

11/1/72

Hi there "fastback",

Interested only in "getting on and off stage and finding a broad afterward".

Why ain't ("haven't got too many college graduates doing comedy") you out there "making a statement of pricking consciences"?

Can I have a better source than The Only One?

Of course, it doesn't mean anything that I was at your motel when you were here and saw no broad. After all, is it not an all-girl's college you addressed?

Broad. Hamm. Maybe I should send Gloria Steinem or Flo Kennedy a copy?

I'm not very funny. I'm happier when Kinsinger is flying. It's when he's not that there's trouble.

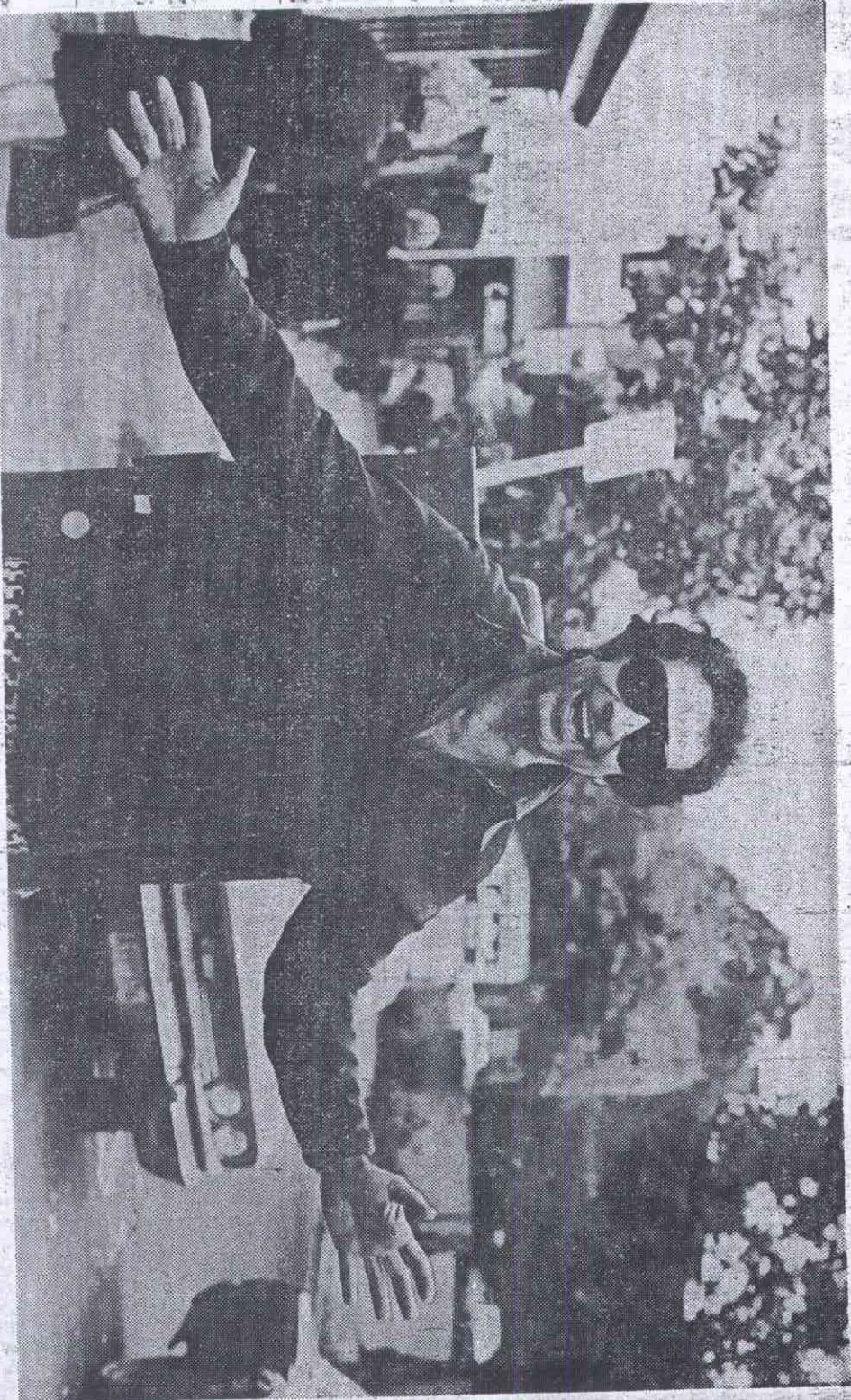
I'm not "intellectual", either, I guess, because Mort is telling me that I don't know what "Pricking consciences" is.

And all the time I thought I did.

Goes to show.

Best regards,

ENTERTAINMENT/THE ARTS



Stop the world, Mort Sahl wants to get off—but luckily for lovers of his 20 years of political satire, he hasn't yet. The humorist-social critic appears at the Cellar Door through Saturday.

By Arthur Ellis—The Washington Post

Mort Sahl: Finding the Humor in

By Hollie I. West

It's a cloudy afternoon in Georgetown. Political satirist Mort Sahl is posing for a photograph, and a white-haired, middle-aged woman stumbles over a nearby curb.

Slowly getting up with help from two men, she says: "You know why I fell—I recognized him. That's Mort Sahl. He's great. How are you?"

He answers: "Like all of us—numb."

Says the woman: "I saw you on the Mike Douglas Show. You were terrific. It's good to have you around."

Later, inside a restaurant, another woman walks to Sahl's table and says: "Mr. Sahl, I just want to shake your hand. You're speaking for a lot of us. Keep it up."

Indeed, Sahl may be speaking for many Ameri-

cans who like having him around—for his penetrating satire of politicians and bureaucrats, government rigidity and Victorian morality.

He sees himself as a social critic—without taking himself seriously. "I look at it first as a way to get laughs," he says. "Maybe that's first, second, third and fourth. I'm not smart enough to put chocolate on the pill and sell it. I've never been interested in people agreeing with me.

"I want to stimulate people. I like to get the juices boiling. I think there's a dormant humanity in people and I try to stir it up."

Sahl, 45, started stumping the hustlings of political humor during the Eisenhower years, after getting a degree in city management and engineering at the University of Southern California. At the Cellar Door,

where he is appearing through Saturday, the humorist looked back over his 20 years of poking fun at politics: "It was easy to make a joke about Eisenhower—he'd call a news conference and not know what to say.

"The humor was heady in those days. We worked in cellars and broke a lot of rules. But the subjects—Nixon and Agnew—are grave now. You really have to work to dream up some humor about them.

"Exaggeration is a lost art for comedians. We're being driven to absurdity. You can just read the paper aloud and get laughs."

Sahl, an inveterate reader of several newspapers and magazines a day, is critical of television. Says he: "The message of TV is: Go back to sleep. It works on the movie theory—present the

worse aspects of a subject and that's supposed to help us understand things better. That's the reasoning behind the show, 'All in the Family.' Only it's one-dimensional. TV goes from the saccharine to the profane."

Nevertheless, Sahl and producer Pat Weaver are working on a pilot television series for ABC that would fill one of the weeks soon to be vacated by the Dick Cavett Show. With the Cavett Show scheduled to run one week a month, the other three weeks would be filled with shows fitting into the general category "The Wide World of Entertainment."

Sahl and Weaver are putting together a newsroom comedy show which would simulate a television news program or the city room of a metropolitan daily. Bob and Ray and Stan Freeberg

Politics

will appear. Sahl will interview actual public figures. The pilot series is scheduled to run Nov. 28 through Dec. 1.

Sahl thinks it may be a shot in the arm for political humor, which he says has gone underground. Asked why he is the only comedian who uses politics exclusively, Sahl said: "You haven't got too many college graduates doing comedy. That doesn't mean that college graduates are all intellectuals. But the performers use headlines. They say, 'Well, I see Kissinger is flying again,' and that's the extent of their political humor. They don't really get behind events. Most of them are interested in a fast buck, getting on and off stage and finding a broad afterward. No one is interested in making a statement or pricking consciences."