

Richard Nixon as news editor

by Bill Gill [White House correspondent, ABC News]

There is a distinct chill here in the White House. A feeling that one is sitting, unwelcomed, amidst those who regard his very presence as an unforgivable affront to their own righteous exercise of power.

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[Presidents] expect a free ride by an adoring, unchallenging press. Somehow, they assume that having been chosen as the lesser of two bad choices to run the country, they should command the allegiance of newspapers, television, radio and even the barroom braggart. Anything else is intolerable to their sense of righteousness and majesty. It won't happen that way.

On those admirable occasions when a White House reporter is able to report what the President is doing, as opposed to what he says he is doing, the ensuing chill may become a downright freeze.

Our problem with this President stems from his insistence on changing the rules from merely the use of arguments to include pressures, intimidations and executive powers against the press.

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Let the President complain and gripe to his heart's content with the result. We are not his apologists, though he would like us to be. Should Mr. Nixon abandon his adopted role as national news editor and resume his role as President, there may yet be a chance for burying

the hatchet between us. This President has accomplished much good in foreign affairs. He may even accomplish something domestically if the spirit of compromise doesn't prove too repulsive to his egotism.