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## White House Pressuring Media

WASHINGTON. — President Nixon's principal assistant for domestic affairs demanded recently that CBS News President Richard Salant fire the network's veteran White House correspondent because the President did not like the way he reported the news.

John Ehrlichman, a White House aide of such high standing he often speaks authoritatively for the President, paid a surprise visit on Salant in his Manhattan office.

Ehrlichman denounced CBS reporter Dan Rather as a biased observer who sounded like "an arm of the Democratic National Committee" and "did not give sufficient emphasis to the President's accomplishments."

Ehrlichman insisted that Salant get rid of Rather. What Salant replied privately to Ehrlichman is not quite clear, but two things happened immediately thereafter. Rather was personally assured by Salant that he was doing a good job and would remain assigned to the White House.

The Rather episode is the latest in a long-running battle between the President and the press, which has included increasingly bold Presidential pressure tactics. FCC spokesmen have hinted dire

things about FCC power over network-owned TV stations. Vice President Agnew has attacked the networks regularly, and the CBS documentary, "The Selling of the Pentagon," has been probed, poked and pummeled by both the Administration and Congress.

Regardless of Rather's judgment in reporting, the President's agent tried to interfere directly in the only real protection the public has against government dictatorship and abuse — the independence of the press.

For Ehrlichman to say that Rather is prejudiced is simply another method of saying Rather is not doing the job the way the White House wants it done. But Rather is not supposed to be a White

House mouthpiece (the President already has 50 people on his public relations staff for that purpose); he is supposed to call it as it is, to the best of his ability.

President Nixon is not the first Chief Executive to become upset about news coverage. President John F. Kennedy, for instance, once asked a New York Times official to pull its correspondent, David Halberstam, out of Vietnam because he regarded Halberstam as a troublemaker.

President Lyndon Johnson, who got far rougher treatment in the press than President Nixon has yet to experience, was more sensitive about the separation of press and President than either Kennedy or Nixon.

He never demanded anyone be fired; he did, however, repeatedly and vociferously object to the reporters involved about stories he considered unfair or inaccurate. And though it may come as a shock to Ehrlichman, Johnson was overheard to complain a number of times about Rather, whom he definitely did not consider an apologist for the Democratic Party.



Salant

Rather

... backing from the boss