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THE NEW REPUBLIC

John Osborne
Associate Editor

October 10, 1974

Dear Jim,

I hear around the White House that serious consideration is being given by Ron Nessen to opening his regular briefings to film and sound coverage. You have asked for the views of correspondents. Here is mine, with a copy to Mr. Nessen.

Sound and film coverage would have a ~~disastrous~~ effect on the briefings. I emphatically oppose it and in doing so believe that I represent the views of a good many of my writing colleagues and, to my knowledge, of at least ~~one~~ chief of a radio news bureau. But I speak only for myself, of course.

My concern is not so much for the effect upon the hustlers and self-promoters in our company, though God knows that effect could be horrendous. My concern is principally for the effect upon the briefer. It would freeze him, debar the little lapses into casual chit chat that occasionally lighten the proceedings and can be quite informative, and generally convert the whole thing into more of a contrived show that it is now and has been over recent years.

Finally, it would encourage further electronic intrusion of all sorts. Only yesterday, after the President's press coverage, I was talking with Don Bacon and a couple of other reporters when I suddenly realised that some son of a bitch had a film camera stuck right in my face, recording everything. I should have told him to fuck off ~~right~~ right then, but the whole thing was so surprising and unexpected that I didn't. I told that this character and his attendant technician -- these people seem unable to work in less than troops -- have been roving the press room for some while and I'd like to know, by whose authority? But that is by the way. The issue is, film and sound at the briefings, and I'm against it.

Sincerely,

John Osborne

Mr. James Deakin
President
The White House Correspondents Association

BY HAND

cc: Ronald Nessen



NBC NEWS

A DIVISION OF NATIONAL BROADCASTING COMPANY, INC.

4001 NEBRASKA AVENUE, N.W., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20016, 202 362-4000

Jim Deakin
President
White House Correspondents' Association

Dear Jim,

As you might expect, I am in favor of permitting television camera crews to film the White House news briefings on a regular basis.

Film is a primary tool for reporting news on television. It is as important to our medium as newsprint is to your's. Denying reporters the use of film for their television stories is discriminatory and, I believe, pointless.

I am well aware of the argument that filming the briefing would in some way inhibit the free exchange between reporters and White House spokesmen. That is a discredited thesis. Reporters and subjects at other news conferences all over this capital have not been inhibited by the presence of cameras. If an official wishes to go off the record or on background the cameras can be stopped or the film not aired. Finally, the cameras would remain at the back of the room in a stationary position and would be activated only intermittently - so reporters and spokesmen wouldn't know when to be inhibited.

Television is here. It's time to give it full diplomatic recognition in the White House press room.

Sincerely,


Tom Brokaw



NATIONAL NEWSPAPER SYNDICATE

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VIENNA, VIRGINIA 22180

(703) 281-2808

REV. LESTER KINSOLVING
RELIGION COLUMNIST
AND
WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENT
MRS. JOHN PRISLEY
ASSOCIATE

October 3, 1974

Mr. James Deakin
President, White House Correspondents Association
The White House



Dear Jim:

I do appreciate the courtesy and candor you manifested this afternoon during our conversation following the press briefing. I trust that the length of this letter will evince the fact that I have given careful thought to your remarks, even though I have mixed reactions as to their substance.

My questions are, admittedly, lengthy -- but I do believe the record will show that I am by no means alone in asking lengthy questions. In regard to reasons why my questions are lengthy, I have no particular lust to give a speech, as I to am represented by a lecture bureau. I think rather, that the reasons my questions have been extended include the following:

- 1) The White House Correspondents Association has never managed, to the best of my knowledge, to formulate even a recommendation for a procedure which could end the present chaos, by which the daily press briefings often resemble an Arkansas hog calling contest, or (as 'The Boys On The Bus' observed) The French Chamber of Deputies.
- 2) The Press Room podium is still the city hall of Credibility Gap -- although, to be sure, in nothing of the measure it was during the Zeigler Era.
- 3) I have seen what The Boys On The Bus have done to such nonconformists as Sarah MacLendon and Clark Mollenhoff, by way of refusing to follow up even the most appropriate questions they may ask, or letting them face official wrath alone, or even laughing or groaning at them.

Hence we of the White House Press Corps Ishmaelite Squad are obliged, when we can obtain recognition, to ask questions with built-in follow-ups -- ~~xxx~~ as well as enough qualifiers as to expose evasive answers.

I doubt very much if this would be necessary if only the White House regulars were willing to help formulate some orderly procedure. But I doubt if this will be done, because if it were done for press briefings, it would logically be in order for Presidential News Conferences. And any system in which we proceeded in an orderly manner, such as drawing numbers, would deny these regulars their built-in advantage of reserved seats up front.

The daily press briefings could even be conducted with a system of numbers, which reporters could pick off a large hook, as is the case in some physicians offices. A second group of numbers, on another hook could be used by anyone wanting to follow up.

MORE

October 3, 1974

But as I say, I doubt very much if the regulars would allow such order. And in the absence of such, we nonconformists will have to do the best we can.

I am under the added burden of the fact that I must cover the religion beat as well as the White House, which scintillating, albeit intricate, combination I imagine that no one else in the press corps approximates. Hence my questions may well seem irrelevant to some, or even many. Well, there are often questions raised which seem irrelevant and exceptionally boring to me -- but I think of the Indian aphorism about walking in the other man's moccasins, and apply this to the fact that I don't write for their editors or broadcast for their general managers.

Moreover, I am not entirely assigned to the White House. On the other hand more of my morning commentary each day for WAVA News is expected to be political than religious.

Having ~~this~~ tried to explain why I ask unusual questions, in response to your information that there ~~ix~~ are unnumbered members of the White House press corps who are angry at my questions, let me assure you that I am angrier than they are.

I think Hell Week should last no longer than one year, if that, Jim. On the first day I attended a briefing (and you very kindly followed up my question in your very amusing manner) I was, at the close of the briefing very brusquely interrogated by John Osborne, who demanded to know my identity and the papers I represent.

In trying to be polite, I answered this elderly but still singularly arrogant bully, who acts as if he has not yet gotten over the heady perfume of being a hatchet artist for ~~the~~ Henry Luce.

I don't know if it was Osborne who spread the rumor that I was a CIA agent, but Dan Rather was kind enough to tell me about this, and the fact that some of our colleagues not only demanded to examine my credentials, but apparently fed this slime to Father McLaughlin, who refined it in his inimitable way and announced it on TV.

At one Nixon press conference, when -- along with 50 or 75 others -- I called for recognition by Nixon, Osborne took it upon himself to tell me to shut up and to call me a jackass, and then ~~putting~~ his side of this episode to a wire service. (This delighted the Scientologists -- who as you know are suing The Post-Dispatch, but there was virtually no other reaction.) I tried very politely to reason with Osborne, but what do you do when he explains his actions in terms of "I don't like you,"? -- except to find it easy indeed to reciprocate, along with the realization that I am not on either of these beats to win popularity contests.

One of my editors, who is regarded as one of the very best political writers in the West, advised me: "Be friendly with everyone-- and friends with no one." I thought this was to apply only to the Nixon administration. Perhaps it has to apply to other newsmen as well, although I rarely found ~~that to be~~ the case when I worked as a reporter on two of the biggest dailies in the U.S.

MORE



October 3, 1974

When Dan Rather suggested that my voice was reverberating at that Nixon press conference, I tried another way: a sign reading "MR. PRESIDENT." While some people were amused, Marty Schram growled: "What do you think this is, a circus?"

I thought this was a rhetorical question! Of course it was a circus, with Marty and the regulars given ringside seats where they don't have to call or hold up signs. ~~What a circus! What a circus! What a circus! What a circus!~~

Then, on one occasion after a press briefing, I was in the middle of a question to Jerry Warren when Carey of Copley interrupted, saying "Stand aside for a question of substance!" And he kept up this fantastic behavior until I had to instruct him to get his damn hands off me.

Just recently, Philip Buchen issued a rhetorical invitation to me, during a press briefing, suggesting that I come up to the podium and lecture on the theology of mercy. After the press briefing, I began one question on this when I was abruptly interrupted by Knight Newspapers, who angrily told me to stop preaching and to take my collar off -- which diverted me from Buchen, on whom I was writing a column for 230 secular newspapers. And I just do not intend to put up with anymore of this stuff.

Knight Newspapers was seconded By John Herbers and Ted Knapp. While these three are usually pleasant, I still wonder which of their editors instructed them to discuss the vesture and to make pronouncements of judgment upon the questions asked by other reporters. I asked if they had proffered the same advice to Congressman Drinan, who wears his collar at all times, even though some of his Republican colleagues think he is preaching and dislike same.

The afternoon following this incident, I discussed it with my General manager at WAVA News, who responded in Latin, which, roughly translated, means "Don't let the bastards grind you down."

I don't think these three are bastards -- but the rest of this statement about not letting ~~thax~~ oneself get ground down is apropos, and it emanates from one of those for whom I work. I do not share the apparently widespread low esteem of the White House Press Corps we see regularly on our bulletin board from assorted editors and columnists. Neither will I be overawed by them.

I have written at this length not for publication, Jim, but in order to try to chronicle my thoughts with regard to any of those unnumbered and ~~not~~ unidentified backbiters who may continue to bitch to you and say nothing to me. I plan to carry a copy of this letter for anyone who doesn't like what I am doing and who wants to discuss it. As for the others, they can take a flying leap into the Potomac, as I regard such with the same contempt as those many who write me anonymous letters.

One final consideration: your mention of the fact that you didn't want to see Sarah or me "barred from the press room." If anyone is serious about such a scheme, they had better have a damn good lawyer.

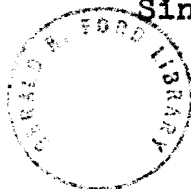
I do appreciate your courtesy and I will always try to be courteous. I will even try to reduce the length of my questions, if possible -- and because you asked, not because anonymous critics growled.

cc

Sarah MacLendon

File

Sincerely,


Les Kinsolving

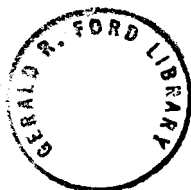
although I report for print and radio media, I do feel that the TV networks should be allowed to film the daily briefings if they wish to do so; -- primarily on First amendment grounds.

I would suggest the following procedures, in the cause of equity:

1. That a red light be installed (by these nets) which will begin flashing if they decide to go live.
2. That they scrupulously respect any person request to go off the record (which request I haven't seen so far)

I realize that going live gives TV an instant scoop over print. But print has been contending with instant radio since 1928 and print has the advantage of being able to afford the public infinitely more depth in reporting and interpretation.

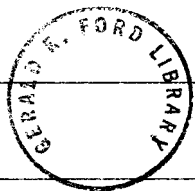
Will telecasting attract great crowds to these briefings? I wonder -- particularly if those who have been regularly covering the White House ~~are~~ have space held for them up front.



Les Kissel

Jim Deakin

— Re: Broadcast
of Briefings.



I for one have no feelings
one way or the other on filming
briefings, But I do object
to live broadcasts of the briefings
under all but the most unusual
circumstances.

Though I am in the Electronic
media, I lean toward barring
cameras & use of tape of the
briefings. I feel that it would
restrict & not facilitate

the free flow of information.

Leah St. John
National Public Radio

See
WHCA Assn

WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENTS ASSOCIATION

October 7, 1974

At the call of President Deakin, a meeting of the officers and directors of the White House Correspondents Association was held this date from 8 A.M. until 9.40 A.M. in the National Press Club.

The meeting was called to discuss changes proposed by Press Secretary Ron Nessen in the format of President Ford's press conferences.

Nessen on Friday, October 4, described some changes he has under consideration and asked the WHCA for its comments thereon.

After extended discussion this date, it was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously by those officers and directors present that they would not at this time take a position or express an organizational position on any of the changes except as noted below.

It was agreed by vote that the officers and directors would begin consultation with reporters at the White House and members of the WHCA on proposed changes in press conference format.

It was agreed that at this time the officers and directors of the WHCA take no position on any of the proposed changes, but are prepared after consultation to consider two questions: 1) Should the officers and directors take a position in their organizational capacities? and 2) If the answer to question 1 is yes, what proposed changes should be endorsed or opposed?

On a second vote, the officers and directors agreed unanimously that consistent with the vote above it would now be appropriate to advise Nessen of the sentiment of the officers and directors toward one proposed change, to wit: That the present practice of reporters standing and shouting for recognition be replaced. It was agreed that an appropriate alternative would be to have reporters wishing recognition to stand in place in silence as opposed to a proposal to have reporters wishing recognition to sit in place and raise their hands in silence.

It was agreed that the second vote should be conveyed to Nessen only as an expression of sentiment and should not be interpreted as an organizational position.

Present at today's meeting were President Deakin, Secretary O'Rourke, Treasurer Poe, and directors Beckman, Healy, Kempster and Theis.

Respectfully submitted,
Lawrence M. O'Rourke, Secretary

WHITE HOUSE

CORRESPONDENTS' ASSOCIATION

1029 NATIONAL PRESS BUILDING

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20004

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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

PAUL F. HEALY
New York Daily News

ALDO B. BECKMAN
Chicago Tribune

J. WILLIAM THEIS
Hearst Newspapers

NORMAN KEMPSTER
Washington Star-News

JAMES DEAKIN, President
St. Louis Post Dispatch

HELEN THOMAS, Vice-President
United Press International

EDGAR A. POE, Treasurer
New Orleans Times-Picayune

LAWRENCE M. O'ROURKE, Secretary
Philadelphia Bulletin

March 11, 1975

Know All Persons By These Presents:

Pursuant to the Constitution of the White House Correspondents' Association and subsequent amendments and by-laws, the annual election of officers of the association was held in the appropriate location and under legal circumstances. The results are formally proclaimed herewith and their validity attested by the undersigned William Davis, Superintendent of the White House Press Room, to wit:

President: Helen Thomas, United Press International

Vice President: Lawrence M. O'Rourke, Philadelphia Bulletin

Secretary: Paul F. Healy, New York Daily News

Treasurer: Edgar A. Poe, New Orleans Times-Picayune

Executive Committee:

Aldo B. Beckman, Chicago Tribune

J. William Theis, Hearst Newspapers

Ralph Harris, Reuters

Robert C. Pierpoint, CBS News

The above-mentioned officers will be installed at the annual dinner of the association on May 3, 1975 at the Washington Hilton Hotel.



Signed,

William Davis


THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

April 30, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: DONALD RUMSFELD

VIA: JIM CONNOR

FROM: RED CAVANEY 

SUBJECT: THE PRESIDENT AND MRS. FORD'S
ATTENDANCE AT THE WHITE HOUSE
CORRESPONDENTS ASSOCIATION DINNER
Washington Hilton Hotel
Saturday, May 3, 1975

Attached at TAB A is the Proposed Schedule for the President and Mrs. Ford's attendance at the White House Correspondents Dinner which will be held at the Washington Hilton Hotel on Saturday, May 3rd, 1975. Attire is Black Tie and long dress for ladies.

APPROVE _____ DISAPPROVE _____

Attached at TAB B is a Head Table seating diagram.

BACKGROUND

The 61st annual dinner meeting of the White House Correspondents Association will install new officers, present journalistic prizes, and provide an evening of socializing for its members and guests. Outgoing president James Deakin of the St. Louis Post Dispatch, will install Helen Thomas of UPI as their first woman president. Entertainment will be provided by Danny Thomas and his daughter, Marlo.

Other invited guests include the Vice President, Justice White, Secretary Kissinger, Secretary Simon, Attorney General Levi, Secretary-Designate Hathaway, Secretary Dunlop, Secretary Hills, Secretary Coleman and Ron Nessen.



A general reception begins for dinner guests at 6:30 pm. Our guidance indicates that the President and Mrs. Ford will attend the Head Table Reception and the entertainment.



PROPOSED SCHEDULE

THE PRESIDENT AND MRS. FORD'S ATTENDANCE AT THE
61st ANNUAL WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENTS DINNER

Washington Hilton Hotel

Saturday, May 3, 1975

Attire: Black Tie and
Long Dresses for Ladies

7:30 pm Head Table Reception begins in the Cabinet Room.

7:35 pm The Vice President arrives at the VIP Entrance
and proceeds to Cabinet Room.

7:45 pm The President and Mrs. Ford board motorcade on
South Grounds.

MOTORCADE DEPARTS South Grounds en route
Washington Hilton Hotel.

[Driving time: 7 minutes]

7:52 pm MOTORCADE ARRIVES Washington Hilton Hotel
(VIP Entrance).

The President and Mrs. Ford will be met by:

James Deakin, St. Louis Post Dispatch,
Retiring President of the White House
Correspondents Association

Helen Thomas, UPI, Incoming President of the
White House Correspondents Association

PRESS POOL COVERAGE

The President and Mrs. Ford proceed via elevator
to the Cabinet Room for Head Table Reception.



7:55 pm The President and Mrs. Ford arrive Cabinet Room.

OFFICIAL PHOTO COVERAGE
ATTENDANCE: 45

8:05 pm The President, Mrs. Ford and the Vice President,
escorted by Helen Thomas, Jim Deakin, and Edgar
Poe, Treasurer of the White House Correspondents
Association, depart Cabinet Room en route holding room.

8:05 pm The Head Table guests depart Cabinet Room
and proceed to Head Table.

8:06 pm The President, Mrs. Ford, and the Vice President
arrive holding room.

8:08 pm The President, Mrs. Ford and the Vice President,
escorted by Helen Thomas, Jim Deakin, and Edgar Poe,
depart holding room en route off-stage announcement area.

8:09 pm The President, Mrs. Ford, and the Vice President
arrive announcement area and pause for announcement.

8:09 pm "Ruffles and Flourishes"
Announcement of the Vice President
"Sweet Georgia Brown"

8:10 pm "Ruffles and Flourishes"
Announcement of the President and Mrs. Ford.
"Hail to the Chief"

8:11 pm The President and Mrs. Ford, escorted by Helen Thomas,
Jim Deakin, and Edgar Poe, enter the Ballroom and
proceed to Head Table.

PRESS POOL COVERAGE
ATTENDANCE: 1600

8:12 pm The President and Mrs. Ford arrive Head Table
and remain standing.

8:13 pm National Anthem.

8:15 pm Dinner begins.



NOTE: During the first course, Jim Deakin will greet guests, introduce the Vice President, Supreme Court Justices and Cabinet Members present.

8:30 pm Jim Deakin introduces Paul E. Healy, Secretary of the White House Correspondents Association, who will present the Merriman Smith Memorial Award to Douglas C. Wilson of the Providence Journal.

8:40 pm Jim Deakin proposes a toast to the President and the Vice President.

NOTE: No response is expected.

9:15 pm Dinner concludes.

9:16 pm Jim Deakin presents two silver cups to the President and Mrs. Ford.

NOTE: A brief thank you by the President is appropriate.

9:18 pm Jim Deakin gives thanks to the orchestra.

9:19 pm Jim Deakin introduces Helen Thomas as the new President of the Association.

9:20 pm Remarks by Helen Thomas, concluding with the introduction of the new officers.

9:25 pm Helen Thomas introduces the evenings entertainment.

9:27 pm The Danny Thomas show begins.

10:00 pm The show concludes.

10:01 pm Introduction of the President by Helen Thomas.

10:02 pm Presidential remarks.

PRESS POOL COVERAGE

10:12 pm Remarks conclude.

The President remains at the podium.



10:13 pm Thank you remarks by Helen Thomas.

10:14 pm The President, Mrs. Ford, and the Vice President, escorted by Helen Thomas, Jim Deakin and Edgar Poe, depart Head Table en route Cabinet Room to greet performers.

10:15 pm The President, Mrs. Ford, and the Vice President arrive Cabinet Room.

10:22 pm The President, Mrs. Ford, and the Vice President, escorted by Helen Thomas, Jim Deakin, and Edgar Poe, depart Cabinet Room en route motorcade for boarding.

10:28 pm MOTORCADE DEPARTS Washington Hilton Hotel en route South Grounds.

[Driving time: 7 minutes]

10:30 pm The Vice President's motorcade departs.

10:35 pm MOTORCADE ARRIVES South Grounds.

