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TELEGRAM

September 20, 1976

Richard S. Salant
President
CBS News
51 West 52nd Street, New York, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Salant:

Your telegram to the President of September 18th raises a serious issue which we have carefully considered. Nevertheless, we continue to support the position previously taken by representatives of the League of Women Voters, the President and Mr. Carter concerning television coverage of the debates.

The President issued his debate challenge because he believes the voters should have the best opportunity to judge both candidates on the merits of their specific positions on the issues. We endorse the point made by CBS President Arthur R. Taylor in a communication dated August 26, 1976, to the Chairmen of the Senate and House Subcommittees on Communications. Mr. Taylor said that we must face the question "Is there a substantial danger that a live audience in an informal setting (however well intentional^{ed} and how non-partisan in theory that audience might be) could provide distractions from the substance of the debate or give supporting or negative emphasis to one participant or another?" The League's guidelines address this potential problem.

Michael Raoul-Duval
Special Counsel to the President



The White House
Washington

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PMS

PRESIDENT GERALD FORD (PLEASE DELIVER URGENTLY)

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON, D.C.



DEAR PRESIDENT FORD:

CBS NEWS URGENTLY REQUESTS THAT YOU REVERSE YOUR POSITION AND AGREE TO PERMIT THE TELEVISION AUDIENCE TO SEE AND HEAR THE INVITED AUDIENCES PRESENT AT THE FORTHCOMING LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS DEBATES. THE LEAGUE, AT A MEETING TODAY, INDICATED THAT IT WOULD TAKE A NEUTRAL POSITION ON THIS ISSUE, AND IF BOTH CANDIDATES AGREE THE AUDIENCE CAN BE SEEN AND HEARD, THEN IT TOO WOULD AGREE.

WE WISH TO EMPHASIZE IN THE STRONGEST POSSIBLE TERMS THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS ISSUE. A MATTER OF JOURNALISTIC PRINCIPLE AND ETHICS OF VERY GREAT MAGNITUDE IS AT STAKE, INVOLVING THE INDEPENDENCE OF NEWS COVERAGE AND NEWS JUDGEMENT BY BROADCAST JOURNALISTS.

TO REQUIRE US, AS THE PRICE OF COVERAGE, TO AGREE TO A RESTRICTION SUCH AS THIS -- TO REQUIRE US TO IGNORE AN INTEGRAL PART OF A NEWS EVENT AND PRETEND IT DOES NOT EXIST -- WOULD CONSTITUTE NOT ONLY AN ACT OF PRIOR CENSORSHIP BUT WOULD STRIP US OF THE RIGHT TO MAKE THOSE INDEPENDENT NEWS JUDGEMENTS CENTRAL TO A FREE AND VIGOROUS PRESS.

. IT WOULD CREATE THE MOST DANGEROUS PRECEDENTS, NOT ONLY AT HOME BUT ABROAD, WHERE WE HAVE CONSISTENTLY RESISTED ALL ATTEMPTS

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6 TO CONTROL OR LIMIT OUR COVERAGE. YET THIS IS PRECISELY WHAT THE
7 PROHIBITION ON AUDIENCE REACTION COMPRISES, AN ATTEMPT TO LIMIT
8 AND CONTROL COVERAGE.
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12 WE REGARD THE DEBATES AS A MOST IMPORTANT NEWS EVENT AND A MOST
13 VALUABLE PUBLIC SERVICE. WE SHOULD BE PERMITTED TO COVER IT IN
14 THE SAME MANNER WE COVER ALL NEWS EVENTS WITHOUT CENSORSHIP OR
15 RESTRICTION. WE WISH ONLY TO DO OUR JOBS IN THE MANNER THE PUBLIC
16 HAS COME TO EXPECT OF US.
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21 RICHARD S. SALANT
22 PRESIDENT, CBS NEWS
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TELEGRAM

DRAFT

Richard S. Salant
President
CBS News

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Michael Raoul-Duval
Special Counsel to the President



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7 PRESIDENT GERALD FORD (PLEASE DELIVER URGENTLY)

8 THE WHITE HOUSE

9 WASHINGTON, D.C.

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21 RICHARD S. SALANT
22 PRESIDENT, CBS NEWS
23 NNNN
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MIKE DUVAL

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

August 31, 1976

Dear Bob:

It's good to know that the Mutual Broadcasting System has made the commitment to carry the Presidential debates to its 700 affiliated stations.

The arrangements for the debates have not been finally agreed to. The negotiators, in fact, are meeting again tomorrow to continue trying to arrange the details.

Should it turn out that the agreed upon format includes a panel of newsmen asking questions, you can be sure that a newsman from Mutual will be given every consideration for service on the panel.

Thank you for your interest.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,



Ron Nessen
Press Secretary
to the President

Mr. Bob Stahly Moore
Director of News
Mutual Broadcasting System, Inc.
918 16th Street, N.W.
Washington, D. C. 20006

*File
Debates - TV coverage*

mutual broadcasting system, inc.

World Center Building, 918 16th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006 • (202) 785-6300

August 30, 1976

Mr. Ron Nessen
Press Secretary to
The President
The White House
Washington, D.C.



Dear Ron,

Anticipating that arrangements will soon be completed which will allow for broadcasting of debates between the Democrat and Republican candidates for President, please be advised that the Mutual Broadcasting System intends to carry these debates in their entirety on the Mutual Network which has over 700 affiliated stations.

Should the format for these debates include the presence of news reporters for the purpose of offering questions to the candidates, the Mutual Broadcasting System respectfully requests that one of its correspondents be included on the panel of reporters. I would like to point out that during the Kennedy - Nixon debates, the Mutual Broadcasting System was represented, along with the other networks, by a news correspondent on the panel.

Additionally, as the world's largest network which was founded in 1934, the Mutual Broadcasting System has a long standing tradition to provide complete coverage of such major political events as Presidential debates, campaigns, elections, inaugurations and was, in fact, the only radio network to carry gavel-to-gavel coverage of the Democrat and Republican convention of 1976.

I hope you will keep me advised on the progress of arranging the debates, the format, and the potential of Mutual's participation on any panel of correspondents, so that we may go forward with our arrangements for station clearances and the assignment of a news correspondent.

Mr. Ron Nessen
August 30, 1976
Page two

Thank you for your attention and consideration, and I will be looking forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely yours,



Bob Stahly Moore
Director of News

BM:jr



Site

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

September 20, 1976

Honorable Philip W. Buchen
Counsel to the President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Phil:

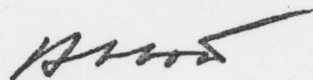
It was good to have a word with you this morning. As mentioned, I think Michael Duval has done a superb and dignified job of "holding firm" against posturing of the networks. There is absolutely no chance in the world of their staying away from Walnut Street Theatre Thursday night!

Note comments by Dean Burch and myself in today's Television Digest, enclosed.

Page 2 of the Digest reports our decision of Friday to permit taping and broadcast of debates within a period limited to 24 hours. This takes care of the daytime stations, coverage in Alaska and Hawaii, and the time needed to insert captions for the deaf (which PBS plans). Jim Quello and I pushed for this; Hooks and Lee dissented.

We are turning down Lester Maddox's complaint today.

Yours,



Abbott Washburn

Enclosure

