

When Will We See Him Again?

By Sander Vanocur

There is one important issue that's been overlooked in the current controversy over CBS correspondent Daniel Schorr. It is whether we will ever again see him reporting on a CBS news program.

The issue is not just whether he acted foolishly in turning over the secret report of the House Select Committee on Intelligence to *The Village Voice* after the House had voted against its release.

Nor is it whether the House Ethics Committee is conducting a witch hunt or wasting \$150,000 in an investigation to determine how Schorr got the report.

The most disturbing question remains: When, if ever, will Schorr—the toughest and best reporter in television news—be allowed to resume his reporting at CBS?

Schorr is now suspended from those duties, though he is still on the payroll and will remain in that status pending the outcome of the Ethics Committee's investigation. CBS News executives say that no decision on Schorr's future will be made until the issue of the investigation is resolved.

Schorr is a problem for CBS, and has been for years. A sigh of relief would be forthcoming from many CBS affiliates if CBS News decided

not to allow Schorr to return to his on-the-air reporting duties.

Schorr is a problem not because he is arrogant, abrasive and egocentric—those are the words you usually find in anything said or written about him—but because he is aggressive.

In a medium where individuals can go a long way and get very rich and famous by practicing "on the other

Television

hand" journalism, Schorr consistently calls a spade a bloody shovel.

As a charter member of the original Nixon Enemies List with special standing because he was investigated by the FBI on order from the White House, Schorr also has his share of enemies among his colleagues in television.

He is a threat to them and to the system under which they operate because he will not play by the rules. Though he will be 60 this August, he covers Washington like an ambitious cub reporter on a diet of uppers—pushing, shoving, scrambling and generally beating the pants off his competitors. He is obviously a dangerous fellow who must be closely watched.

Journalists, especially those in television, like to travel in packs and generally look with disfavor on a col-

league who strays off the reservation. There are great rewards for those who do not stray, who do not leave the pack, who get along by going along.

It is difficult to believe that at his age and given his disposition, Schorr can give CBS any promissory notes of conventional behavior for the future. One can sympathize with the problem that this will present to management.

But Schorr is only five years away from mandatory retirement. It would be a monumental loss to CBS and to television journalism if we were never allowed to see or hear him again. It would be a signal to his colleagues that there is no place in television for the likes of Dan Schorr.

CBS is standing by Schorr in this battle with the House investigators. It is paying his lawyer's costs. But might it not be in order, for the sake of its own reputation, and for what Schorr has come to symbolize in a medium dominated by timidity, for CBS to allow Schorr to return to active reporting?

It calls for no special announcement, for no fanfare. It would be enough if one night we turned in on the evening news and heard Walter Cronkite say: "That report was from Daniel Schorr in Washington." All of us will be the losers if we never hear those words again.