

September 20, 1976

Richard S. Salant  
President  
CBS News

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 intentioned 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