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THE NATION

THE POLITICS OF POLARIZATION

TO lower our voices would be a simple thing," Richard Nixon proclaimed last January after taking the oath of office as President. Before the October antiwar Moratorium, he insisted that "under no circumstances" would he be affected by it. Yet now he has, in effect, abandoned his above-the-battle position. Nixon took the field against his critics in his Nov. 3 plea to "the silent majority" for backing of his Viet Nam policy, and last week he ordered Vice President Spiro Agnew into the fray to mount an extraordinary—and sometimes alarming—assault on network television's handling of the news (*see following story*).

What brought on the Agnew attack? In the past, the Administration has avowed that his salvos have had only tacit, after-the-fact approval from the White House. This one had its genesis in Richard Nixon's office on the morn-

ing after his Viet Nam speech, when the President read the news summary edited for him by Speechwriter Pat Buchanan—and concluded that the TV commentators had chopped him up. "There was fairly widespread dismay and unhappiness around here," says one White House aide wryly. The incoming mail showed that some of the President's supporters were just as upset, so Nixon sent Agnew into the breach.

Months before, the Vice President had turned down an invitation to speak at the Midwestern Regional Republican Conference in Des Moines. Last week, just two days before the meeting was to begin, Agnew suddenly reinvented himself. The conference chairman hastily hired the Fort Des Moines Hotel ballroom and scheduled Agnew as the klieg-light speaker. Agnew's words were written by Buchanan, who is a hard-line conservative, and vetted in the upper

echelons of Nixon's personal staff.

"The President has felt that the time has come when he could no longer try to hold everybody in the tent," a top aide explains. The Administration now seems committed to the politics of polarization. Viet Nam is the touchstone of division, the litmus test of loyalty. Nixon's aim is to demonstrate to Hanoi that the protesters do not speak for the American public, and so gain time and leverage for his plan for a gradual U.S. disengagement from Viet Nam. In the process, the Administration is splitting conservatives from liberals, drawing a line between dissenters and Americans who are sick of dissent—more so than of the war itself.

Presidential Aide Clark Mollenhoff told the *Des Moines Register* that the speech reflected concern that the Administration is not "getting through to the public"—not just on Viet Nam,

PRO-NIXON DEMONSTRATION IN WASHINGTON ON VETERANS DAY

JAMES WELLS, JR.—PICTORIAL PARADE



but also on such issues as the Safeguard ABM and the nomination of Judge Clement Haynsworth to the U.S. Supreme Court. The Haynsworth question is especially vexing to Nixon right now, since he faces almost certain defeat when the nomination comes to a vote in the Senate this week. In each of these controversies, Mollenhoff contended, newspapers, magazines and television news reports have "distorted" the facts and failed to give the Administration's case a fair hearing.

The newly strenuous notes of partisanship were sounded on other fronts. George Romney, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, cheered Agnew as the "champion of the old culture that values historic and democratic principles." In Milwaukee, Attorney General John Mitchell blamed public mistrust of Government primarily on "the deception which was practiced over the last few years" by the Johnson Administration. Transportation Secretary John Volpe drove well off his official road to damn a majority of the organizers of last week's renewed antiwar protest as "Communist or Communist-inspired."

Masterly Performance. While Agnew and Nixon's Cabinet circuit riders were spreading a tough evangelical line from a multitude of pulpits, Nixon himself—contented with public response to his Viet Nam speech and buoyed by pro-Administration demonstrations—stuck with gentler preaching to the converted. On the 51st anniversary of the Armistice that ended World War I, Nixon visited patients at a Washington veterans' hospital. Then, on the eve of M-day II, he invited Senators and Representatives from both parties to the White House to thank them for Capitol Hill support. A House resolution introduced by Democrat Jim Wright of Texas backs the President broadly "in his efforts to negotiate a just peace" and specifically in the details of his policy; it now has 309 sponsors. Fifty-nine Senators have signed a letter to the U.S. delegation in Paris that is less explicit but also praises Nixon for seeking "a just peace."

The President came up with an effective way to underscore his appeal for unity, thus further isolating his critics. Normally a President speaks to Congress only on formal occasions—to deliver a State of the Union address or a momentous special message. Last week, on less than 24 hours' notice, Nixon arrived to address the House for twelve minutes without notes, invoking the bipartisan spirit of U.S. foreign policy that had prevailed in his own days as a Representative during the Truman Administration. He declared: "When the security of America is involved, when the lives of our young men are involved, we are not Democrats, we are not Republicans, we are Americans." That statement drew heavy applause and loud cheers, though party spirit has not been an issue on Viet Nam and though the question of whether

the war is indeed crucial to U.S. security is at the heart of the debate and transcends party lines.

"I believe that we will achieve a just peace in Viet Nam," he went on. "I cannot tell you the date, but I do know this: that when peace comes it will come because of the support that we have received, not just from Republicans, but from Democrats, from Americans in this House, in the other body [the Senate] and throughout the nation." Nixon's speech, delivered as the peace demonstrators assembled for the first of their marches in Washington, was in many ways more persuasive and candid than his TV address to the nation. As he left Washington to watch the Apollo 12 launch at Cape Kennedy (see *THE MOON*, p. 28), the President was visibly and understandably pleased with himself.

Altered Mood. While shrill contentiousness is something of a novelty in the Nixon Administration, it is scarcely a tactic new to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. Franklin Roosevelt rounded on "economic royalists" and Harry Truman on the "do-nothing 80th Republican Congress" in deliberate attempts to polarize the U.S. electorate, and both were critical of what was said about them in print. Now, as then, the news media tend to be thin-skinned and quick to rush to their own defense.

There is nothing wrong with a President's attacking his detractors; what is unsettling about Nixon's current offensive is the weapons he has chosen and the way he does battle. In his Viet Nam speech he honored the patriotism of his critics—and then impugned it by remarking: "North Viet Nam cannot defeat or humiliate the United States. Only Americans can do that." While there is much room for thoughtful criticism of television news, Agnew's blast was partisan and intemperate, and left a certain impression that the issue would never have been raised had the networks backed the President. Dean Burch, newly confirmed head of the Federal Communications Commission, raised doubts about the preservation of the agency's traditional independence of the Executive Branch when he enthusiastically applauded Agnew's attack.

In the short run, Nixon's politics of polarization are paying off. What will happen in the longer haul is more problematical, both at home and vis-à-vis Hanoi. He argues that dissent weakens the U.S. bargaining position. But not only is he stimulating dissent among many moderates and on the left by his new belligerence, he also risks stirring up the hard-line right to renewed cries of "Not peace—victory!" He may exacerbate the tensions of a nation distraught and confused as it has not been since the Depression. That danger augurs ill for both his presidency and the American people, and could in the end make a compromise settlement in Viet Nam more difficult for Americans to understand and accept.



PROTEST MARCHERS IN CAPITAL

AGNEW DEMANDS EQUAL TIME

THE networks had been forewarned of the subject matter of the speech—including a line that read: "Whether what I've said to you tonight will be seen and heard at all by the nation is not my decision, it's their decision." Hence "they," the three television networks, had their cameras warm and waiting when Spiro Agnew arrived to address the Midwestern Regional Republican Conference.

For 30 minutes—carried live in the dinner-hour news slot by the networks—Agnew inveighed against the commentators and producers who control the flow of information and comment to the nation's television viewers. "A small group of men," said Agnew, "numbering perhaps no more than a dozen anchormen, commentators and executive producers, settle upon the film and commentary that is to reach the public. They decide what 40 to 50 million Americans will learn of the day's events in the nation and in the world." Such vast and unchecked power in the hands of a "small and unelected elite," the Vice President claimed, has served to distort traditional rhythms of "normality"—"our national search for internal peace and stability." Gresham's law, he said, "seems to be operating in the network news. Bad news drives out good. Concurrence can no longer compete with dissent. One minute of Eldridge Cleaver is worth ten minutes of Roy Wilkins."

No Censorship

In attacking TV—broad and inviting target that it is—Agnew was also aiming at a larger foe. For network TV to many Americans is symbolic of the Eastern Establishment, of glibness and superiority, of unwelcome change, of dissent and division. Still, some of Agnew's criticisms were entirely sensible. He asked a great many questions that have troubled others about the nature and source of TV's power, its influence on America, its effects for good or ill. The speech was more professional and better drafted than almost any he has delivered—thanks to fitting in the White House speech shop. There were, for example, no such gems as "an effete corps of impudent snobs." If the prose was somewhat more finished than in some other recent Agnew performances, the tone was still truculent, occasionally intemperate and bullying. "I'm not asking for Government censorship or any other kind of censorship," he protested. But he noted pointedly that television stations are subject to federal licensing.

Agnew began by attacking television's postmortem analyses of Richard Nixon's Nov. 3 Viet Nam speech. "President

Nixon delivered the most important address of his administration," said Agnew. "His hope was to rally the American people to see the conflict through to a lasting and just peace in the Pacific." But no sooner had Nixon finished his painstakingly prepared address, the Vice President complained, than "his words and policies were subjected to instant analysis and querulous criticism."

Agnew did not name names, but the White House seems particularly incensed by the correspondent who "twice contradicted the President's statement about the exchange of correspondence with Ho Chi Minh." That was CBS's Marvin



AGNEW SPEAKING IN DES MOINES
Major questions, rhetoric aside.

Kalb. Despite Nixon's claim that Ho was intransigent, Kalb observed that "the Ho Chi Minh letter contained some of the softest, most accommodating language found in a Communist document concerning the war in Viet Nam in recent years."

Special Venom

Another commentator, said Agnew, "challenged the President's abilities as a politician." That was ABC's Bill Lawrence. A third was berated for claiming that Nixon "was following the Pentagon line." That was ABC's Bill Downs. "Others," the Vice President said, "by the expression of their faces, the tone of their questions and the sarcasm of their responses, made clear their sharp disapproval."

The speech had a special venom for Averell Harriman, former negotiator at

Paris, who has consistently criticized Nixon's war policies. ABC had lined up Harriman for an interview after the Nixon speech. The choice was biased in a sense; it clearly indicated that ABC meant to criticize the President. Yet Agnew spoke not merely of Harriman's being "trotted out" to offer "gratuitous advice," but sharply impugned his peace efforts. While he was in Paris, said Agnew, the U.S. "swapped some of the greatest military concessions in the history of warfare for an enemy agreement on the shape of the bargaining table." That line has an Agnewistic demagoguery about it that led some to think the Vice President wrote it himself and inserted it into the speech.

The "greatest concessions" involved the U.S. bombing halt in exchange for a tacit agreement with North Viet Nam to stop attacks on South Vietnamese cities as well as military operations in the DMZ, and acceptance of the South Vietnamese government at the conference table. Since then, Hanoi has not entirely adhered to the first two points. But if the Nixon Administration really believes that Harriman made the worst deal in the history of warfare, would it not be reasonable to resume the bombing?

In another questionable passage, Agnew conjured up a comparison of Nixon to Winston Churchill, who "didn't have to contend with a gaggle of commentators raising doubts about . . . whether Britain had the stamina to see the war through." In fact, Churchill had his share of critical commentators. More important, the Nazi threat of total war against Britain and the entire Western world simply cannot compare to the threat posed to the U.S. by the enemy in Viet Nam.

Rhetoric aside, Agnew did touch on a major phenomenon. It is the strange, pervasive love-hate relationship that Americans seem to have with TV—the force that entertains them, unifies them by making them simultaneous witnesses to great events, and yet also brings them words and images they resent. Most often, of course, they are words and images beyond the control of the distant and suspect networks; they are the inevitable result of social upheaval, of change, or war. But in challenging the qualifications and motives of the TV news commentators and producers, Agnew brought to the surface questions that have been in the mind of every American who has ever tuned in a news program. Who are these men? What are their prejudices and backgrounds? Since they broadcast from Washington and New York, are they

dedicated members of the Eastern Establishment or what Author Theodore H. White calls the "opinionated Mafia"? How do TV news and commentary programs come to be? Do they need outside control? Agnew touched on several major features of TV news:

• **INSTANT REBUTTAL.** "The President has the right to communicate with the people who elected him," said Agnew, "without having the President's words and thoughts characterized through the prejudices of hostile critics before they can be digested." It is true that a commentator can assure himself of a vast automatic audience by following the President on the air, and the instant rebuttals or analyses are often feeble. But in the case of the Viet Nam speech, reporters had an hour to study the text before Nixon spoke; they were also briefed on the contents by White House advisers so that they were not speaking entirely off the cuff in their critiques. Besides, the President's right (purely customary) to use television whenever he chooses is an extremely powerful weapon—some think too powerful. Says CBS's Eric Sevareid: "I think the networks should reconsider having all three of the major networks carrying a presidential speech at the same time live. Perhaps that is a kind of monopoly position given to a political leader that he ought not have." Some argue that a President, controlling the U.S. Government's vast information network and releasing only what information he cares to, should not be allowed to air his official pronouncements without some balancing criticisms.

• **EDITING REALITY.** More worrisome than the influence of individual commentators is the effect that can be achieved by the selection of film or tape footage. In this way TV producers can more or less edit reality. Television, even more than other media, has a bias for action and excitement. A small disturbance at a cross-section can, when it fills a TV screen, suggest an entire city in riot. Similarly, during the Newark riots of 1967, TV reporters and their audience were duped into believing that a church assistant was a minister and prominent black spokesman. Hundreds of charges of distortion were brought against the networks for their coverage of the 1968 Chicago Democratic Convention, but a Federal Communications Commission investigation found "no substantial basis" for them. If the influence of TV were as irresistible as Agnew claims, and if TV reporting of Chicago was so prejudiced, why did a majority of Americans nevertheless support Mayor Richard Daley and his police? Still, the power of television to decide which event and which part of an event to cover is awesome, and must be kept under scrutiny. On the evening newscasts a few hours before President Nixon's Viet Nam speech, both NBC and CBS carried film of atrocities committed by South Vietnamese troops.

• **INSTANT FAME.** TV, Agnew charged, can create issues overnight and turn nobodies into national figures. But Agnew's own examples suggested that this process has limits. He mentioned Stokely Carmichael; in Carmichael's case, notoriety happened, at least in part, for complicated psychological reasons having to do with white guilt. Agnew also mentioned George Lincoln Rockwell; in his case, only minor notoriety resulted, and only assassination transformed him into a national figure.

Perhaps Agnew's most telling charge was that the TV "elite" consists of only seemingly well-informed, possibly unqualified people whose backgrounds and credentials are virtually unknown and who think alike: "To a man, these commentators and producers live and work in the geographical and intellectual confines of Washington, D.C., or New York City. Both communities bask in their own provincialism, their own pa-

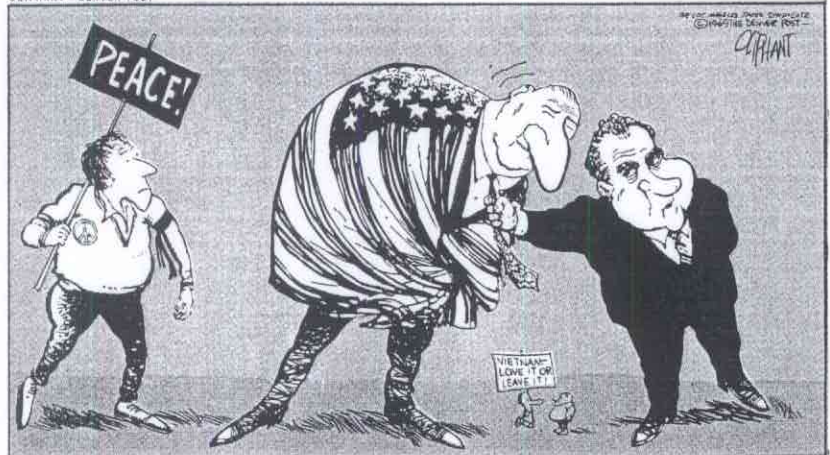
so Draconian, but singled out "a dozen announcers, commentators, executive producers" who control TV news, and superficially he got the number right (see box, page 20).

Right and Wrong

His complaint of sameness among the commentators also gains a certain superficial support from their biographies. Many are from the Midwest, most broke into journalism on small or middle-sized newspapers, most are Democrats or Independents. But TV's top commentators are in fact remarkably different in their approaches to life and their jobs.

Because of his professorial manner and general conservatism, ABC's Howard K. Smith probably stands out most distinctly. A supporter of U.S. involvement in Viet Nam, his hawkishness deepened after his soldier-son was gravely wounded in the war. Walter Cronkite also be-

OLIPHANT—DENVER POST



"I MAY NOT AGREE WITH HIS VIEWS BUT I DEFEND HIS RIGHT TO EXPRESS THEM. TELL THE UNAMERICAN, PINKO, COMMIE-SYMPATHIZING PAWN-OF-HANOI THAT!"

rochialism. These men read the same newspapers, draw their political and social views from the same sources. Worse, they talk constantly to one another."

The Vice President was echoing a journalist who closely followed the election of President Nixon, Theodore H. White. Reacting at least partially to unfavorable reviews of his book, *The Making of a President, 1968*, White attacked the "increasing concentration of the cultural pattern of the U.S. in fewer hands. You can take a compass with a one-mile radius and put it down at the corner of Fifth Avenue and 51st Street in Manhattan and you have control of 95% of the entire opinion- and influence-making in the U.S." On William F. Buckley's TV program, *Firing Line*, White suggested breaking up the networks. "Let's say we can rear back and pass a miracle bill. We would say only one national network can have its headquarters in New York City, one must be in Los Angeles and one must be in Chicago."

Agnew's proposals were not nearly

believes in the U.S. commitment in Viet Nam, although he feels that it has developed serious flaws. Basically, he is an optimist. Poverty? Pollution? Problems of the aged? In his fatherly, concerned way, Cronkite feels that "we've got a pretty good democracy going in this country; it works pretty well. If the people really want to do those jobs badly enough, they'll get a Congress that wants to do those jobs badly enough."

After the Chicago convention, however, Cronkite developed at least one gloomy streak in the form of a premonition of censorship. "People are beginning," he said, "to mistake us for the stories we're covering." Those who were charging TV journalists with biased reporting were "doing so for political reasons, for the most part." Even mere reminders that TV stations were licensed amounted to censorship, he felt. "When they talk about public responsibility in the news, they're talking about censorship." And, he added, "they'll come to newspapers next. They won't

The "Unelected Elite"

Hundreds of men and women are responsible for the presentation of TV news, and any selection of an "elite" (in Spiro Agnew's phrase) is necessarily arbitrary. Still, a few men stand out at the top of the profession, including the twelve, some familiar and some not, who are identified below:



LOWER



WESTIN



FRANK



MIDGLEY



SALANT



WESTFELDT

BRINKLEY, David, 49, NBC News correspondent. Born in Wilmington, N.C., dropped out of high school but took courses at University of North Carolina and Vanderbilt University. Reporter for Wilmington *Star-News*, 1938-41. Bureau manager in South for United Press Associations, 1941-43. Became NBC Washington correspondent, 1943; in 1956 was teamed with Huntley. Separated, three children.

CRONKITE, Walter, 53, managing editor of CBS News and news analyst. Born in St. Joseph, Mo., attended the University of Texas. War correspondent for United Press, 1942-45, and Chief U.P. correspondent at Nuremberg Trials; head of U.P. Moscow bureau, 1946-48. Correspondent CBS-TV news since 1950. Married, three children.

FRANK, Reuven, 48, president of NBC News. Born in Montreal, graduated from the City College of New York, 1942 (B.S.); Columbia, 1947 (M.S.). Reporter, Newark *Evening News*, 1947-49; night city editor, 1949-50. Joined NBC News in 1950; news editor, *Camel News Caravan*, 1951-54; producer, political convention coverage, 1956, 1960 and 1964; producer *Huntley-Brinkley Report*, 1956-62 and 1963-65. Married, two sons. Registered Democrat.

HUNTLEY, Chester (Chet), 57, NBC-News correspondent. Born in Cardwell, Mont., graduated from the University of Washington, 1934 (B.A.). Began radio newscasting with KPCB Seattle in 1934. Joined NBC in 1955, and within a year was teamed from New York with Brinkley in Washington. Married, two children. Registered as Independent.

LOWER, Elmer W., 56, president of ABC News. Born in Kansas City, Mo., graduated from University of Missouri School of Journalism, 1933; Columbia University, 1958 (M.A.). Reporter on the Louisville *Herald-Post* and Flint (Mich.) *Journal* and a United Press editor in Washington, D.C. Foreign correspondent, *LIFE*, 1944-51. CBS News, Washington and New York, 1953-59; vice president of NBC News, 1959-63. Married, two sons. Registered Independent.

MIDGLEY, Leslie, 54, CBS executive producer. Born in Salt Lake City, attended University of Utah. City editor, Salt Lake City *Deseret News*, 1935-40; night editor, New York *Herald-Tribune* Paris edition, 1944-49; associate editor, *Collier's*, 1949; managing editor, *Look*, 1952-54; producer, CBS News from

1954. Married (to Betty Furness), three children. Registered Democrat.

REYNOLDS, Frank, 45, ABC News analyst. Born in East Chicago, Ind., attended Indiana University and Wabash College. Anchor man at WBKB-TV, Chicago, 1950; writer-producer-reporter at WBBM-CBS, Chicago, 1951-63. ABC Chicago correspondent, 1963-65, and ABC White House correspondent, 1965-68. Married, five sons.

SALANT, Richard S., 55, president of CBS News. Born in New York City, graduated from Harvard, 1935 (A.B.) and Harvard Law School, 1938 (LL.B.). Attorney for U.S. Government, 1938-43, serving on National Labor Relations Board, with the Solicitor General and as acting director of the Attorney General's Committee on Administrative Procedure. Associate of law firm of Rosenman Goldmark, Colin & Kaye, 1946-48; partner, 1948-52. Vice president of CBS, 1952-61; named director of CBS and president of CBS News, 1961. Married, five children.

SEVAREID, (Arnold) Eric, 56, CBS News analyst. Born in Velva, N. Dak., graduated from University of Minnesota, 1935 (A.B.). Reporter on Minneapolis *Star*, 1936-37; city editor, Paris edition of the New York *Herald-Tribune*, 1938-39. Became CBS European correspondent, 1939; as U.S. war correspondent, broadcast French capitulation from Tours and Bordeaux; CBS Washington bureau, 1941-43 and 1946-59. Author of five books. Divorced, two children.

SMITH, Howard K., 55, ABC News analyst. Born in Ferriday, La., graduated from Tulane University, 1936 (B.A.); Rhodes scholar at Oxford, 1937. Correspondent in London for United Press, 1939; CBS Berlin correspondent, 1941. War correspondent, 1944-45. Chief European correspondent of CBS in London, 1946-57. CBS Washington correspondent, 1957-61; CBS chief correspondent and general manager, 1961-62. Joined ABC in 1962. Author of three books. Married, two children.

WESTFELDT, Wallace, 46, executive producer of *Huntley-Brinkley*. Born in New Orleans, graduated from the University of the South, 1947 (B.A.). TIME correspondent, 1950 and 1952; reporter, Nashville *Tennessean*, 1953-61. Associate producer, NBC, 1961; writer for *Huntley-Brinkley*, 1963; associate producer in Washington, 1967. Married, one daughter.

WESTIN, Avram (Av) Robert, 40, ABC executive producer. Born in New York City, graduated from New York University, 1949 (B.A.); Columbia, 1958 (M.A.). CBS News writer-reporter, 1950-53; producer-director, 1958-67. Executive producer CBS News, 1965-67; executive director of Public Broadcasting Laboratory, 1967-69. Divorced, one son. An Independent.



BRINKLEY



CRONKITE



SMITH



SEVAREID



REYNOLDS



HUNTLEY

stop." David Brinkley, "liberal, but not very," is just as pessimistic about the Federal Government, "a clumsy, heavy-footed bureaucratic monster out of contact with the American people."

No one could be further from effete snobbery than Chet Huntley. Deeply—almost lyrically—affected by his childhood in Montana, he is quite simply puzzled and troubled about America. When he was a child in the West, he says, "Our idealisms were be kind to your neighbor. You respected your father and your mother, you exercised thrift and you saved—you saved for a rainy day." Today, "we really don't know ourselves. We haven't had time in the past 60 years to stop and get acquainted with ourselves. Our youngsters have idealisms which are somewhat grander in proportion—namely, the brotherhood of man and world peace, and those are difficult to get into action."

Thoughtful, deliberate Eric Sevareid probably comes closest to the liberal in-

WALTER BERNETT



FCC COMMISSIONER JOHNSON
Public property for public interest.

tellectualism that is anathema to Agnew. Yet, even he shares an Agnewesque distaste for "professional intellectuals. They tempt me to agree with Eric Hoffer, who said that intellectuals must never be given power because they want people to get down on their knees and learn to love what they really hate and hate what they really love."

Agnew's most dangerous point is that newscasters ought to reflect majority opinion, rather than their own best judgment, and that this somehow would make them objective. Almost to a man, broadcasters reject objectivity as a goal and insist that they are fair. An objective man, says David Brinkley, "would have to be put away in an institution because he's some sort of vegetable." ABC Anchor Man Frank Reynolds was quoted by Agnew as saying, "You can't expunge all your private convictions," and during the 1968 campaign charged Rich-

ard Nixon with a suppressed "natural instinct to smash the enemy with a club or go after him with a meat ax." Av Westin, executive producer of the ABC evening news, puts the industry's case in its best possible light. "My politics are more conservative than Vice President Agnew would have people believe, but that doesn't matter. My job is to keep my politics and those of others off the air. You can't always be objective because you bring your experiences to things—so you try to be fair. We are on guard. We're not infallible. We try."

Typical of the kind of trying that goes into a news program is the *Huntley-Brinkley Report*. The first staffers arrive around 9 a.m., and shortly thereafter film crews are ordered out on the likeliest stories. Each morning Executive Producer Wallace Westfeldt attends a meeting with the NBC news brass, including President Reuven Frank. "But no one," says Westfeldt, "ever tells us what to run or what not to run." But, of course, certain prevailing assumptions, a certain atmosphere, almost unconsciously dictate decisions. Through the day, film arriving from all over the world is run off and edited. Late breaking footage can be put on the line from one of the affiliated stations.

Around 3:30 p.m., Westfeldt decides the first "rundown," the order and length (down to the second) of the stories. An hour or so later, a couple of writers begin to rap out Huntley's copy, mostly from the A.P. wire. Brinkley generally writes his own. Westfeldt has final film cut and say; he doesn't touch Brinkley's prose, but he sometimes overrules David on the priority of items. New, updated copy sometimes is slipped to the anchor men during commercial breaks.

Vote by Channel Selector

By what authority does this "small band of commentators and self-appointed analysts" (Agnew's words) shape the presentation of the news each evening? As in any business, their rise depends on intelligence, talent and merit. But TV is not just business; it is show business. Top commentators are in the \$200,000-a-year bracket because they draw audiences. Thus, even though Agnew calls them "unelected," TV newscasters and commentators are more elected than any other newsmen in America. Every night the viewer votes with his channel selector; the Nielsen rating company tabulates the results. Just now, CBS's Walter Cronkite is ahead of Huntley-Brinkley 26 million viewers to 21 million. Despite Agnew's presumption that silent-majority viewers would prefer an alternative to CBS-NBC dovishness, viewer-voters leave Frank Reynolds (who publicly questioned last month's Moratorium) and hawkish Howard K. Smith far behind, with an audience of 10,500,000.

There are many power centers in a free society—foundations, corporations, the print press—whose top executives

are not "elected" and have no political constituency. Many people are legitimately concerned about the responsibility and power such men wield. One answer is that they represent an important counterweight to the sometimes excessive power of Government; another is that their influence is limited by competition and diversity. In TV, greater diversity is undoubtedly possible through proper financial support of the fourth, public network and a larger number of local stations.

Broadcasters' Greed

Agnew's implication that TV newscasting and commentary do not draw enough critical attention belies the facts on every hand. A new awards committee, supported by the Alfred I. du Pont Foundation and Columbia University, last week published a tough, 128-page critique entitled *Survey of Broadcast Journalism 1968-1969* (Grosset & Dunlap Inc.; \$1.95). Prepared by a jury

PAUL CONKLIN



RHODE ISLAND'S PASTORE
Protection from citizen protest.

of five people who know their TV well,* the report indicted the industry for dereliction of its duty to the American people—although not in the sense meant by Agnew. Among its conclusions: broadcasting is far behind print in investigative reporting, "documentary programming hit a new low" and reporting of the 1968 election campaign did not adequately inform the electorate. In a personal postscript, Sir William Haley kissed off much of U.S. news coverage as "meretricious, superficial and spotty." The survey hammered at what it called "the real cause of the crisis in broadcasting": broadcasters' obsession with private profit rather than public ser-

* Sir William Haley, former director-general of the British Broadcasting Corp.; Author-Critics Marya Mannes and Michael Arlen; Richard Baker, acting dean of the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism, and his predecessor, Dean Edward Barrett.

vice. "A theologian would call it greed," the jury dryly observed, and they included advertisers who shied from sponsoring public-affairs shows as well as local station managers who did not deign to carry them.

Theoretically, at least, the agency to deal with these shortcomings already exists: the Federal Communications Commission. Its control of the broadcast industry would seem to be an infringe-

ment of the First Amendment guarantee of freedom of the press, but it is excused on the grounds that there are so few available broadcast channels and they are therefore public property and must be used in the public interest. Stations are licensed and bound by written rules covering everything from transmission wattage to obscenity. Political candidates are guaranteed equal time with rival candidates, and a citizen may

rebut a "personal attack" from anyone appearing on a TV station.

If the FCC finds that a station is not operating in the public interest, it can revoke its license or refuse renewal. The FCC does not license networks, but since each network owns at least five TV stations, the commission can exercise considerable influence over them.

It never has. Over the years, most commissioners have gone into or served as lawyers for the broadcasting industry once they left the FCC. Even if they had been eager to bite the hand that promised to feed them, the commissioners never had sufficient funds to monitor stations properly. Only lately, under the prodding of Nicholas Johnson and a few other activist commissioners, has there been a change. Last January Boston station WHDH-TV lost its license for several reasons, including the other media interests of its owner. And last August, an FCC hearing examiner recommended the suspension of a Los Angeles station's license for "dreadful" programming and because it "miserably failed to serve the public interest." Around the country, groups of concerned citizens are challenging the license renewals of stations for reasons such as racial bias, local media monopoly and unfair reporting.

Final Takeover

But the broadcast lobby is one of the most powerful in Washington, and Senator John O. Pastore of Rhode Island, chairman of the Communications Subcommittee, has introduced a bill to protect a broadcaster's license from public challenge unless it has been previously revoked. In effect, the Pastore bill would grant owners a permanent license. Commissioner Johnson called the legislation "the final takeover by broadcasters," and warned that it meant further emasculation of the FCC. Nixon's appointment of Dean Burch (*see box*) and a Kansas broadcaster named Robert Wells to the FCC has been interpreted as a pro-industry move. On the face of it, Agnew has rallied the nation's citizens against shabby television practices. But unless Agnew and his boss give equal time and attention to the defeat of the Pastore bill, the gesture will prove to be hollow.

Still, Agnew's attack on TV drew wide support, and it did quite a lot for him politically. He is undoubtedly a more considerable figure today than he was three weeks ago. During last year's campaign he blamed the press and TV for ridiculing him. Since then, he has provided by his own experience a perfect rebuttal of what he accusingly said about TV in his speech—that without justification, it can bring an obscure figure to prominence overnight. If Agnew, by his public speeches, had not compelled the networks to pay attention to him, he would still dwell in vice-presidential obscurity. Spiro Agnew owes his office to Richard Nixon, but today he is also a creation of the media.

Activist at the FCC?

SOON after President Nixon delivered his Viet Nam speech on television two weeks ago, the three networks received an unusual personal request from Dean Burch, new chairman of the Federal Communications Commission. Burch wanted to see transcripts of the discussion programs that followed Nixon's address. Immediately. Since the transcripts would have reached FCC offices routinely within 30 days, the new chairman was obviously showing something more than casual interest. Last week broadcasters learned how much more. Endorsing Spiro Agnew's attack on network news as "thoughtful" and "provocative," Burch delivered a not-so-subtle reminder that the FCC has the potential—and in fact the duty—to wield enormous influence on U.S. television.

Burch shrugged off his display of interest as "the easiest way to get the information." Moreover, he carefully re-emphasized Agnew's disclaimer of any notion of Government censorship and, like Agnew, said that change should come from public pressure and the industry itself.

Burch is nothing if not adaptable. At Du Pont-Columbia broadcast award ceremonies last week, he declared in his first speech as FCC chairman that "the finest hour of television is in its news and public-affairs reporting." In fact, he came on more as the Hugh Downs of TV officialdom than a fighting critic. "Unthinking criticism, in my opinion, is a cop-out," said Burch. "We must not contribute to an atmosphere in which each party to an issue tries to shout the other so that neither is heard." He frankly admitted that he did not have "all the answers to the problems of the communications industry" and suggested that no one else did.

Nor, until last week, did his appointment give any hint that the White House was unhappy with television's point of view. Nicholas Johnson, the commission's most outspoken liberal (who has also called for more public involvement in TV), recently criticized Nixon for clearing Burch's appointment with broadcasting honchos before announcing it.

The son of a federal prison guard, Burch worked his way through the University of Arizona's law school, graduating in 1953. Taking his first trip east of the Mississippi, Burch went to work for Senator Barry Goldwater in Washington a year later as an administrative assistant. Among other things, Goldwater taught the young lawyer how to fly an airplane. In 1964, Burch served as a dep-



DEAN BURCH

uty director of Goldwater's presidential campaign and later as Republican national chairman. His tall, rugged good looks (a colleague recently called him the "Marlboro Man from Arizona") and breezy Western manner made him one of the more personable figures in Goldwater's campaign. Burch has gained the reputation of being a skilled organizer and an imperturbable man in the face of ridicule.

His sudden change of tone on TV news broadcasting raises the possibility that in last week's statement Burch was simply backing up a political friend. Even so, if the friend happens to be Vice President and is determined to curb TV dissent, the implications are that the friend has the rightest man in the right job at the right time.