But their meeting was a purely serendipitous outcome of a broadcast that started out on a far different tack.

I had the first television interview with Anwar Sadat soon after he succeeded Nasser as Egyptian president when it was still quite uncertain that he would be able to hold on to that post.

We sat under a huge banyan tree out at the presidential residence on the banks of the Nile. And he droned on and on and on. It was perhaps the dullest interview I'd ever suffered through, until that moment when he brought me wide awake by saying, "And I shall go to Jerusalem." My gosh, I had a scoop. (Laughter)

Under questioning, however, it turned out that he was using the phrase as a figure of speech to indicate that there would be peace in his time, that even he would be able, eventually, to travel there.

Thereafter he repeated that statement many, many times around the world at various occasions. And it always, of course, started a little furor of rumor, quickly to be put down upon questioning. It turned out the reference was always equally vague.

He made the statement one Wednesday afternoon to his parliament and a group of Canadian parliamentarians were there. They heard this statement, "I shall go to Jerusalem," and then they dashed right off with that ringing in their ears, no explanation, as they went on to Tel Aviv and Jerusalem itself.

And they saw Begin and they asked him, they said, "He said he'd come to Jerusalem." Begin said, "Well, if he said he'd come, let him come." You know, that kind of thing. And that started some more rumors, of course, around everywhere.

It went on all weekend, these rumors, Saturday and Sunday, and nobody seemed to get to either of the principles and get this thing settled, particularly to Sadat.

So, on Monday morning, we put in a satellite call to Sadat, got him on the satellite and I knew he was going to knock down the story. I was going to ask him what were his conditions to go to Jerusalem and he was going to say, when there's peace, you know, and that would settle it, that the whole thing would be taken care of at that point.

I got him on the air and I said, “Mr. Sadat.” “Yes, Walter. How’s Barbara?” I didn’t want to talk about how Barbara was, I wanted to talk about something else, but he said, “Yes, Walter.”

And I said, “You know, you said to your parliament that you would go to Jerusalem.”

“Yes, Walter, I shall go to Jerusalem.”

I said, “What are your conditions for going to Jerusalem?”

“Well, the Israelis have to withdraw from the Golan Heights, they have to withdraw from the Sinai, they have to return Jerusalem—”

I said, “No, those are your conditions for peace and those are your conditions before you go to Jerusalem?”

“Oh, no, no, no, Walter, those are my conditions for peace. I have no conditions for going to Jerusalem.”

I was, of course, again awakened by Mr. Sadat’s statement and I tried to pin it down and I said, “Well, you have no condition? “

“No, I have no conditions.”

“Well, when could you go?”

“Anytime, anytime.”

I said, “Could you go this week?”

“Yes, I could go this week.” (Laughter)

Well, with a sharp news operation, of course, and already, Bud Benjamin, our beautiful, late producer was on the phone to Tel Aviv: “Get Begin, get Begin, he’s got to get — Cronkite’s got to talk to Begin on satellite.”

We got Begin a couple of hours later and I repeated this conversation, the start of it, I said he said he would come. And he said, “Well, that’s fine, tell him to come.”

I said, “Well, he said he needed something more than that, he needs an official invitation.”

“Tell him he’s got an official invitation.”

I said, “No, I think you have to tell him he’s got an official invitation.”

And he said, “All right, tell him I’ll send him an official invitation.”

And I said, “Well, now, he said he can come this week.”

Begin looked like I had hit him in the solar plexus. He said, “He said that? He said he can come this week?” He said, “I’ve got to go to London, never mind, tell him to come.” Friday he was there and history, I think, is still in the making on that one.

This clearly was not a case of a newsman helping a source float a trial balloon. However, television journalism in this case, at least, speeded up the process, brought it into the open, removed a lot of possibly obstructionist middle men, and made it difficult for the principals, of course, to renege on their very public agreement.

Foreign correspondents frequently and eagerly floated trial balloons in the old days of slow communication by cable and slower production of newspapers. Days went by between the filing of the first cable dispatch until it was answered by all affected parties, and armies could be marching or governments fall in that time.

Today, this neat connivance between press and politics is almost passé. Instant communications by satellite shoot down the trial balloon before it rises above the corn rows.

In the early stages of the Iraq crisis, a rumor floated around Washington that Baghdad was talking up some possible points for negotiations. That evening, Dan Rather, in his noteworthy interview, asked Saddam Hussein about that and Hussein said there was absolutely nothing to it. That same afternoon Brent Scowcroft reacted similarly at the White House. TV brought a quick end to what possibly was a trial balloon floated by some interested party.

Anchor people have acquired a great prominence and there's no danger in that as long as they themselves are level-headed enough to understand their limitations. The present ones are admirable in that regard.

Two situations appalled me when I sat in the anchor chair. For one thing, there were those who would come up to me on the street and say, "Oh, I believe everything you say." I wanted to grab them by the shoulders and shake them and say, "You know, don't, don't, don't." We have hits, runs and errors, you know, just like baseball teams. And I wanted to convince them of that, it seemed so hard.

Equally appalling were the number of persons who urged me to run for public office, for everything from mayor to president. Dog catcher was never mentioned.

Some were delegations from established political organizations, others were amateurs who merely approached by mail, such as the students at Vassar who said they put a down payment on a store front to run me as the draft for president. They said they'd like to know what my intentions were before they anteed up the rest for the down payment.

I wrote them back that I could go Sherman one step further; if elected, I'd be impeached.

The overtures from the professional politicians taught me, if I needed any more lessons, how cynical our political process really is.

They always approached me with flattery about my fame and the respect in which people held me, and then went on to the fact that I was so well known that the campaign would be an inexpensive one.

But not once, not once mind you, did anyone of them, and there were quite a lot, not once did they ever ask me where I stood on the issues. Not once.

It's possible that they mistook my impartiality on the air as approval of their side. People have a tendency to do that. If you don't say anything against them, they assume you are for them.

I fear, however, that these professionals figured that once in office they could manipulate this amateur and that it didn't really matter what my own views were.

I have stood on a long-held principle in refusing even to entertain the idea of running for office. Besides all the obvious reasons why I shouldn't run, but should one who has achieved national fame as a presumably impartial news person ever run, the public is going to have every reason to question whether that person had been tailoring the news to build a political platform. And every other person who fills an anchor role is going to have to live forevermore under that shadow. The burden of credibility already is heavy enough without having to assume that extra load.

I tried to explain that to Bobby Kennedy once in 1968. I had just returned from Vietnam and the controversial broadcast in which I stepped out of my normal role and, clearly identifying, I hope, the material as editorial opinion that suggested that we should seek an honorable peace and get out.

Well, Kennedy called me down to his Senate office to have lunch, just the two of us. He said he wanted to hear more about Vietnam. It turned out, I think, he had a couple of other things on his mind. The world didn't know at that moment that he was considering whether to run for the Democratic nomination against, it was assumed, the incumbent President Johnson.

After hearing his strong views on Vietnam, which happened to coincide with my own, I fell into a dangerous trap which always lies there for the unwary newsman who succumbs to the heady narcotic of being in on the inside. I became a player rather than an observer.

"If you feel so strongly on the subject," I said to him, "it seems to me you certainly ought to run for the presidency."

He said, "Give me three reasons why I should run and I'll give you three reasons why I shouldn't."

Well, we discussed Vietnam a little longer and then he changed the subject.

He said, "You don't vote in New York, do you?"

I said, "Yes, I vote in New York."

He said, "Well, you aren't registered as a Democrat, then."

I said, "No, I'm not, I'm registered by belief and conviction as an Independent."

He said, "Well, that doesn't matter, I want you to run for the Senate in New York, next time."

And I thought I rose to a wonderful moment; I said, "You give me three reasons why I should, and I'll give you three reasons why I shouldn't."

When I went back to our Washington bureau and found that Roger Mudd had prepared a piece, a very good piece, that evening on the fact that the Kennedy clan and advisors were all gathering at Hickory Hill and they were going to discuss whether or not Bobby should run. And much of the material he had were some of the things that Bobby had told me in our very much off-the-record luncheon.

Well, I had to get back to him and tell him that this, Roger had developed this thing on his own, that I hadn't fed him these facts and tried to explain to him, as best I could, the circumstances of a difficult situation, which is one of the reasons why you shouldn't go off the record, as a newsman, ever.

But at any rate, I called. Frank Mankiewicz, his assistant, said that he was on the floor, couldn't be disturbed at the moment but he'd take a message to him. And I told him to tell him the problem and also would he give me a comment on the possibility of his deciding to run that weekend.

And Mankiewicz came back. I think he was a little miffed because he wasn't in on the lunch and he said, "I don't know what this is about, but I have a message here for you from the Senator and he says you can use it only if you use it in full. And here is the message: 'I am thinking of running for the presidency even as Walter Cronkite is thinking of running for the Senate in New York." (Laughter)

A few days later I was to learn again the dangers of a newsman trifling even ever so innocently in the complicated game of politics.

Dr. Stanton, president of CBS, called me to his office and sternly faced me down with a serious complaint from President Johnson that I was urging Kennedy to run against him. So much for our off-the-record luncheon.

I have learned also the peril of fame and the danger of one's most off-the-cuff remarks being repeated and usually distorted. It makes one guard his tongue, as in this incident.

Following a speech to the Foreign Policy Club, I think it was called, at Notre Dame, I was being driven back to the train station, that's how long ago it was, by the sponsor of the club. I shall call him Father O'Brien. We were getting along famously when he asked: "Do you know our Senator Capehart?"

When I allowed as how I did, he asked what I thought of him.

I said, "Well, I'm an impartial newsman, you know, and I don't render personal opinions of that nature. But I guess you do know that in Newsweek's annual poll of the Senate press gallery he was voted the dumbest man in the Senate."

"Well, that's why I asked you," said Father O'Brien. "He made this same lecture that you did last year and I was driving him to the station to catch the same train and he said, 'What's your name again, Father?' and I said, Father O'Brien. He said, 'No kidding, you wouldn't be the son of old Father O'Brien who was out here in the mathematics department for so long, would you?'" (Laughter)

Distortion by compression may be the single biggest problem with television news, and it clearly affects reporting on politics and public policy.

The TV correspondent as well as his subjects is a victim of sound-bite editing. With inadequate time to present a coherent report, he or she seeks to craft a final sentence that,

in summary, might make some sense out of his or her gibberish. That's hard to do without coming to a single point of view, and a one-time editorial is born.

Similarly, a story of alleged misdeeds frequently ends with a single sentence, "A spokesman denied the charges." More distortion.

Television frequently repeats a newspaper story that is based on "informed sources." The newspaper may have carefully hedged the story with numerous qualifiers, but the time-shy newscast may not. More distortion.

The broadcast and print press today must be the monitors on the character of our candidates for public office. The days are gone when the political bosses, who knew the potential candidates well, screened them for drinking, gambling, womanizing, plagiarizing or patronizing psychiatrists.

With the candidates going directly to the people through the primaries, it's now up to the press to serve the public interest by doing the nasty but necessary job of screening through revelation.

These stories demand full explanation and a complete exposition of extenuating circumstances, but television news seldom has time for that.

The highly professional and dedicated people of network news are not to be faulted for the serious limitations of their medium.

Nor should we today put too much responsibility for the coverage of our political campaigns on the networks. The days when they were forced to carry that responsibility along, and generally did a good job of it, are over.

While most of the public still gets most of its news from the networks, the percentage is dropping precipitously and the networks no longer are a monopoly in this area.

Responsibility now must be shared by those who share the public's attention, the independent stations and the cable outlets. CNN and C-Span already are helping fill the gap. They are showing the way to tomorrow's fuller coverage of our world of politics and government.

Still I would like to see the network news departments show a little more responsibility by dropping the contrived photo opportunities and the planted sound bites in favor of longer interviews with and statements by the politicians dealing with the issues, for heaven's sake. They could restore, at least for the campaign, regular analysis by their political correspondents, again on the issues, not the mechanics of the campaign.

The network news people are, for the most part, responsible, and I have a feeling that, with all the public attention and the criticism, which they themselves have on occasion led, they are searching even now for the breakthrough campaign coverage that is going to dazzle their opposition and bring plaudits from an anxious public.

The networks also should augment the inadequate daily news coverage with at least one hour weekly, at least, to examine in greater detail the campaign issues.

As for the debates, I would like to see the networks simply say no to any more sham panel shows and offer their time, and plenty of it, for genuine debate. They surely would have the support of a fed-up public that is beginning to see how criminal it is for our candidates and their parties to avoid taking the issues to the people by the one medium that can reach us all.

As for the commercials, there are constitutional questions of free speech involved, but I should like to see the broadcasting industry and the political parties work toward an elimination of negative advertising.

A legally questionable suggestion is to sell nothing less than two minutes for commercials, and permit only the candidates to appear thereon. He or she presumably would have to say something in that time, and would have to make any charges against the opposition face to face, as it were. (Applause)

The solution may well be, where it usually is, in public opinion. In this election year, an increasing number of newspapers carried columns that matched facts against the

claims candidates made in their commercials. Perhaps Dr. Adatto or another Shorenstein Barone scholar will provide us with a survey of how effective that has been.

And we can hope that television news might join in the effort in '92.

Campaign financing also must be relieved of the heavy burden of television time purchases. The millions that must be raised to run today are dangerously corrupting our government. The electorate has the right to ask what it is that makes those elected jobs so valuable.

One solution might be to ban all commercial television time and force the candidates onto public television and cable's public access channels.

Reform, of course, is not the sole responsibility of television. The electoral process itself demands attention. Some responsibilities taken from the party organizations by the 1972 and subsequent reforms need to be restored and the primary system needs to be regularized so the process is fair, understandable and equally meaningful across the country.

The parties could help regenerate public interest in our elections if they took the platform committee debates back to the conventions and opened them up for television coverage. It might also help if they produced leaders courageous enough to say out loud what they stand for. (Applause)

We certainly could improve our voting participation by easing our complicated registration procedures. And the idea of at least a half holiday for voting isn't that bad.

But the real key to improving both our electoral process and voter participation is, as in so much else in our decaying society, education.

We all know Thomas Jefferson's admonition: "The nation that expects to be ignorant and free expects what never will and never can be." But we are, in too large a part, an ignorant nation. We have an illiteracy rate that is the shame of the western world.

The technical miracle of television could help. If the vested educational interests would support it, we could pipe the great teachers, the inspiring ones, directly into every classroom in the country.

But regardless of how it is done, to preserve this democracy, and to give some meaning to whatever we do to reform our press and politics, we must assure that future generations of Americans are smart enough to intelligently exercise their precious franchise.

That is the ultimate campaign in which we all should engage. Thank you.

Mr. Kalb: Walter, thank you very much indeed.

Ladies and gentlemen, there is an opportunity to ask questions.

From the Floor: Mr. Cronkite, would you take just a moment and reflect on the appropriateness or perhaps the inappropriateness of news organizations endorsing public candidates for public office. We certainly have a long tradition of newspapers doing that. Where does that affect objectivity and what's the difference in the newspaper and the media, television media in that practice? Thank you.

Mr. Cronkite: The problem in television is separating the editorial endorsement from the news copy that runs generally in the broadcast. That is an awkward thing to do. You would have to almost set up a separate broadcast of an editorial not attached to the news at all in order to impress people on the fact that this is an editorial opinion and not a part of the general news coverage.

It's easier on the newspaper where you've got an editorial page, it's clearly an editorial. It's much more difficult for television to do the job, or even for broadcasting, radio broadcasting, to do the job.

I must say we gave the right to editorialize to radio some years ago. It's not exercised very frequently these days. And maybe it's just as well it's not.

I remember, right after the permission was given to radio to editorialize, I was driving down in Florida near the Cape Kennedy Space Center and I heard this, literally. I think I've got it almost straight on the air. "Da-da-da-da-da dot, dah-dah, KPLQ faces the

facts. Da-da-da-da-da, dot, dah-dah, KPLQ's editorial of the day. Dada-da-da-da, dot, dah-dah, KPLQ gives you the story. Da-da-da-da-da, dot, dah-dah. Hello, I speak for KPLQ about the dangers to our community of bad check passing. (Laughter)

Well, if those are editorials, we might as well stay out of the business.

From the Floor: My question has to do with the comment you made about the media. Because it seems to me there is a major news story in the Persian Gulf, which is almost totally, not totally, but 99 percent, ignored by the media, by television and by compassionate columnists who may be within this audience who write about those things, namely the story of the genocide of the Kurdish people.

Mr. Cronkite: Well, I suppose you are asking me why they are ignoring this. I don't think they are. I've been reading that reference quite frequently in the press. I don't know that it's so frequently repeated on television, but in the press I've seen it in many articles. I feel it's been fairly well explored.

One of the problems with television news is that we have so little time in television. Twenty-three minutes or so of a half-hour broadcast to cover the world and a very complicated country of our own, that if we say it once on a Monday, we can't repeat it again for several weeks thereafter.

It's the same thing with some of the issues that come up in a political campaign. The candidates will issue position papers, newspapers can cover them rather fully. We can take a quick shot at them. And thereafter, we don't feel we can repeat that over and over again, which makes it very difficult because that's the speech that the candidates are repeating over and over again. Which makes it certainly mandatory to do the sound bites and the photo opportunities.

But I would have to simply disagree with you. But those facts about the Kurdish genocide have been reported, I believe.

From the Floor: Mr. Cronkite, presidential debates are very, very important, obviously. What's happened in the last several, at least the last one in '88? It appeared to have a very circus atmosphere with several thousand partisans in the audience cheering one smart comment or one slick comment versus the other. And it struck me how, for instance, if the candidates were just in the studio and the press were covering it as observers, how much more momentous some of the comments would have been coming across TV without the cheers and the laughter and the applause.

What's happened with these debates and how can we get them back? If I understand it correctly in '88, the two campaigns actually organized a group to sponsor the debates. How did that happen? And if someone like you could possibly use your influence to bring it back so that it was closer to the people?

Mr. Cronkite: The sponsorship of the debates came about because of the equal time rule that applies to broadcasting. We have to give equal time to all candidates on any broadcast that we sponsor, that we put on ourselves, any documentary that we do, we have to give equal time.

There are dozens, as you know, candidates across the United States on one ballot or another or various small fringe groups or just independently on the ballot, raised enough petitions or something. We can't possibly handle that, of course, equal time for all those people.

So, the system was devised in which the League of Women Voters would put on the debates and we would cover them simply as a news event, which is the fiction that we still operate under today. That's how it came about.

But what we do about it is, I think I suggested in the speech, is we don't do that; we don't play that game any longer. And I think that by not doing it, by saying, Look, that's not a legitimate debate, we are not going to cover it, I think we would excite enough comment in this country, enough reaction that the candidates would be forced to come back to some more reasonable form of presentation, I would hope.

From the Floor: With so much to be discussed that's so important in reference to what you've spoken about tonight, I feel my question may seem a little trivial.

Mr. Kalb: As long as it's brief. (Laughter)

From the Floor: Thank you, I'll try and make it brief. I missed a ride to the Democratic convention in Chicago in the summer of 1968 and some of my friends came back with stitches in their heads, and so it's probably just as well, but I got to watch you cover it, something I would look forward to, anyway.

And finally one night, after the beatings of people had gotten so bad, people were being beaten in the streets including journalists and reporters—

Mr. Cronkite: I know where this is going because I asked the question, and I could do it faster than you are doing it. But go ahead.

From the Floor: Well, you appeared and there were tears in your eyes, something for which I admired you then and will always admire you. And the following night you had Richard Daley on. And it seemed like you were eating crow in a big way and I wonder if you could explain how that came about and your view of that.

Mr. Cronkite: I can. I have been criticized frequently for that and I should be.

What happened was, it was really just a series of unfortunate errors. We had tried to get Daley to come up to be questioned about it. I had thought if we got Daley, I would not ask him any questions. I would stand on the dignity of not even taking his obviously obfuscating answers, perhaps line answers. Why listen to all that? I'd say, Mayor Daley, explain yourself. You've got the air, you haven't had the air, take it, five minutes, explain yourself, good-bye Mayor Daley, and let it go at that.

Unfortunately, that was misunderstood. It was a bad idea. A lousy idea, terrible idea. And it was badly misunderstood, and it should have been. And it was a blown opportunity. That's all I can say.

From the Floor: Mr. Cronkite, last week in Massachusetts the voters suggested that radio and television stations should give free time to political candidates in a non-binding referendum. You've taken a step in that direction in your speech. You've said that maybe political ads ought to be banned from the networks and put the candidates on public TV and cable. Would you be willing to take the next step and tell your old bosses over at CBS that not only should they ban political advertising, but they ought to give the candidates free time on network TV?

Mr. Cronkite: Yes, I'd be willing to do that. I don't think I'd get very far, but I'd certainly be willing to do it. (Laughter)

You know, the problem is this, it's not the problem of the networks necessarily giving free time so much, but if the networks give free time, you have to assume that broadcasting is going to give free time. That means the local stations are going to get free time. We can give free time to presidential candidates, let's say; what are you going to do about all the senatorial candidates, the congressmen? That's where the real problem lies in these vast expenditures; vast, terrible expenditures.

And that means local stations have to give free time. It means not giving free time to one candidate, it means giving free time to maybe 20 or 30 or 40 candidates in the area.

They don't, the local stations, while I think most of them are making money, I think we can safely say that. But a lot of them are fringe stations. They are not making that much money. And to give away enough time for 40 candidates to have a minute here and there on the broadcast during the election campaign, I think would be economically quite impossible. It's an economic matter.

That's why I say the public broadcasting systems could arrange some time. The cable system certainly could arrange time. And people are watching more and more public television and more and more cable. There's no reason why the cable shouldn't be able to carry everybody.

From the Floor: Mr. Cronkite, you talked a lot about the rise of television and the visual media in the past several years. What do you think the role of the print media will

be in the years to come and how are they going to survive this growing emphasis on the visual media and the picture of a candidate?

Mr. Cronkite: Well, I hope that, and it's only a hope, I would like to think that we are going to begin to teach in high school, and perhaps with a refresher course in college, a course of journalism for consumers that would educate the public to the fact that they can't get nearly all they need to know from television alone. And force them, because of their own curiosity, their intellectual exercise, to go to print for further information where it lies, in most cases.

There are many newspapers, I'm afraid, across the United States in these days of monopoly newspapers, which aren't doing a much better job than television is, as far as only headline presentation.

But there are good magazines. There are certainly good books. There are opinion journals. There's a lot of information out there. If we can just educate our public to go out and get it. And I think that that is where the future of print lies.

From the Floor: Mr. Cronkite, you make a very eloquent case for education and the need for education. I'm wondering what role, if any, you see for media in education given the need for impartiality?

Mr. Cronkite: It's difficult. I think that my bottom line answer to that, and quick answer to it, it's not our job. It's not our job.

I think by being as impartial as we can, as informed as we can, as educated as we can, we are passing on that information to the public, and to the degree we should. To assume also the responsibility for educating the public, I think is too burdensome for the media.

From the Floor: Mr. Cronkite, I'd like to know if you think with nationally syndicated columnists like Meg Greenfield wondering what's wrong with patriotic journalism and things like the press ban in Grenada and the press pool in Panama; do you think the press today is getting rather jingoistic or not?

Mr. Cronkite: Well, I don't think that those things are causing the press to become jingoistic. I think there is a natural kind of a jingoism in all of us in a sense, an immediate reaction to an offense, particularly by somebody like Hussein and the circumstances of that. There's a sort of an immediate reaction, we all kind of climbed on that for about 24 to 48 hours until we began to think it over for another moment or two, which I suggest should have been the duty of the administration to think it over first. (Applause)

No, as a matter of fact, Grenada, Panama, the pool arrangement has caused the press to be anything but jingoistic. The press is more adamant than ever in claiming its rights for free operation, free press without pooling, without that kind of control.

I'm concerned that we are not hearing enough about the limitations on the press in Saudi Arabia. There are considerable limitations today. The press is not able to go out on its own to talk to the soldiers. Everybody who goes out into the desert to where the troops are has to be accompanied by a public relations officer. The public relations officer stands by while the questions are being asked to the soldiers. That's not free reporting. That's not what we are entitled to.

But I'm concerned that the press isn't screaming out loud about that. It seems to me that the press ought to be standing up on its hind legs and yelling loudly at this. The thing about the press, it's always been a little bit self-conscious about standing up for its own rights. It's strange when it will attack anybody or anything that it feels is wrong, except for standing up for its own rights.

And in that, it backs off of freedom of the press stories. You'll find them buried in the paper someplace. For heaven's sake, I'd take a banner line in the paper and say we are not getting the truth out of Saudi Arabia, if that's so. I'm not saying we are not getting the truth. I'm saying there are limitations which make me doubt that we are getting the truth. I haven't been there, so I can't report anything other than that.

But don't think that the press is jingoistic because of controls from the Pentagon, just the opposite.

From the Floor: Mr. Cronkite, you've spoken about the rise of cable networks. There are also satellites, when you covered a great deal of space, now broadcasting or about to broadcast television to all of Europe. And there is the imminent emergence of a digital, global information environment with the instantaneous transmission of information and replication copying and access to information in many forms almost anywhere.

From your vantage point, where do you see the impact of these information environments going, our decisions as individuals, on broadcast networks and on political institutions?

Mr. Kalb: 30 seconds.

Mr. Cronkite: Yeah. (Laughter)

I gave a lecture on that in London just a week ago. It took me about 40 minutes.

Let's put one more thing into that mix, fiber-optics. This country is going to be wired with fiber-optics very soon in the next few years. Fiber-optic cables, smaller than your telephone cable, are going to be able to carry literally hundreds and hundreds of channels into your house.

With all of this proliferation of various channels of information, I fear very greatly what is going to happen to information flow. Because I see, as we get specialized channels, which are going to give us very specialized news, not just sports scores on one channel, but only football scores, only football on one channel, basketball on another and all that stuff, sewing, whatever the interests people have are going to be channel by channel.

And people today, happily, who are interested only in the comics or the sports scores, at least have to turn through a few pages of their newspaper and be exposed, if only momentarily, to a headline or a picture that may capture their attention. They have to listen through a news broadcast for the sports broadcast. They can always tell it if they are three blocks away because the sports announcer shouts quite loudly, but at least they've listened to something else first.

With these specialized channels, they may never be exposed to any other information at all. And we'll really have a strange kind of couch-potato society. I'm very fearful of that. That's why we have to get a handle on this now and begin to teach people, for heaven's sakes, to be intelligently inquisitive so that they will read some newspapers and magazines and books.

From the Floor: One thing that you didn't talk about in your presentation tonight, Mr. Cronkite, is that the fundamental shift that's taken place in the nature of TV news regarding the human interest emphasis. We are now seeing more stories that focus on emotion and drama and storytelling. And I wonder if you think that change from, let's say 1968 to 1990, has been in the large part positive or negative.

Mr. Cronkite: No, I think it's been very definitely negative. I think it's very unfortunate. We have 23 minutes. There's not time to play with those stories.

There's still people, most of the people getting most of their news from television today. A high percentage of those, a majority of those people are getting all of their news from television. Our responsibility is at least to give them a guide to their day, give them a headline guide. We can't go into very much depth, but we certainly can tell them what's happening in their world, I hope. And I don't think we should be diverting our interest to these non-news stories.

From the Floor: Mr. Cronkite, sir, I remember a very wonderful interview you had with General Eisenhower, walking on the beach with him. One of your last questions you put to him was, you said he had been a person who for so many decades had participated in and even shaped history. And you wondered at that moment what regrets he had, what he saw in the future and as he thought about himself, that made him

wish that he were once again back in the driver's seat. Would it be fair, sir, to put that same question to you, tonight?

Mr. Cronkite: Well, I certainly won't be as eloquent as General Eisenhower, President Eisenhower was on that occasion. If you remember, he talked about the boys who laid out there in the fields in Normandy as the helicopter pulled away — beautiful shot. No, I can't be anything like that eloquent.

I really can say there are a lot of things I would have done differently, item by item, down through the years. But I would not have traded my profession of journalism for anything else in the world. I was lucky enough to be on the frontier, cutting edge of television news. That was pure happenstance and I was fortunate enough to be there.

There were many decisions that should have gone, perhaps, the other way. I have regrets on several stories, the way I handled them, the way I performed on them, but not in the choice of the business. I still think that journalism is the highest of callings. It's the most independent way to live that I know. You really don't have any master to whom you must answer in television, in journalism. We are not beholden to any man or any cause or any purpose. We are as free as the birds in that regard. We may not be able to work for the same employer all the time, but we can write. And there still is that privilege available to us. And I am so thankful of that.

Thank you. (Applause)

Mr. Kalb: I just want to say to Walter that he has started this Theodore H. White Lecture Series in great style and we are in his debt.

Thank you very much, indeed. (Applause)

PART II
THEODORE H. WHITE SEMINAR
NOVEMBER 16, 1990

Moderator: MARVIN KALB
Director
Joan Shorenstein Barone Center
Kennedy School of Government

Panelists: WALTER CRONKITE
CBS News Anchor

ALBERT R. HUNT
Washington Bureau Chief
Wall Street Journal

COKIE ROBERTS
Congressional Correspondent for National Public Radio
Special Correspondent for ABC News

TIMOTHY RUSSERT
Senior Vice President and Washington Bureau Chief
of NBC News

Mr. Kalb: Good morning.

The point of this Teddy White lecture is not simply the lecture, but the examination of the lecture. Walter Cronkite delivered his speech last night. We were all there. We heard it, as well as, I'm told, the largest crowd ever to assemble at a Forum event.

And, this morning, to offer — what shall we call it? — a constructive critique, or to carry the discussion even further, I've asked three colleagues to discuss their views.

To start, each will present three to five minutes of their own views. Then we will pick up specific themes that Walter enunciated last night and that the three panelists will talk about this morning.

We are on the record all the way. This is a seminar where questions are not only permitted, they are encouraged, as well as comments. And the reporters who are in the rear are here to cover the seminar and we are pleased to have them.

Our panelists are first, Albert Hunt, who joined The Wall Street Journal in June of 1965. He worked in the Boston bureau and then arrived in Washington in 1969, covered Congress and became the Washington Bureau Chief in October of 1983. He has appeared on many television programs, *Meet the Press,* I remember from personal experience, and something that is now called *The Capitol Gang.* He has co-authored a series of books on American elections. And, Al, we are happy to have you here.

Cokie Roberts is the congressional correspondent for National Public Radio and has been since 1978. She has now joined the staff, I think, of ABC News. And she appears on all of their programs and certainly enlightens and informs *This Week with David Brinkley.*

Our third panelist is Tim Russert, who is the Senior Vice President and Washington Bureau Chief for NBC News. He participates in the development of NBC News policy and programming. He directly supervises *Sunday Today* and *Meet the Press.* And prior to joining NBC, he served as counselor to New York Governor Mario Cuomo in 1984–1985 and served as special counsel and then chief of staff to Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan from '77 to '82.

I would like to start first with Al Hunt.

Mr. Hunt: Thank you, Marvin. Thank you for that nice introduction.

I had lunch a couple weeks ago with Scotty Reston and the first thing he said to me was, "Why do you do that awful television show?" And I tried to give an explanation about expanded opportunities and different outlets and went on for awhile and he looked at me and said, "I see, midlife crisis." (Laughter)

It's really terrific to be here for a lot of personal reasons. I can remember a number of times having breakfast at the Sheraton Wayfarer in New Hampshire with Teddy White and being regaled with stories about the politics of yesterday and invariably learning something about the politics — a lot more about the politics of today than I knew going into it. He was a wonderful man and just great company.

And Joan Barone was my dear friend. And I think represents everything that is good about television.

And Walter Cronkite is my idol. And I think for any of us in this business, it is just such an incredible pleasure and honor to be with Walter Cronkite. It was terrific to see you and hear you last night.

I know what my role is this morning. My role is to be the sort of anachronistic pencil pusher who really doesn't understand the television business, and to say some silly provocative things. And then Russert and Roberts are going to eat me alive. And I'm going to play that role. I mean, I'll do it. But I have several reservations.

Reservation number one is that I worry about piling on. It hasn't been an easy couple of years for television news. You remember back in 1988 when Dan Rather had that celebrated confrontation with then Vice President George Bush. You could feel the tension in the air. And afterwards, Dan was called arrogant by Sam Donaldson. (Laughter)

Five weeks later, there was a Democratic presidential debate in the State of New Hampshire. And my dear friend Jack Chancellor was the moderator. I thought he did a terrific job. And after that debate, Jack was called tasteless by Gary Hart. (Laughter)

My wife, Judy Woodruff, moderated the vice presidential debate in Omaha that fall. And she said, with that background, she lived in mortal fear that afterwards, she would be called a lightweight by Dan Quayle. (Laughter)

The second reason I worry about this role I'm going to play today is that I recalled, flying up yesterday, just about 10 years ago having dinner with my dear friend Joan Barone, and making, I'm sure, some of the same points and some of the same criticisms about television news that I'm going to make today. And I thought I was quite eloquent. And after about 10 or 15 minutes of going on, Joan, in her terribly kind but always insightful way, looked at me and said, "Well, if it's so bad, why do you leap at every opportunity to go on it?"

But, as I say, I will play that role and I'm tempted to start off just by saying I associate myself with the remarks of the gentleman from CBS last night, because it was such a terrific presentation.

I think that Walter's reference to Dr. Adatto's I think seminal study about comparing network coverage in 1988 and 1968 is as good a take-off point as any.

And what really struck me, one of the stories she told in that study, was the way television covered that famous confrontation back in 1968 between Ed Muskie, the vice presidential candidate, and the student demonstrator. And I think it was on the air for about two minutes, 57 seconds for the demonstrator and over a minute from Muskie.

And just imagine if the campaign were held right now and George Bush or Dan Quayle were out there and a similar incident occurred in, let's say, the Persian Gulf, how much time do you think would be on television today? I think it would be more like 20 or 30 seconds.

And what worries me about that is not just to count seconds. What worries me is what that does not just to the viewer, but what it does to the practitioners of politics. Because I think that politicians, certainly presidential candidates, but also senatorial and Congressional candidates, are now told they have to think in terms of sound bites. And they have to think quick. They have to think in five or ten seconds. There is a great premium on not being thoughtful because of so much television coverage.

And I think that's a shame and I think that's different than it was 20 or 25 years ago. And I would hope that the television networks would think more carefully about trying to reverse that trend.

Because several other problems, I have — I once was quoted as saying that television viewers really are video nymphomaniacs. And I think there is some truth to that. They can't turn down a good picture. That's why a Bob Squier and a Roger Ailes are so important to politicians these days.

Walter said last night, it was a standoff, I'm not sure it is a standoff. I'm not sure the Ailes and the Squiers aren't winning.

And I guess I get a little tired of the stories of people saying, geez, I did this tough piece and the pictures were so great that they loved it. Well, if that's the message that the viewers are getting, I kind of wonder about why we are doing those stories.

And it goes back to what Walter's boss, Dick Salant, the always astute and sometimes diplomatic Dick Salant, suggested several years ago. What he said was networks ought to go on the air some nights and say that candidate X didn't say a damn thing today. So, we are not going to tell you anything about it.

And I wish television had the discipline to do that. And I fear it doesn't.

I suppose, like everyone else, that a lot of the troubles began when it became a profit center. I look now over the last year of the incredible things that have happened, the collapse of Communism, what's happening in South Africa, the Persian Gulf, and for all of the good that's on television, Lord knows there's a lot good.

You look at the three anchor people and I think that, Walter, I worry you created a monster. I think the role of the anchor is overplayed today. But, if we have to have anchor people, thank goodness we have Tom Brokaw and Peter Jennings and Dan Rather. They are terrific journalists.

And each of the networks does a lot of good stuff. NBC, Tim's network, with people like Brian Ross and Ira Silverman, that great investigative team. And Bob Bazell just does terrific stuff on medicine and health. And ABC, Ted Koppel is a national treasure. And CBS did those great pieces on education a couple months ago.

But when you look at the whole and you look at what's happened over the last year, how much have you seen on prime time of those remarkable events. I think very little.

And Walter, I think your story last night about Jack Kennedy and the regulatory pressures can be chilling. But I think those regulatory pressures, 30 and 40 years ago, also forced television to do things like *CBS Reports.* And you think of things like *Harvest of Shame* and *The Selling of the Pentagon* 30 and 20 years ago. And those are programs we still remember today and still have an effect today.

And I just wonder, over the last year, what have we seen on prime-time television that we could be talking about at a similar session 20 or 30 years from now? I would suggest not much.

In conclusion, let me just say I think there are three or four things that we can do about it — I hope television would do about it.

One, I agree totally with what Walter Cronkite said last night about the debates. The problem is we got trapped into a system of thinking that political parties could control the debates. And the candidates controlled the political parties, so we ended up with those sort of sham debates that we had last time.

The debates should be turned over to the television networks. They know how to run it and they should keep the candidates out of it and let the journalists run debates. That's number one.

Secondly, we shouldn't limit it, though, just to presidential years. I would like, through pressure, through cajoling, whatever have you, it would be nice if we can encourage television to try to do more things in prime time. There is an extraordinarily important debate going on right now about the Persian Gulf. I don't know why it's asking too much to, say, just one hour a week for the next six to eight weeks, why can't we have — why can't the television networks focus on that great debate. I really don't think that's asking too much.

I think the networks are in inexorable decline. I think the competition of cable and local stations and direct satellite broadcasting and the like, they are down to 57 percent of the share for the news division. That's going to go below 50.

One of those three networks is not going to be around, one of those news divisions is not going to be around in 10 years. And I would suggest that the network that treats news more seriously may indeed have a better chance of surviving in that competitive climate than might one or two of the others.

And I guess, finally, I wish newspapers would treat television journalism more seriously. I think we too often treat it as entertainment. And the people who write about it view it as entertainment. And I think, therefore, that some of the standards and criteria that should be applied are not.

For anybody who wants to write about it seriously, they can start with two very important works, one, Dr. Adatto's study and, two, Walter Cronkite's speech of last night. Thank you.

Mr. Kalb: Thank you very much, Al. Cokie.

Ms. Roberts: Well, I have to start with a disclaimer, which is that the last time I spoke in this room it was an orientation session for the new members of the 101st Congress. And I told them not to worry about the pay raise, that Jim Wright had worked it out.

There would be no vote on a pay raise, and it would all just be fine and they could go to Washington, get their money, and no one would ever speak to them about it again.

So, with that kind of record of having spoken truth here, I'm not terribly confident about my own words this morning.

I think there are a couple of things, places where I'd be harder on TV and places where I'd be easier on it than my colleagues have been.

One thing that I do think is true is that the effect of television on politics is unbelievable, enormous, and in every way indescribable. It has changed the nature of American politics.

But I don't think that is necessarily because of news bites or anything else, it's just that it is. I mean, keep in mind in the old days, most of the country was illiterate. People did not read papers. And so television comes along and starts telling people about things.

I had an interview that really brought this home to me in a wonderful way. And, well, some campaign, I think it might have been 1980, where I was talking to a great character named Mimi DiPietro in Baltimore. Remember Mimi DiPietro? And he was an old-time ward boss. And he said, "You know, in the old days, it was good. I would tell the parents, the parents would tell the children, and everybody would vote the way I told them to vote." He says, "Now, they vote the way they see to vote on TV, the TV tells them how to vote. It's terrible, I can't tell anybody how to vote, everybody thinks for themselves. It's a terrible thing."

And that is the result of television. It has changed the whole face of American politics in ways that no one anticipated. And you can argue whether that's for better or worse. I can make a good case that Mimi DiPietro probably had a better idea of who to vote for than the kid who's watching a Congressperson cavorting with dogs and children in a 30-second spot. But that is a different question.

I think the other thing is the power of money on politics and television just simply, again, can't be overstated. When you are talking about political campaigns costing millions and millions of dollars and almost all of that money goes to television, then it completely changes how politics is operated.

We were talking, Mrs. Shorenstein and I last night. Look at California in 1992. You are going to have two Senate races. You are going to have six or seven open House seats of new seats. You are going to have all the House seats of people running for the Senate, open seats there. You are going to have all the seats of people who have just had their terms limited by the voters in California, state legislators who will now be running for Congress and the Senate.

I would say, at least 100 million dollars will be spent in California in 1992. I mean, the thing to be in California right now is the owner of a television station. If anybody can invest in one, do it quickly because there will be a lot of money coming in in that political campaign.

And that has distorted, I think, our politics, certainly at the federal level more than anything else.

I also would argue, I actually agree with Spiro Agnew, I always have, that there is an agenda-setting that goes on. It's not conscious. Nobody sits down and calls up the three networks, you know, and has a conference call at 3:00 in the afternoon and says, "Let's now all decide what the news is tonight." But, if you notice, we turn on the news. It's pretty much the same wherever you look at it.

Now, obviously, that's for a good reason, you know, when the Berlin Wall comes down, that's news and everybody is going to cover it.

But there are other things that everyone sort of determines is news. I remember having a conversation with Em Stone, you remember, was head of CBS Radio for a long time. And him telling me a story that he was at the theater in New York one night and that his counterpart at NBC came in and sat in front of him and they hadn't seen each

other in months. And how they were joking with each other that Spiro Agnew thinks that we meet every day and we sit down and talk together.

But the truth is that they were at the same theater, they have the same values, they have the same things they care about. I mean, television is run by a bunch of white guys who care about middleclass people who care about the same things.

And so you do have an agenda-setting that's completely unconscious, but that says these are the things we think are important and, therefore, we are going to tell you that they are important. And I do think that that absolutely goes on.

The one thing that I would say that I think we are a little better than Walter Cronkite gave us credit for last night, is that I actually think the relationship between the politicians and the press has gotten less cozy rather than more cozy. And if Al's job is to be the print person on this panel, mine is obviously to be the female.

And I do think that the entrance of women into the press corps in large numbers, the political press corps, has really changed the coziness of the relationship. That when in the old days the guys would all go out together, they all, you know, finished the day's events, everybody would go drinking together, carousing together. And there was an unspoken rule that nobody talked about what went on there because you could tell on me as easily as I could tell on you.

And when we ladies arrived on the bus, I think we pruded things up a bit. And I think that we stopped some of the coziness of that kind of relationship because we weren't carousing with them, and changed that to some degree.

I also think that the truth is, they need us more than we need them. So that there's no need to be particularly cozy with them. We had an example last week on the Brinkley show where the White House blew up at the booker and said, "How dare you put Ed Rollins on this program without calling us and telling us about it." You know, what do you mean how dare you? It's not your program.

And they said, "We will get retribution. You will pay for this." How? How? They are not going to put people on the Brinkley program? Baloney. They are going to put people on whenever they want to put somebody on, and that's exactly how they do it now and that's the way they always will do it.

So that I think that we will — we don't have to kowtow to them, because their desire to get their version of the news out is very great.

I understand, and Tim, tell me if I'm wrong, that the President is paying to send a satellite to the Persian Gulf, we the taxpayers are paying, to send a huge satellite to the Persian Gulf because the networks refused to do it, so that we can all watch the President having Thanksgiving dinner live with the troops in Saudi Arabia. This is a separate airplane going with all of the equipment to do that. Clearly he thinks that he wants us to see him and will make himself available for that purpose, I think, whenever it serves his needs and that that's true of all of them.

So, on that note, I'll stop.

Mr. Kalb: Cokie, thank you. Tim Russert.

Mr. Russert: Thank you.

This is kind of a coming home for me in two ways. One, I had the privilege of spending about three hours with Teddy White the night before he died. And I can assure you the only thing on the agenda was politics. God, he loved it and loved to talk about it.

And Marvin Kalb, who was my colleague at NBC for four years, actually got me to focus on this whole subject of press and politics. He invited me up here last year and I met with a group of students for a rather raucous two-hour session. But it really gave me a chance to focus and clear my thinking, which led to a piece I eventually wrote for The New York Times.

Right before that, I had received the galleys of Roger Simon's book on the campaign. There's a wonderful preface in there which I would just like to read because it sort of captures our dilemma.

It says: "Alone in his bedroom on a dark and stormy night, the presidential candidate was putting the finishing touches on his announcement speech when the devil appeared before him. 'Worry not,' the devil said, 'I can grant you victory in the Iowa caucuses, I can give you the New Hampshire primary, the South, New York, California, and all the rest. I will even guarantee you the nomination of your party. But in return, you must sell me your soul. You must betray all decent principles. You must pander, trivialize, and deceive. You must gain victory by exploiting bigotry, fear, envy, and greed. And you must conduct a campaign based on lies, sham, hype, and distortion.' 'So,' the presidential candidate replied, 'What's the catch?'" (Laughter)

I knew then someone in television had to do something. So, tutored by Professor Kalb and David Broder who wrote an extraordinary piece in The Washington Post, I tried to set out and lay out some of my thoughts and they are in response to Walter Cronkite's speech last night, some of the very points he raised.

First, on the issue of photo ops, the information spectrum has changed since 1968 when there were but three television networks commanding 90 percent of the audience. It is 1990. We have three networks competing against 40 or 50 other channels. On any given night, Tom Brokaw, Peter Jennings, Dan Rather are up against *Jeopardy,* reruns of *M*A*S*H.*

Probably the most dominant factor in determining the evening news ratings is who has Oprah Winfrey as a lead in. That is a fact.

We have a situation — Walter mentioned the number of people who get their information from television — it is now over two-thirds who receive most of their information from television. More than half, more than 50 percent, openly admit they receive all their information from television. The average American family is now spending close to eight hours a day watching television.

The burden on people like myself, I really do think, is extraordinary in that regard because I don't believe for a moment you can function as an intelligent citizen by simply relying on television.

So, how do we cope with this change in information spectrum and this enormous reliance on this medium?

First, on photo ops, what I suggest is that we learn our lesson from '88. No one was happy with that campaign. The candidates felt we spent more time on sizzle rather than steak, faux pas rather than substance. The public felt we had trivialized the campaign, that they had been overwhelmed by negative advertising, which I'll get to in a minute. And the press felt, frankly, we had been had. And we were.

I think by the time that George Bush went to his third flag factory, it dawned on us that something was going on in terms of photo ops.

And we tried to change our behavior, frankly. What I think we have to do and started to do at the end of '88, for example, when Dukakis took his now infamous ride in a tank and put on the goofy little hat and we all laughed at the photo op, it was a perfect peg to say, Michael Dukakis visited a tank factory today, here is an analysis of his positions on defense policy.

What we did do, in fact, in '88, is when George Bush came here to Boston and used the Boston Harbor as a backdrop to suggest that he was going to be the environmental president, our piece went something like this: George Bush came to the Boston Harbor today to proclaim that he would be the environmental president. Here with an analysis of the Reagan-Bush environmental record is Lisa Myers. And she proceeded to do a very tough piece on their environmental record.

And the campaign went crazy. Wait a minute, you're not supposed to do that. We gave you the podium. We gave you the vice-presidential seal. We gave you the Charles River as the backdrop. We gave you the sound bite. How dare you not accept that and go with something contrary to what the arrangement is supposed to be. And we realized

then that, as the days went on, the campaign began to adjust to what we were trying to do.

We had a meeting, the last two weeks of the campaign in '88, with producers and correspondents and sat down and said, "Listen, it's as if Jim Haggerty brought in the print press and said, here's a news release, press release, I'd like you to reprint this on the front page of your paper. That's what they are doing to us. They have everything set up: the photo-op, the sound bite; they give it to us, we put it on the air, on to the next stop."

That has to stop. And I believe it will, not only at NBC, but all the networks, as I talk to my colleagues. Use photo ops as a peg to try to talk about an issue in a serious way.

One of the ways of bringing that about is the campaign plane. I think it's a flying side show. And what I hope to do in '92 is, working with our people at NBC, is try to keep the correspondents off the plane in terms of a permanent assignment. Send first-rate producers, send first-rate crews, be there for the, God forbid, death watch, capture all the sound, but have correspondents drop in and out of that flight. There's a big campaign going on outside that campaign plane: strategy, polling, fundraising, campaign managers are all back in Washington or Denver or Boston, wherever the particular home of the candidate might be.

And this notion that the correspondent will not be able to develop contact with the candidate, nonsense. We know who they are, they know who we are; that is not a problem.

You also, and I admit one of the difficulties of television, it is a star-driven system. And if we send Andrea Mitchell or Tom Brokaw or Peter Jennings, Cokie Roberts, Dan Rather, Bruce Morton on the campaign trail, there is a drive to get them on the air. They are out on the trail. We have to put them on. They are one of our big names. And I admit that and I accept that.

But why not keep them home and do analyses. This is much tougher journalism. It takes a lot more research, a lot more difficulty in putting together. And frankly, wait for the peg in which to put it on the air.

Secondly, Walter mentioned the negative ads. They are being called ad police. I would designate David Broder as Commissioner of Police. It was his idea, and a marvelous one. Over 25 newspapers have already begun to take a negative advertisement, dissect it, analyze it, tell people where it's misleading, where it is factually wrong. Three local affiliates began it this campaign season. We are going to do it in full form in '92.

It is something that television has the graphics, has the technology to do. There is nothing more devastating to a candidate than a split screen, saying one thing in a commercial, another in so-called free media. There's nothing more devastating to a candidate when you stop a commercial and stamp on it, untrue, misleading or clarify a fact.

My hunch is, my hope is that if we do this in a vigilant way, the candidates will pull the ads off the air. I know in this past campaign, Bill Caret, Diane Feinstein's campaign manager in California, said, "Because the press is monitoring our ads, it has changed our behavior." I know Bob Squier apologized for an ad he ran in Texas with Ann Richards and an ad he ran here against Belotti in which they took headlines from The Boston Globe and clipped them and only used part of them.

If we are vigilant in that regard, I think we can have a profound effect upon the campaign.

Commercials in 1992 are the equivalent of what a stump speech was in 1968. Politicians don't talk to crowds anymore. They don't go on street corners. They don't go to union halls other than to serve as props. That's all they are. It's the commercial where he or she is flooding into the home of the average person which really counts and we have to treat it as a serious attempt by a candidate to communicate a message.

Debates, my proposal for debates is very much based on the Canadian model. I'm not sure if you've had a chance to observe the Canadian debates. They are absolutely marvelous. Two people, eye to eye, toe to toe, face to face, going at it.

What I propose is four prime-time debates, 90 minutes each. And the way to get the networks engaged, have a sole moderator, no panel, no props. I would rotate it with Bernie Shaw, Brokaw, Jennings, Rather, one of each all broadcast simultaneously, roadblock the networks first on domestic policy, second on social policy, third on foreign policy, fourth on the remaining issues that have evolved in the campaign.

Now, the strategy in this is how do you get the candidates to play without taking over the rules? I think it's simple. And I think I speak from the perspective of someone who has both managed campaigns and covered them.

I submit that the challenger will want a debate and that the networks simply say we are having four prime-time debates, these are the times they are being held, we hope you will be there. I do not know a candidate or a president who would sit in his living room and watch his opponent have 90 minutes free on prime-time television on all four networks. Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe President Bush or his successor or the Democrat will prove me wrong and not show up. I don't think so.

Mr. Kalb: Who is the sponsor?

Mr. Russert: The four networks would sponsor. And we would, by using their anchors, I think they would have a self-interest in it. It would be very much on the Lincoln-Douglas model, throw out an issue, let the candidates debate it until they exhaust relevance. Obviously keep it civil or change subjects if you think it has gotten to that point.

But there'd be very little role for the moderator other than keep the candidates focused on the issues that have been presented.

I dare say we would see a much better portrayal of who these candidates really are. Because I believe that the television camera is a wonderful X-ray. I think that people select a candidate for president basically on two issues, character and temperament. And television is a master at capturing that, particularly over a sustained period of time like four 90-minute debates.

And Walter's last suggestion was free time. My only concern with free time is, one, we as a news division don't have direct control over it, so we don't have the power or the authority to implement; the other suggestions I have made, we can.

Secondly, I'm not sure I want to give free time to Roger Ailes and Bob Squier and to the campaign consultants. I would much prefer arranging a situation where the candidates would come on *Nightly News* or the *Today* show on a regular basis, perhaps weekly, and be engaged in an interview format rather than just surrendering air time for them to put forward 30 minutes of celluloid images.

You may be able to modify your proposal, Walter, in terms of, it must be live, it must be a talking head.

I just think the candidates have gotten so good at boilerplate that they really have to be engaged by a journalist in order to get them off pre-fab campaign announcements.

That's it, in terms of the reforms that are possible. Will we do it, can we do it? I think we can. I think we will. Bill Wheatley, who is the executive producer of *Nightly News* and is here this morning, has just been appointed director of political coverage for NBC. He's going to spend the next semester here at the Shorenstein Barone Center thinking and talking to everyone here, write a paper, which Marvin has guaranteed me will be published, which we think can implement not only these ideas, but many more that he has.

And I think that we will have a profound change in the way we conduct ourselves in '92. If we don't, we will have not succeeded.

Mr. Kalb: Tim, thank you very much. Walter.

Mr. Cronkite: First of all, taking the last first, congratulations on putting Wheatley at the Center for this year. That's a marvelous, forward-looking step.

Mr. Russert: It was his idea. (Laughter)

Mr. Cronkite: I don't doubt it.

And it is encouraging that you are working to that degree. And I think that the other networks are doing something, perhaps not as extensive, but I would hope so. But they are similarly studying how to correct these problems that I brought up last night.

And I agree with you, I think things will be done next year. I think they will be done considerably differently in '92. I'm sure that something will be done on the commercials, as you suggest, in the broadcasts; the comparisons to the record and the commercials themselves.

I have a slightly different thought on the debates, although yours is very good. I've thought in terms of probably six subjects, the six principal points that are before the public, the issues to be debated in two hour formats, and with the old Oxonian Rules that we all followed in high school. I'd like to see the candidates taking the subject, resolve that, the positive and negative sides of that, rebuttals and all the rest of it.

And, an added feature, I'd like to see them have on stage their consultants, not their political consultants, but their policy consultants. Let them have all the books they need out there to refer to. Let's see them at work as you would on a regular debate. Let's get them out from behind that myth that they carry all the answers in their head at all times to all the important questions of the day. I think that might be a very refreshing thing for us all to view.

Mr. Kalb: Just for clarity, these debates also would be sponsored by the networks?

Mr. Cronkite: Well, I suppose so. I don't know what the law is right at the moment on that. There's been some relaxation, I gather, in the equal-time situation and whether we can do it actually that way or not. But I don't think that's the problem. I think that could be worked out, certainly.

And since we are talking about rather major reforms of that kind, one political reform that has occurred to me through the years, which could actually be accomplished by one of the parties, the party out of power and the Congress could do this on its own, it doesn't require any constitutional change or anything of the sort. Clearly, a lot of practical problems would have to be solved first.

But, wouldn't it be refreshing if the party out of power organized itself something along the lines of the parliamentary system. And after losing the previous election, selected a leader, possibly the losing candidate in a presidential situation, or someone else in the off year, preferably concentrating this in the Senate, of course, which is one of the practical problems involved, but select a leader who would be the spokesman for the party and then have a shadow cabinet.

This gets into the debate situation you were talking about, Cokie, the continuing debate. This would provide the continuing debate that would be engaged using television quite clearly for this debate.

If you had a shadow cabinet of the party out of power, those people could be the spokesmen for their party.

This would require a lot more party organization. A lot more party discipline than we have now. It would require a lot of infighting within the party for these leadership roles, quite clearly. But wouldn't that be a good thing, if they began to fight for some form of leadership so we selected some leaders or they, within themselves selected some leadership potential within the party?

It's obviously a reform down the line somewhere, or probably not in the cards at all. But perhaps it could be talked up and somewhere along the line we might get somewhere near that. It would have considerable advantages, I think, to our democratic system.

Television focusing on a continuing debate — that is so easy for the television networks to do, and it's probably as close to crime as they are committing these days in not doing it. They have the time. They are using the time for trivial things, *48 Hours, 20/20* and so forth.

They could be using that time for exactly what you are talking about, a really serious debate. Right now, the crisis in Saudi Arabia, the budget crisis before this, the savings and loan situation before that. These things could be taken up in depth in those programs. Why they are not, well, we know why they are not. They are not because they are not going to draw the same audience that "48 Hours on Crack Street" is going to draw, although that's an important subject quite clearly, and was an important broadcast.

But finding those sensational subjects is obviously going to feed into the network a higher rating than the following program or whatever, which are the considerations that a network always takes in programming.

But it is something that should be done by the networks. I regret very strongly that they don't do more in that regard.

The question that you raised about the television networks, Al, diminishing in their importance and news following suit with perhaps only two of them existing in another few years, that sort of thing. I think the trend is going to be somewhat different from that.

I think that, temporarily at least, news is going to have a greater importance to the networks. And we are going to see news more on the ascendancy in the networks.

First of all, they have become a profit center.

Second of all, production of news programming is a lot cheaper than production of entertainment programming. Along the bottom-line considerations, that is important to them.

Third, and most important perhaps, is that with the dropping percentage of the total rating in the network entertainment programming, the news ratings for documentaries, features and the news itself has come up to almost the level of the entertainment programming and actually exceeded in some cases.

With that combination of circumstances, I think you are going to see the networks, and they are, we know, I'm sure your network, ours is the same, in the entertainment area, the networks are going to the news people and saying, have you got any programming for us, do you have any ideas for prime time that we could develop?

So, I think we are going to see more news in prime time on the networks over the next few years. Now, whether that is going to continue, I think is very hard to say what the economics of broadcasting are going to be a few years down the pike. With fiber-optics, as I mentioned last night, and a lot of other sources of information, whether the networks will continue or not over a long haul is problematical, I assume.

I would think that since they are a very handy sales tool for commercials, much handier than the independents and cable, even, and all these other things, there's a concentration of sales effort there, marketing. I think they might exist longer than they would otherwise, certainly.

Cokie, I'm not sure about your statement about people not having read newspapers in the past. Maybe that's so in Louisiana. (Laughter)

Agenda-setting, I think we are putting too much emphasis on television setting agendas. All across the country newspaper editors were sitting there at the very time Spiro Agnew was making his Des Moines speech about us and television. Across the United States, the newspaper editors are also selecting their banner line, their column-eight story, their column-one story, their title story, the bottom, their feature story. And it turns out to be the same almost all across the country. I think it gets back to our general position in the society and the fact that we do think alike. But also it's just basic journalistic principles of what is a story and what is not.

I was just thinking about, it's not important, but the Bush satellite in Saudi Arabia of course reminds me of the fact that we've sort of forgotten that Richard Nixon built an entire television satellite station for the Chinese. And RCA built it, but we all ended up paying for it, in China for his visit to China and opening up China.

Of course I think that was an important story and I'm glad we were able to cover it, but we had to build the station. The Chinese put one person in the station for everyone, we had to learn how to use it.

Those are my comments, Marvin.

Mr. Kalb: I'd like to thank the panelists. Now we get to that time in the seminar when those of you who wish to ask a question, please raise your hand.

Ms. Hume: I'm Ellen Hume. I work with Marvin here at the Center.

Walter Cronkite, I'm really excited about your prescription. Your prediction that we would have more news in prime time sounds great. My question is about, is it going to be news or is it going to be entertainment or what someone called infotainment where news is merely the raw material for building a glob that may or may not reflect information that's useful and factual?

So, how do we prevent the news from just simply turning into another soap opera and really present the issues?

Mr. Cronkite: I don't know that we can. I think your fears are well founded, completely. All I can say is we can hope. We can be fairly sure, I think, if the responsible people in the news departments are going to try to persuade the management to produce something which is meaningful.

But guarantees that that would happen, no, I certainly couldn't do that.

Mr. Russert: I think, Ellen, we are going to do both, just like newspapers do. You pick up any newspaper, it has its entertainment sections, leisure sections, astrology, comics and all the rest, and there's certainly a front page and an op-ed page to it.

In January, we are, finally, NBC, the news division, is finally going to get a crack at prime time again, and we are going to do two different programs.

One is *Exposé* with Brian Ross and Ira Silverman, the two men that Al mentioned who've won every award possible for investigative reporting, most recently shipping the nuclear trigger over to Mr. Saddam Hussein. And that will be a very hard-hitting, investigative half-hour of prime-time news.

And that will be coupled with *Real Life with Jane Pauley*, which will be softer, more human-interest directed. But nonetheless, part of that information spectrum I talked about.

Mr. Cronkite: You know, since you've mentioned it, just a comment here about the newspapers.

One of the major problems I think we have in communications in the country today is the fact that most newspapers are trying to compete with television in television's backyard. They are trying to compete with television with entertainment instead of competing with television with news.

They can beat us with news if they would present more news and do it more thoroughly than they are doing it in many cities in the United States, instead of filling their newspapers with feature material.

I am disturbed, as a matter of fact, by the tendency of The New York Times today to featurize the front page of the newspaper. It really sets me back on my heels every morning when I pick up my Times and expect to see the news on the front page and find it filled with feature material. I just wish that the newspapers would stick to giving us the news and let the entertainment, to leave that to the television networks.

Mr. Hunt: I'm not going to come to the defense of newspapers, but there has been one omission at least on my part today.

And that is the predicate to this really has been the three television networks that started 40 years ago. And we haven't spoken as much as we probably should about CNN.

And I was telling Bernie Shaw last night, sometimes you miss, sometimes it doesn't quite live up to what it should be, but I think it may be the most exciting thing that is happening in television journalism today. When a crisis happens, the first thing I do now is I turn on CNN, whether it's in the middle of the day or at night.

And I think that CNN has just been one of the most important things that's happened to television journalism, you know, in the last 40 or 50 years, Walter. The audiences are still small by commercial broadcasting standards, but I think they are growing. And I think the job that Bernie and his cohorts are doing really is an extraordinary one.

Mr. Cronkite: I agree with that wholeheartedly. The first thing I do when I come in the house is turn on CNN. I can tell by the attitude of the person on the air whether there's anything going on or not. (Laughter)

I don't have to wait. If there's a certain tension in the air, I stay tuned in. If not, I turn it off again.

Mr. Schorr: Dan Schorr, National Public Radio.

I would like to bring the discussion back to one of the central themes of your talk last night, Walter, your marvelous talk last night, which has to do with also the purpose of the Shorenstein Barone Center, which is media and politics.

Massachusetts had a referendum in which they voted, not in a compulsory manner, but voted in favor of the idea that television stations, networks, should give free time to politics.

I myself find that one of the pernicious influences in politics is the cost of campaigning, some of the effects we see are in hearings now going on of the Keating Five, or Four, or Three, in Washington today.

I think that having lived abroad as you have, I've seen most civilized West European countries simply say that as a function of television and the return for the gold mines that we give you, one of your proper duties is to provide free time for political discussions on the national level, on the regional level, and on the local level.

The Federal Communications Act says that radio and television will operate in the public interest and deem it as a necessity. And I think that one of the ways that we do that is simply to require, by law, to provide free time for political debate and no funds can be spent on television time.

I think you'd clean up the process. I think you'd clean up politics. I think it would be a great first step in doing that.

Mr. Cronkite: Well, Dan, let me ask you something in a little dialogue with you here on that. That would work nationally for presidential politics, where it isn't quite as necessary as it is in the local area where the congressmen are spending so tremendous an amount of money on television.

But, in a local situation, suppose you've got one or two television stations in a town and you've got 40 candidates for various offices in that state at that particular moment? You have the county courts, you have the congressman, you have the governor and the lieutenant governor and the secretary of state, perhaps and all these offices.

That station can't afford to give away that much time.

Mr. Schorr: Well, I would start by limiting it to races for national office, that is Congress, and in states to the principal offices like Governor.

But I think you start at the top and develop the system and see how far it can go.

Mr. Hunt: Take Los Angeles. I would imagine there must be 25 congressmen who are in the Los Angeles media market. So you give free time to 50 candidates each week?

Mr. Schorr: Sure. It's a lot better than paying time for 50 candidates.

Mr. Cronkite: Well, it's better in theory, but the television industry in this country, as opposed to those foreign nations, is a free-market, capitalist, profit-making industry here that we are talking about. And to mandate that they take that amount of commercial time out of their daily schedule, I think is almost confiscatory. I don't see how it could be done.

Mr. Schorr: Well, I know that every station that finds that it can't make a go of it, can often give back a franchise, which I don't think has happened very often.

Mr. Cronkite: No, no.

Well, we could do like the British are doing and putting all the stations up for sale all over again, pour the money into public broadcasting and then force everybody into public broadcasting.

Mr. Bromfield: Morton Bromfield, American Privacy Foundation. I'd like to throw on the table a suggestion that might save the networks some money on the election area. As you may know, the French have a law that prohibits polls within so many weeks of the actual election. Then the matter of projection is another aspect.

I, for example, don't want to go to a movie when I know the ending, so why should I go to the poll and vote when I'm being told within .02 percentage points who is going to win? Or, if you get me in the polling station and then I hear the projection, I say, "Well, why am I going to vote for the loser, I'll vote for the guy that won."

Mr. Kalb: Well, there's already been some movement in that direction. Tim, would you like to start?

Mr. Russert: I have two points.

One, the polls, this last election, I think, if you went back and looked at the polls that were released the weekend prior to the campaign, they were right probably about half the time. There was enormous change in voter behavior over the last couple of days.

The problem you have, you see, is if the news organizations don't release their polls, the candidates will. We have found the real use of our polls is it gives us a base from which to confirm the polls that are being leaked by the candidates. And they will, you know. It's been their story, we are up 10, because it helps their fund raising and on and on and on. And I just don't think limiting speech in that regard is a particularly good idea.

As to projections, what all three and now four, CNN has joined this consortium, the BRS pool of voter projections, is that we will not characterize or project any race until the polls have closed in that particular state.

Ms. Roberts: There's been a lot of research done on this particular question. And the truth is there's absolutely no evidence that polling and projections stop people from voting. I mean, it just doesn't show up in any of the data.

And I think, you know, you can make a case that in 1980, that Al Ullman in Oregon and Jim Corman in California might have lost because people didn't go to the polls. But I think that was much more related to Jimmy Carter conceding the election than it was to anybody calling the election.

So that I just don't, I think this is one of those things that everybody raises as a problem and when you really sit and examine it, it's not a problem.

Mr. Cronkite: And if I could just make one comment on that. I would be and I am absolutely opposed, and the networks have finally agreed we are not going to use exit polling material before the polls close in any given state. That's taken care of.

The business of, however, of our reporting the returns, as the state's polls closed in the east and its affecting the west, as Cokie says, there's no empirical data at all that this affects these races, although a lot of money has been spent by a lot of institutions, including the networks themselves, to determine this.

But the answer is perfectly clear to this problem. I still find it hard to believe all that data. I still think there could be an effect. But there is certainly an easy way to solve this thing, slightly expensive, but it's the government's problem to solve it.

The 24-hour voting law does the job. You have a 24-hour window, the polls open and close simultaneously throughout our entire 50 states and the problem is solved.

Ms. Roberts: The House of Representatives actually passed a really cockamamie law, which fortunately didn't go anywhere, to try to deal with this problem, which involves certain states not going on daylight savings time until after the election and other states going on daylight savings time and, you know, so that polls—

Mr. Cronkite: That, of course, assumes the cows are all going to vote.

Ms. Roberts: Isn't that crazy, just so the polls would all be opening and closing at the same time.

And of course the reason that nobody passes these changes in the voting laws is that what always happens when you change the voting system is unintended consequences. So, everybody is sitting there trying to figure out what the consequences might be, and will it have more effect on Democrats or Republicans, will working people go to the polls versus rich people, will women go versus men, blah, blah, blah. And since they can't figure out what the consequences will be, they'll leave it alone.

Mr. Cronkite: There's one other point in there, that it would be a denial of the democratic system if we tried to censor ourselves and not report the returns in the east until the polls are closed in the west, because we would simply be denying to the people knowledge that the political operatives would have.

They could get the word out after the Ohio returns are in and say, look, we've got to get that vote out in California, redouble your efforts, pull another million dollars in, hire every taxi in town and get those people out there.

That's the way they used to work. In the old days, the telegraph reports anyway. And when they were using rule of thumb and they didn't get out of Cuyahoga County with enough votes, why they knew they had to get more out of Marin County, California. And there's no reason to return them to that system, certainly.

Mr. Russert: The first call you get on election day is from the staffs of the Congress people who are bashing the networks for projecting, their staffs are calling saying, "Who's ahead in California, what are the early exits?" They should have it, but the public shouldn't.

Ms. Barrett: My name is Janice Barrett and I'm a second-year doctoral student at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. And as a former classroom teacher for 22 years, I very much appreciated your comments last night. I would like to raise a two-tier question dealing with the education issue, which has not been discussed here this morning, yet.

How do we, as educators, raise these issues with young people in the classroom so that they do become a more critically thinking audience and so that they therefore, when they graduate, can become better citizens and voters?

I do think, for instance, here at Harvard we have the School of Education and the Kennedy School and I see that Chairman Hiatt is here, chairman of our visiting committee and member of the board of overseers. There might be a way here that we can institutionalize some sort of cooperation between the two schools. Harvard is proud of the various programs it has in the field of education and here at the Press/Politics Center.

So I guess that's one question, how can we learn more?

The second question is, this whole issue around Whittle Communications, which is a way economically, because they provide the equipment to schools which are in dire straits now because of all the cutbacks from the education presidents, Reagan and Bush, that they don't have the funding they need to be able to buy the equipment.

Therefore, Whittle has come in, provided the equipment, but the price has been, as Peggy Charren has said and Bill Honing in California and our own Dean here, Dean Graham has said, they are selling access to children's minds with the two minutes of commercials.

I wonder if you, Mr. Cronkite, would be willing to respond to those two questions? Thank you.

Mr. Cronkite: Well, for the first question, I think that's for you education professionals to figure out. I really don't know the answer.

Mr. Kalb: I can give a little bit on that, but why don't you pick up that second one.

Mr. Cronkite: On the second question, this bothers me a great deal as it must bother everybody, of course. And I don't really have an answer. I don't know. I haven't made up my mind which is worse, not having the children have access to a communications system which could be important, obviously, to them, or suffering the indignity of a closed-circuit commercial coming to them.

If the equipment is available for use and there are others who are willing to use it in a proper form so that you've got hours of incoming information you can use putting together a network, bringing the great teachers into the classroom for instance, then maybe it's worth it; maybe it's worth it.

If it's only used for a one-time news broadcast with two minutes of commercials in it, I think that probably is pretty cynical.

Mr. Kalb: Chris Whittle spent the day here at the Kennedy School yesterday, and I don't see him here today. One of the things that he said is that his company has already given out 300,000 TV sets to schools around the country.

He believes that within the next four or five years, most schools around the United States, I think he said 85 to 90 percent, will also have received sets. And therefore, will receive 12 minutes of news very early on in the day, 10 minutes of news and two minutes of commercials.

He believes that the equipment would then be used in the rest of the day to pull in on a down-linked system all kinds of other programming. And that it would then be left to the teachers to figure out which of that programming would then be projected to the students the following day and become the basis of a discussion.

Chris Whittle also believes that the move toward this kind of technology is inevitable and that the education systems around the country are being short-sighted, simply turning their backs not only on something that is inevitable technologically, but something that is very worthy.

When I raised with him a question as to why it is more worthy for students to look at television than to read a book, I'm not sure that I quite understood the rationalization that he offered, but I think that what I've given is a fair account of what he has said.

On the first part of your question, Janice, as you know, there is, right now an effort at the Shorenstein Barone Center to work out with the National Education Association a means of devising a curriculum in press/politics that would be made available to secondary schools around the country.

As with everything else, it is a matter of money. Everybody thinks it is a great idea, but then who is going to pay for it? And the NEA, apparently, has the same kind of problems that many businessmen and corporations around the country have.

So, they are considering it. It's still a close call. I don't know how it's going to end up, but we'll know soon enough.

Mr. Cronkite: I don't know how much you want to dwell on this, but I've had a very personal experience with all this with a program that I devised called "Why in the World." It was meant to be a daily news program for schools, to be piped into the schools by satellite and so forth and to be received on their regular television sets.

The idea was we were going to take, really, the best teachers in the country on different disciplines each day from a city desk type operation and assign them the story of the day, the night before, find the one who was willing to speak extemporaneously on this subject, the story of the day. And in that particular discipline, show how it relates to the discipline. Try to give some relativity to the students between the outside world and their formal studies.

We ran across some serious roadblocks, particularly in the NEA. We had problems. We finally solved many of those. But there was a huge teacher resistance to this because it's not in the syllabus. And they learn the syllabus for their course and they got such and such matter to cover every day. If they are interrupted with this thing for one day a week or something of the kind, the whole thing seems to go out the window. They are not willing to do their homework, apparently, in order to be prepared to do this the following day.

This was one of the problems we ran into. We finally had a whole department which worked simply with teachers trying to get this across.

And I'll tell you, one of the most horrible things that happened, just a quick incident, in one school, where they had equipment available in the Los Angeles area. They had equipment available. It was one that we wanted to use in our test programming before we ever went on the air with the thing, which was on the air for several years with PBS, not in the form I'm talking about, but something similar to it, we were working up to it, never had the money.

But at any rate, this one school, the equipment was available. One of the teachers was in charge of the audio/visual department of the school. He asked, how much is this worth to me to get the equipment out every morning in order to do this? He wanted something under the table in order to do his job.

That's the kind of morality that we've run across in America today.

Mr. Shaw: I'd like to ask each of you, what makes you think that network news gathering and writing, reporting and analysis is going to get better when the mandate of each network is first to make a profit rather than first to inform?

Mr. Russert: We have actually a much more diminished role and that's to break even. (Laughter)

We are at a point where, and the numbers have all been discussed widely in the press, we lost 50 million dollars a year for about 10 years, it's a half-billion dollars. Not many businesses would stay afloat with that kind of record. And what NBC—

Mr. Kalb: You are talking about the news division?

Mr. Russert: The news division, yes.

The network itself made money, continues to make money, but nowhere near the sum that it once made. I'm not crying the blues for NBC or for the other networks.

I do understand that CBS Network, excuse me, the CBS Television Network, the O&Os, the owner/operated stations and the network itself, this quarter, is very close to perhaps reporting a loss or close to it. Now that may not be the case, but at least that's the rumor on the street, which would be the first time in history that that would happen to a television network.

I think we have all seen the demise of many great papers in this country. And certainly, I consider part of my charge to make sure that NBC News does not become extinct. People call it a dinosaur. I don't want to ride a dinosaur to its grave.

And if that means that we have to try to manage our resources and still try to conduct ourselves in that way, so be it. Of course there are going to be compromises. I wish we had more correspondents, more producers, more — we don't. And I've never met anyone at a newspaper who didn't feel likewise.

The key to it, Bernie, and I think you are experiencing the same tightening that we are, is can we in fact find ways to do our business a little bit different without shortchanging our journalism.

And I can name, I don't want to bore you, but in three or four ways we've gone about it, but it's going to be difficult.

I'll tell you, the one person who is absolutely destroying network news budgets is George Bush. He has traveled more than any president in the world in history, in his trips. And when you go from Prague to Germany to Paris to Saudi Arabia to Cairo, the cost of that trip, seven countries in South America in December. He's now thinking about

Australia and New Zealand in January. It is megabucks trying to keep up with that man. And maybe it's all part of a plot.

But obviously it is at a point where the economy is such where advertising is down, it's going to get tougher and tougher for the network news divisions to break even, much less make money. But that's part of our responsibility, as with any newspaper.

Mr. Cronkite: I think one of the most serious effects of the serious, down-hole, bottom-line thinking at the network news levels is in the foreign bureaus. And this is a very critical matter to the general intelligence provided the American people through their news broadcasts.

To close all of these foreign bureaus as they all have done now and to think that you can cover the world like you cover a city from a city desk on a fire-alarm basis is really sabotaging the entire news effort overseas.

I think a case could be made, perhaps, that if all of us had had bureaus in Baghdad, for instance, or foreign correspondents, even a bureau in the Middle East with enough correspondents to cover the Middle East thoroughly, to have really understood what Saddam Hussein was up to, the kind of man he was, the moves he was making, the threats he was making toward Kuwait. And these men who had been in Baghdad insisting, "Give me air time, give me air time, I've got to get on there and tell you this story, we might not be in the position we are in today." It's just possible that that could be the case.

And it's going to be the case over and over again and around the world if we don't have people who know the beat. They've got to know the story, they've got to know the people who are involved in the story, they've got to know the trustworthiness of the sources in the story, they've got to know the sources, as a matter of fact. You can't fly into a bureau somewhere and talk to a stringer you had who may be connected with the government in the first place or some part of the government and expect to get accurate information to relay to the American people. And the inaccurate information may be far more dangerous than no information at all.

I think it's absolutely criminal for us not to be there.

Mr. Hunt: My, we've been very Harvard-like this morning, so let me demagogue a little bit on this issue, and picking up an idea that Hodding Carter advanced in The Wall Street Journal several years ago.

There are about 25 or 30 network stars who are making over a million dollars. If they were to take a 25 percent pay cut, that would mean about — and I'm sorry I'm going to end my blossoming friendship with Richard Leibner now, I'm afraid — that would mean about 10 million dollars, which would be about a hundred employees or five or six or seven or eight bureaus. And if Magic Johnson can do it, I don't know why Dan Rather and Tom Brokaw and Peter Jennings can't do it.

Mr. Leibner: When the ownership of CBS changed a few years ago and when the deep cuts were proposed, which turned out to be 30 million dollars and 238 lives disturbed, in fact Dan Rather and a few other correspondents did come to me and rather specifically had me call somebody at the highest levels of management and offer to return over one million dollars in salary. And that's a true story.

The voice at the other end of the phone said, "Richard, don't you dare raise that with any other person but myself, because the 10 jobs or the one bureau that will be protected will be protected for less than 30 or 60 or 90 days or in the following year's budget, that will then again dissolve."

Those people who are getting their fair share of income as the system has balanced it out, should not forfeit it because it will not change the bottom line or the people who run the networks. It is a pervasive attitude. The cost of the baseball contract and the losses attendant to that and a decision to put a bid on the table that resulted in 300 million dollars more being spent to procure that contract than was necessary for fear of not winning it and taking the sport away from NBC is having a greater effect, somebody

else's managerial decision is having a greater effect in the news division and in the O&O budgets than is the salary of any 10 people which found their level without anybody putting a gun to their heads.

And top management said, "You are deceiving yourself if you try to give back salaries."

Mr. Russert: Al, I read The Journal is closing its Philadelphia bureau and others. Have you suggested that Norman Pearlstine take a cut?

Mr. Hunt: No, but I'll tell you what, Tim, I'll be perfectly willing to say that no one at The Journal will make five or six times what anybody else makes there, so television should do the same.

Mr. Russert: Including Peter Kann and—

Mr. Hunt: Yeah, sure, absolutely.

Mr. Russert: This is on the record. Maybe Norman?

Mr. Hunt: Norman Pearlstine doesn't make more than five or six times any of us.

We closed one bureau in 20 years, and it was a terrible thing to do, hated to do it, I think it's going to hurt us. I hope that's it. I think that pales in comparison to the bureaus that the networks have closed over the last four or five years.

Mr. Cronkite: I want to point out none of this affects me, I'm the Mickey Mantle of World War III. (Laughter)

Mr. Driscoll: I'm Jack Driscoll from the The Boston Globe. Before we get any further on this pay-cut issue— (Laughter)

—I'd like to raise the question of debates and maybe this is directed more at Tim than any of you.

Every time we come up with a formula, they seem to come up with a maneuver that makes it inadequate. We did have Lincoln-Douglas debates twice here in the Massachusetts gubernatorial election. And before we were through, each question was a campaign speech with a question mark on the end.

And I just wondered how you would control the candidates from getting off into that direction?

Mr. Russert: Wasn't there a moderator? I think that's the key. I think I have enough confidence in Shaw, Jennings, Rather, Brokaw, to actually say that, "Excuse me, Candidate, thank you for the speech, now let me ask you the question again and here's the follow-up."

Mr. Kalb: I think it was a considerable advance over the debates in Massachusetts during the primary when there were reporters asking these questions. The reporters asked good questions and then the speeches came anyway.

This time, the reporters were eliminated and each candidate asked the other a specific question. And it is true, that in the asking of the question, there was a speech that preceded the question mark, but nevertheless, it was, I think, a step forward.

And I think what is being outlined here in a number of different ways, starting with Walter's speech last night, Jack, I think has carried the concept even further.

To me, one of the central issues in the debate is who really controls it, who sponsors it? Walter this morning said that that may not be a central question. To me, it is a central question because during the 1988 debates, Jim Baker, more than any other single human being — and I'll defer to Al if I'm wrong on this — worked out the number of debates, the length of the debates, where they would be, the selection of the reporters, at a certain point, as I understand it, he even made a call to one of the executive producers to find out whether it was not indeed time to move from domestic to foreign affairs because that was the advance deal. And in fact, the debates were set up by the two political parties, by the Republican and Democratic parties.

And it would seem to me that in some of what we've heard last night and today, if a system could be worked out according to which the networks were "the sponsors," I think that would be a considerable advance. These debates are television programs.

Mr. Hunt: I think that's a fair characterization, and I think that's the genius of Tim's proposal. I think that simple proposal solves the whole problem right there.

Ms. Roberts: Well, except for this business of the politicians using debates. I mean, I just think that's the case. I'm not sure these debates are all that enlightening.

I think the single most enlightening moment in a debate in 1988, and I sat through all those Democratic primary debates, it was just God-awful, was Bernie Shaw turning to Michael Dukakis and asking him about what he would do if his wife was raped, which wouldn't have happened if the candidates were addressing each other. And it revealed more about Michael Dukakis's character than any single other thing. And we didn't like what we saw, as a people.

I do think that candidates are very adept at using television to make their speeches no matter who's there asking them questions than it is the surprise question from an informed journalist that is the best thing that can happen.

Mr. Cronkite: I didn't mean for one minute, when I talked about sponsorship not being important, to suggest that the way the debate is conducted is not important. I was just saying who puts it on isn't, but they have to keep their hands off of the operation.

Mr. Bessie: This seems the right point to ask this question. I'm a book publisher of, among others, Teddy White.

Walter, you mentioned briefly, very briefly, in another context last night, public television and I rise to a question of personal, if not privilege, at least belief, what do you think of the impact on which you are all talking about of the MacNeil/Lehrer show?

Mr. Cronkite: I think the impact is important. It is the sort of thing I wish we had a lot more of. I wish the networks would give some time to a similar approach to the news, certainly, at least a weekly program of some type, if they can't do it daily in their 23 minutes.

But the problem is always going to be, I think, that for the serious discussions can you command the audience out there somewhere. This is the problem with the networks who are in a profit-making mode.

Mr. Bessie: Nationally speaking, it's not a bad audience.

Mr. Cronkite: No, not bad at all, but it probably is not adequate to please the commercial networks, I wouldn't think, and their advertising.

Mr. Bessie: Do you think we are approaching parity?

Mr. Kalb: You know, the ratings for the *MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour*, on an extraordinary night, reach the average of the Sunday morning television interview programs, which give us some sense of balance on that.

Mr. Russert: But in terms of the quality of their work, the folks from PBS and MacNeil/Lehrer have been more aggressive in pursuing these kinds of ideas. We were just overwhelmed with their researchers gobbling up information. And I think you are going to see extraordinary coverage of the campaigns by PBS and MacNeil/ Lehrer.

Mr. Shafroth: I'm Will Shafroth and I'm a student here at the Kennedy School.

I'm wondering if any of the panelists can answer if you see the day or see the need for the day when television news offers its viewers the same kind of forum for criticism that the other forms of the medium offer through letters to the editor or National Public Radio letters from listeners, or even on *60 Minutes* where there are letters?

Mr. Russert: We've tried it a few times on the *Today* show and *Nightly News.* Sometimes it worked and sometimes it didn't. We have a, I think we call it Mail Bag on the *Today* show, and Brokaw calls it Write to Nightly or something.

It is not particularly riveting television. It does, I think, give the viewer a sense that they do have a voice, which is itself worth something. It's something we've used on and off and perhaps something we should explore again.

Mr. Cronkite: I'd say it's a time limitation again. It's obviously desirable, but are you going to take part of 23 minutes to do it? I think that's the question.

There again, expand the news, give us a little more time, special programming; sure it ought to be done.

Ms. Gatz: My name is Carolyn Gatz and I'm an editorial writer for The Courier Journal of Louisville, Kentucky and I'm here as a student this year.

I'd like to go back to the question of how the media, particularly television, might cover contemporary campaigns differently, respond to the different way that they are run in the state. And I'd like to talk about the coverage of the Boston Harbor photo opportunity. That seemed very easy to see how that might have been handled differently, as you've described.

I wonder if you could talk a little bit about how you might better handle things like the flag factory tours and the Willie Horton incident, those messages that go to the gut and not to the brain in the first place?

Mr. Russert: I think in terms of the campaign coverage, if Bush was going to inject the issue of furloughs into the campaign, we then have a responsibility to discuss that issue, both what the federal policy towards furloughs was as opposed to Massachusetts. Obviously, these are some of the things the Dukakis campaign could have done and perhaps tried to do a bit belatedly.

As to the flag factory, we did begin to mock that, in a sense, that Bush wrapped himself in the flag again, obviously trying to suggest that he was a patriotic candidate. It's difficult on those kinds of photo ops and issues. The final alternative is just not cover it. He's gone to it a third time, there he is again, and tonight we've decided to talk about his education proposals or lack of them, which I think is one of the ways we'll try to go about it.

Mr. Cronkite: No wonder there wasn't any emotion in the last campaign; Bush was wrapped in a flag and Dukakis was locked in a tank. (Laughter)

Mr. Gordon: Al Gordon.

I wanted to ask two things. First, seeing what you are talking about photo ops, when you get that satellite feed on Bush with turkey dinner with the troops, what are you going to do with it?

And maybe Mr. Cronkite will elaborate a little bit further, you talked about how the collapse of party organizations is a screening mechanism, how the press should take on that responsibility. I wanted to know how far you would go in having the press be a monitor of political figures and candidates?

Mr. Russert: What we plan to do is, Brokaw will be in Saudi Arabia from Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. So, we'll show that picture on television. It's the President of the United States visiting the troops. He now has invited, in fact, the four Congressional leaders as of this morning. They will be there likewise.

I think it's a legitimate news story and we'll show it. But it will be in the context of the coverage, of our ongoing coverage which has been rather extensive as to how many troops are there, the most access we can get to them, just what is the logistical and strategic situation and any interviews we can come upon.

Mr. Cronkite: I didn't know that Bush invited the four Congressional — has he invited Gorbachev and Mubarek?

Ms. Roberts: Again, I think the problem you get into here is that the visual image is just so much stronger than anything you say. You told the story last night about Lesley's piece where she really slunk into the White House the next day and they loved it.

And that the pictures just are so much stronger than any words that you say. You know, all of us have had this experience of going on television, it doesn't matter how smart you are, how wrong you are, how anything you are, what people notice is your hair or your earrings. You are the picture at the moment that you are on, and if you are putting a television story on the air, the pictures are what anybody responds to.

So, I don't think that talk, mocking the flag factory, does any good, frankly. The fact that you are showing the pictures of the flag factory is all that he cares about. And I think that the same thing will be true in the desert, that all that will be seen is the president.

And now if he has George Mitchell and Tom Foley and Bob Dole, and Bob, poor Bob Michel, he would really hate this trip — he's a sensible soul. And, you know, they are all there sitting there eating turkey, I mean, it's sort of silly to me to look at it, but I think that the image will be there of America, you know, our leader is with our troops. And it doesn't matter what anyone of us says about it, that's what will be the only thing that is known, is the visual image. It's just unbelievably powerful.

And it's interesting for me from the perspective of somebody who does both radio and television regularly, the things that you can do with those pictures that I could never do and no matter how brilliantly I wrote, I mean, we couldn't talk about the Berlin Wall coming down in the way that you saw it happening on television, or an earthquake in Mexico or a Mount St. Helens blowing up, or something like that.

But, on the other hand, when we are dealing with ideas, it is almost impossible to do that on television.

Mr. Broder: Dave Broder from The Washington Post.

Cokie Roberts, this morning, really gently responding to values and the way in which they shape agendas and Walter Cronkite last night did it much more directly saying that a lot of us in this business no longer share the working-day experience of the people that we are reporting for.

How do we get our own business back enough in touch with what is on the mind and the real concerns of the people that we are reporting for so that we can let their agenda begin to drive our agenda in reporting politics?

Mr. Hunt: At one time I teased my friend Fred Wertheimer of Common Cause saying that they represent the guilty rich and he responded, "But I write for the guiltless rich." (Laughter)

So I'm not sure I'm the best person to answer that question, David. One of the things we can do in politics, quite frankly, is to do what you do. And that is to keep talking to voters and to talk more to voters and talk less to Bob Squier and that group. And I think you still practice it probably better than anyone in the business. And I think you still knock on doors and go to shopping centers. And I think we probably don't do enough of that. I think that's the first thing we can do.

And in conjunction with that, Tim's point about over-coverage of candidates and under-coverage of real issues and real people and the way politics affect them, is something that I think that newspapers and television can think more carefully about.

Ms. Roberts: I mean, for my sins, I spend even-numbered years in shopping malls all over America and I'm not even a shopper, I'm a catalogue shopper.

And I think that that's a very important thing to do because once you get beyond the initial question, you know, who are you voting for and why, you start to have people telling you things about their lives that are very important to hear because you then bring that back to your coverage, of Congress in my case. And what you get is people saying, "Well, yeah, things are pretty good, but, you know, my mother is still alive and her health-care situation is terrible and because I'm taking care of her, I can't help out my daughter who is working full-time and I hate the day-care situation she's got for her children."

And you get a whole set of issues in that kind of conversation that you can then take back with the coverage that you are doing on a daily basis. And I think too few of us do it, because it's hard work. I'm scared to death to walk up to strangers in a shopping mall with a microphone in my hand, whereas walking up to a politician with a microphone in my hand is a cinch. We always joke in the Capitol, you use it as a weapon, you know, down, boy, because they are very eager. (Laughter)

But, you know, it's getting back to the plain old hard work part of journalism.

Mr. Cronkite: David, I think that part of it is that you've shown the way — there just haven't been enough followers. That you have, I think, your great genius is that you've broken away from pack journalism. You take a situation, you assess it very quickly, you write about it before you consult with your colleagues about it.

And perhaps what is required here is tougher editors who are a little more aggressive and imaginative, innovative themselves who will listen to reporters who break out of the pack, who have different ideas, different views of stories and are willing to write them that way and an editor who is willing to publish them that way instead of comparing his reporter's report with the AP and UPI as of this week and what's on the networks. That we've gotten into a conformity that has destroyed a lot of the value of the daily newspaper. Also, the networks, the same thing.

Mr. Russert: One of the ideas I've been bouncing around in my own mind, David, is reading in The Post of some of the focus groups you've conducted. I remember when Atwater was trying to organize his campaign, his now infamous focus group in New Jersey, where he first trotted out the issues of furlough and flag burning and some of those things.

Would it be possible to do a piece where we would actually conduct a focus group, show people ads, tape it and edit it and try to show how people were reacting to candidates and to issues and to ads? We do a lot of man-on-the-street interviews, but unfortunately they do get reduced to the quick sound bites. But is there a way for us to intelligently use focus groups in a journalistic way? It's just something I've been thinking and I'm not sure.

In terms of elitism in journalism, I'd like to ask Jack Driscoll to confirm a story that David Gergen tells that in 1929 when the stock market crashed, there was cheering in The Boston Globe newsroom and in 1987 when it crashed, they all ran and called their stockbrokers? (Laughter)

Mr. Hunt: I think another thing I forgot about, and Cokie touched on it a little bit, is that we want to continue to, David, is to have more diversity in the newsrooms, because I think that brings less of that upper-middle-class, white mindset to things.

And I guess what worries me a lot, and I'm talking about The Journal as well as television, is that with the economic hard times, with cutbacks, it's frequently the last hired and those tend to be disproportionately minorities and even women are going to be the first to go. And I think that diversity is terribly important to a newsroom.

Ms. Roberts: I want to emphasize that, too. I think that is the most important thing. All of us know every day what the lead story is. But there are lots of days in any one of our beats that there's not a lead story. And particularly when you work for a newspaper or you work for something like NPR that has a 90-minute newshole at night and 120-minute newshole in the morning, you cover something whether there's news happening or not because there's this monster that's eating up material.

And so you go out and you find stories that you think are interesting. And that comes from your life experience. It comes from, you know, I happen to cover a lot of stories in Congress that have to do with women and children. I happen to have noticed that out of the 44 new members of the freshman Congress, 13 of them are Roman Catholic.

I mean, there are certain things that I will bring my own experience and my own interest into the coverage. And I think that it is wildly important for every newsroom to have a diversity of population, not just in terms of sex and race and ethnicity, but in terms of age, much more, we have got too many young people. You have to have some people that are interested in archaeology and some people who are interested in rock and roll.

And I really think that that is something that we do not spend anything like enough time on worrying about, is the diversity of the newsroom.

Mr. Raymont: There are two points that were made this morning, I'd hoped perhaps Walter Cronkite would have addressed that last night because you had three generations listening to you who I suspect don't have a clue what a wire service is. You speak of diversity and I think you'll find that in the wire services you ask where are the people who know the beat.

And I don't know who your agent was when you were working for the United Press, or perhaps you didn't have one, but how many times did people from *Life* and *Time* come to your bureau, and these were the television stars of their time in terms of what they were getting paid compared to what you were getting paid, and how many times did they come to your bureau or to see Henry Shapiro and ask them what's going on here, these were the people on the beat.

Now, this is a subject that I don't think has been addressed, that is, what is happening to the wire services? And particularly today, when we hear again that the United Press is on the rocks — I spent 18 years with the United Press and they were the most frustrating and the most exciting years of my life, perhaps — and I was amazed that the American journalistic community, which was so proud of diversity, that it sort of didn't raise a peep when a Mexican had to come and save the United Press.

Now, I remember when The Observer in London was going under, it was an American corporation that put in two-million dollars to save them. I think it was The Observer.

Well, anyway, I wonder if you couldn't address this question, and if you don't see a great danger for the Associated Press to have a monopoly. And specifically, to this day, to what extent do the networks and CNN use wire-service copy?

Mr. Cronkite: Oh, I'd say almost totally as compared to reports from your own correspondents in the field which are so few these days. Those people who are in the field, producers, so called, a misnomer, and the correspondents in the field are not reporting back to the evening news broadcast, they are preparing a report that will either be broadcast of their own or not. It's been one of the failings of network news from the very beginning. It's totally, almost totally wire-service dependent.

The loss of the United Press is another severe blow to diversity in American reporting, a very severe blow. The principal loss is not in the United Press' reports themselves so much as the fact that there is no monitor any longer for the single service that survives, the Associated Press. Any good editor, a good telegraph editor or manager or whatever, would take a look at the two services and if they didn't agree on at least the facts of the story, he would query one or the other service, usually the United Press would be queried first.

Actually, I don't think that exists at all anymore anyway. The way news people are trained now on monopoly newspapers, which we have around the United States, is they don't question the reports. They come in, if they like the writing of the AP or the writing of the UP, or UP is first on the story, and they are on deadline, that's the story that's used.

Checking the facts, as near as I can tell, doesn't really exist anymore, certainly not on the news services. I'm appalled. We used to do it under my direction at CBS. But it was very hard to keep our writers on the ball in querying the service about non-agreeing facts. I can tell you another thing that happens, just by sidelight on this, and this is a major problem with broadcasting, I think, a big problem. It is so easy to do, it's so easy to write a news broadcast from the wires; there's nothing to it. You read the first two paragraphs of any story, rewrite them and you can get by with it. There just aren't editors in broadcasting who are aggressive enough to challenge this kind of writing.

I used to hire press-service writers as writers on the evening news. I thought, first of all, their speed, their accuracy. And the important thing, that they knew how press services operated and would not have the trust in the press service that the young people have coming out of college, apparently. That they would know that another 19- or 20-year-old is writing those stories also.

And for goodness sakes, check them. If nothing else, pick up the phone and call the sheriff out in Laramie, Wyoming, and say, "I don't believe this story, is this really what happened?" That's a totally inexpensive thing as far as a network could do.

I'd hire these reporters, very good ones. I hired one off the Associated Press with 18 years at the Associated Press. And he came to us and just like all the others, at first he's aggressive, in a good press-service way, but very shortly he atrophies. He finds that there's nothing to do. That he takes the stuff off the wires, rewrites the first two paragraphs, doesn't even read down to the twentieth paragraph. The lead may be down there, as we all know. But it's difficult to find it.

But this doesn't get to your question. The question is that monopoly newspapering all across the country and now monopoly press service, in a sense, we do have a back stop today in the fact that a lot of newspapers are giving us press-service type attention. But that is not the breaking story in the small towns of America, that's the big stories that they'll give you.

The monopoly newspaper doesn't have a monitor either. Now, I know my old days in Houston and my first experience at The Houston Press, our competing newspaper, The Houston Chronicle in the afternoon and a morning paper that ran right into the evening hours with its editions. But we had a copy boy over at the loading dock at The Houston Chronicle to take the first 10 papers out of the printing press and run across town, six blocks through traffic, to deliver those 10 papers to The Houston Press.

And all of us grabbed the papers, the city editor particularly, he was a little guy who could hardly see over his desk, but he'd stand up and he'd start going through that paper and screaming out across the room, usually, "Cronkite! The Chronicle's got this guy at 1414 Westheimer and you've got him at 1412 Westheimer, who the hell's right?"

You know, you say what difference does it make? What difference it makes is that there are 15 people who live around 1412 and 1414 Westheimer that day know the paper was wrong and say, "You see, they're always wrong about these things, or the name's spelled wrong, see, they're always wrong about that."

Well, multiply that 15 by 20 stories in the newspaper that day that have a single little error in it by five days a week or seven days a week and you've suddenly got a credibility factor spreading through the community of the newspaper's accuracy.

And they don't have these monitors anymore. They are certainly not going to watch television for that kind of information as a double check against the factual material that they have. And the local broadcasts, forget them, as far as that sort of thing goes.

Mr. Kalb: We are quickly running out of time, I'm afraid. And I'd like to exercise the prerogative of the moderator's chair and ask the last question, which is a kind of summary question and it really goes to the heart of many of the questions that are raised at the Shorenstein Barone Center during our roundtable seminars and brown-bag lunches and just meetings down in the corridor.

We have cited Kiku Adatto's study which she calls "Sound-Bite Democracy."

We have talked about salaries and Leibner has told us something about Rather, but it didn't work.

We have talked about elitism in the press and I'm not sure that in the answers we really provided anything that to a young journalist would suggest an uplifting and inspiring sense.

We have talked about the debates. And there, for me, there were a number of very important recommendations, which I hope that the networks will all take to heart, and I know that Tim's is.

We have talked about conformity in picking up Henry Raymont's last question about the wire services.

And we've talked about anchormen, not enough in my view, being parachuted into stories and by virtue of their presence, I think Walter mentioned this last night and Tim today, by virtue of their presence, you simply know that it's going to get on the air, and

probably to an extent well beyond what the news itself warrants, simply by virtue of the fact that the anchorman is there and therefore giving all kinds of additional credibility and importance to a story.

Through it all, to me, getting back to Kiku's phrase about sound-bite democracy, with all of these problems, as you project toward the end of this century, what is going to be the shape of American democracy? Are we going to be enhanced as a free society by the clashing of press and politics, by the technological advances, by the monetary squeezes, all of which we have to live with as realistic options in our society? What will be the shape of American democracy at the turn of the century, is the question in my mind.

Mr. Hunt: I covered the debate in 1978 between Bill Bradley and Geoffrey Bell and Geoffrey Bell gave a speech on the origins of mankind. And Bradley's answer was, it took Will and Ariel Durant 21 volumes to do what you just did in 10 minutes.

So, Marvin, I'm basically an optimist. For all the systemic problems we have, that there are more strengths than there are weaknesses to our society and our system.

And I think, as far as the media is concerned, I think I'm also an optimist. I think that how we use technology too, whether we perform better for people, is going to be a critical question.

I worry a little bit because I think competition, which should be very good, and in so many instances in the past has been good, oftentimes or too often, it's producing sort of Gresham's law in our business, and the bad driving out the good. And that concerns me.

But I must say that basically I am an optimist. I think there are brighter people on the newspapers and on television than ever before. There's more diversity, which we touched on a few moments ago, than there's ever been before. And I just think, basically, that that's going to make it a better business, but it will make it a different business by the end of this decade, but I think it will be a better business.

Ms. Roberts: Well, I'm somewhat optimistic, too, because we have to remember that there's a lot of different things going on. Yes, we've gone to monopoly newspapers in a lot of towns. And the newspapers in a lot of towns aren't worth reading.

And we have sound bites that are nine seconds long, eight seconds long, on the evening news. But, you do have a MacNeil/Lehrer, an NPR, a CNN happening at the same time.

I think that you have at the same time that you have a lot of newspapers going out of business, you have The Wall Street Journal and The New York Times becoming national newspapers for the first time, and USA Today, for better or for worse.

So, I think that you have changes that are happening where there really is a tremendous amount of news available for people who want to get it. You know, people can punch up on their personal computers a phenomenal amount of news any day of the week. They just have to sign up for the right software program. And a lot of people do that.

So that I think that there's a market for it and that it's there. I don't think that you have Joe Sixpack terribly interested in reading The New York Times or even in watching the evening news. And there's no way you can make that person do it. If they want to be uneducated, they can be uneducated, it's their right. And there it is.

And I think that the same thing is true of the political system. We get the government we vote for. And whether you like it or not. And these people, I mean, my view of the House of Representatives, which is very up close and personal, is that these people are very representative of the American people. It's not that it's under-representing them, it's over-representing them in a lot of ways.

And it is showing, we are showing data now that shows that if everybody who doesn't vote voted, that we would have exactly the same people elected as the people who are there. We'd just have more resounding mandates for the people who have been elected. So I really don't think it's a dire situation. I think that it is a sort of a blandified

situation — blandified, I regret the heterogeneity that we used to have in local newspapers and in local politicians. They are all darling boys now. You know, they are much more adept at the blow dryer than I am. (Laughter)

And I think a lot of that comes from television.

But I think that's what's happening in this country anyway, is that we are becoming more homogenous, probably as a result of television, and I regret that, but I don't think it's a disaster for democracy.

Mr. Cronkite: Well, at the risk of sounding like there was something collusive in your question and my answer, the hope is that there are other Shorenstein Barone type centers around the country of many kinds studying all of these issues, probably in greater depth than we've ever studied them before.

There must be a hundred organizations in Washington, many of them important, a lot of them not so important perhaps, studying our electoral process, our political process, our legislative process, the press and politics. This center is very important in the study of press and politics and public policy, but there are others around the country doing much the same thing.

I think that the fact that the intellectual community is concerned, worried enough to pay a lot of attention today and look toward the future with some idea that these things can be reformed, corrected and still — and perfect the democracy, I think is quite heartening.

And television's impact, of course, has been absolutely immense and some for the good and some for the bad. We have indeed raised the floor of understanding for people across the country, people who, very sadly, regrettably, almost criminally can not read or will not read, which is even worse. We've raised the floor of their knowledge.

Unfortunately, at the same time, I'm afraid, we've put something of a cap, a ceiling on the knowledge for the average person who just absorbs some part of television. That has left kind of a narrow intellectual crawl space between floor and ceiling, which has been television's role.

I would hope, as I suggested last night, that we can improve our educational processes enough so people will be more demanding of their newspapers and their television stations and networks. And I think there's hope in that as well.

The real hope is that we are aware of our problems and are attacking our problems in a democratic fashion. That, perhaps, can give us hope for the future.

Mr. Russert: I think we are at a critical stage in our continued development as a country and as a democracy. The amount of information we have is extraordinary and good. People of all educations, all economic levels, can now have access to information about their leaders, about their government, about their country.

But we are on the verge, I fear, of crossing from skepticism to cynicism. And it's part of a cycle which we've discussed a little bit today and Walter touched on last night. And it is our role, I think, to help this country, this electorate break out of it.

If we get the poison out of the negative ads, if we have a system where candidates don't want to engage in that kind of conduct because it doesn't help them get elected because of our monitoring, I think we'll have a positive effect on our system.

I think more and better candidates might want to get involved in the process that they don't think that they and their families are going to be beaten up unfairly and unmercifully.

And if that's the case, and that's the end result of these kinds of seminars, we've obviously made a positive contribution and I think we'll have a much better future.

As for Mr. Hunt's attacks on the anchors, I conclude by reminding him that I suffer from Irish Alzheimer's, I forget everything but the grudges. (Laughter)

Mr. Kalb: I would like to conclude by going back and take a crack at my own question, but by going back to something that Walter said in his speech and that I used in the close of my introduction to his initial Teddy White lecture last night.

He talked about five "ages" that we have all lived through; in a sense, five revolutions. I don't remember them all, but there's an atomic revolution that we've all experienced; a biological revolution in which people are tinkering with genes in laboratories; there's the age of communication which all of us are part of. Walter also mentioned a petrochemical revolution.

What was running through my mind was that for any human being to have lived through one of these revolutions could be a transforming experience in his or her life.

We live comfortably with the notion, I think, in this country particularly, that everything is cyclical. In an economic sense, we have all had depressions before and recessions before, and we go into one and we emerge and everything will be wonderful in another couple of years. And we think about the same things politically.

At the end of the Cronkite comment, the question that he raised was, when you have all of these revolutions taking place simultaneously, can you really not expect that there's going to be a revolution in thought and possibly action? We saw that happening last year throughout Eastern Europe.

I really wonder whether, with all of these revolutions taking place at the same time, whether we can still live comfortably in the notion that everything is cyclical, that if things are bad now, well, they'll get better later in another year or two, we just have to live through this particular bad time.

And it may be that we are on the edge, as a nation, of something quite revolutionary. I have a sense every now and then that there's something major lurking on the horizon and it's going to surprise us by its shape and its capacity to influence virtually every single thing that we do.

And, if that is true, the comfortable again assumptions that American democracy will simply go on as it has because we are essentially optimists, I don't know whether that is going to be.

Now as someone who has been intimately involved in trying to arrange the Theodore H. White Lectureship, I just want to say thank you to Walter Cronkite for coming up here, for making the effort to write that speech and for delivering it to as packed a house as the Kennedy School has ever seen.

To my three panelists, I want to give certificates of appreciation from the Center.

I think that in this initial Teddy White Lecture, we have all been informed. I think we all have been stimulated. I know that we've all had fun. That's a pretty good combination. And I thank the panel, Walter, and all of you for coming.

(Applause)