

23 January 1967

Mr. Robert W. Thomas  
Producer  
Northwestern University  
Evanston, Illinois

Dear Mr. Thomas,

I appreciate your friendly letter of the 18th but I am afraid we are corresponding at cross-purposes. My comments on the recent program YOUR RIGHT TO SAY IF did not raise any issue of freedom of opinion, according to Voltaire or any other civil libertarian, and I very much regret that anything I wrote should have been misread in that way. I intended to raise quite a different issue--the license of persons to use the television or radio media, under the guise of authoritative knowledge, to misinform the public by a veritable stream of inaccurate and irresponsible assertions, without challenge from the interviewers who had the duty as newsmen to prepare and inform themselves so that they could recognize and confront blatant misrepresentations of fact.

It is neither a service nor an enlightenment to the public to broadcast a series of gross distortions of fact--in this specific instance, by Mr. Jenner--without making it clear at the same time or at least subsequently that he was in error in numerous allegations of so-called fact. What must be defended in this case is the right of the public to receive the strict facts, not what is advertised as fact when it is really irresponsible fiction unopposed and unexposed, either by the program as such or by the news reporters who failed abysmally in their function of ascertaining the validity of answers given to them during the interview.

I had hoped that you would address yourself to this issue, which is the relevant one.

Yours sincerely,

Sylvia Meagher  
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