

Klein Gives Elaboration On Calls to TV Stations

By FRED FERRETTI

Herbert G. Klein, Director of Communications for the Nixon Administration, said yesterday that on occasion the White House had phoned television stations to ask what their editorial treatment of the President would be.

However, he said, it was only "Which side are you on, or something like that."

Mr. Klein said the stations called had "seemed pleased" that the White House was interested.

He termed the calls "proper." He said some of them had been made before appearances by President Nixon and "in many cases they came after the fact."

Mr. Klein made his remarks at a news conference before addressing 750 executives of networks and local stations at the Plaza Hotel.

On Tuesday Mr. Klein reported that he had never asked a broadcaster what the tone of an editorial on President Nixon was likely to be, but he added that he could not say that such inquiries had never been made from his office.

Last Sunday, Mr. Klein said that all news media should re-examine themselves.

Criticism and Conciliation

Yesterday Mr. Klein addressed a luncheon meeting of the International Radio and Television Society.

With the three network news presidents sharing a dais with him, he renewed his criticism of the nation's media, yet took pains to be conciliatory.

Vice President Agnew, in a speech last Thursday in Des Moines, Iowa, had severely criticized the American Broadcasting Company, though not by name, for employing former Ambassador W. Averell Harriman as an analyst following the broadcast of President Nixon's Nov. 3 address on Vietnam.

Yesterday Mr. Klein, who sat next to A.B.C.'s vice president for corporate relations, James Haggerty, said that Mr. Haggerty was a fine man and a fine press secretary (to President Eisenhower) and that he had been somewhat of an inspiration to him.

Mr. Klein suggested that Mr. Agnew had raised questions that the broadcasting industry had given "not enough thought to," and he expressed the hope that when the "passion" died down, the questions raised would be "looked at coolly."

Censorship 'Not an Issue'

He then posed several rhetorical questions and answered them. He said it had been asked if the Nixon Administration was proposing censorship or attempting intimidation.

"No," said Mr. Klein, nobody in the Administration "has any desire for censorship."

"You can't have a free country under censorship," he said. "That's not an issue."

Mr. Klein asked if the Government was attempting to stifle news analysis and com-

mentary, and answered, "There is a growing need for interpretation, but there is also need for an examination of how it takes place."

He said the age of complexity in which we live "increases the need for proper interpretation."

He asked if the Government was threatening the broadcasting industry with controls through the Federal Communications Commission, and answered:

"There is no threat but lots of Americans have doubts of the believability of the industry."

He urged the press to "continue to watch the activities of my office" and to criticize, but said that "they should not resist criticism back."

Mr. Klein said the Nixon Administration implied "no threats" and that there was "no intent to interfere with the rights of radio and TV."

C.B.S. Executive Quoted

On Tuesday, Richard Salant, president of news for the Columbia Broadcasting System, was quoted as saying that the White House had asked C.B.S. affiliates in Minneapolis and Los Angeles whether they planned editorials and what they intended to say. A call from Mr. Klein's deputy, Al Snyder, was made to WCBS-TV here, asking simply whether an editorial on Vietnam was planned. According to a source at WCBS-TV, Mr. Snyder did not ask what the content was to be.

It was reported yesterday that President Nixon had personally congratulated, by letter, station WNHC-TV in New Haven for editorially noting that there was a large segment of the population that did not favor total immediate troop withdrawal.

WNHC-TV is owned by Triangle Publications Inc., and is headed by Walter H. Annenberg, the President's appointee as Ambassador to Britain.

The Taft Broadcasting Company, with stations in Ohio, Pennsylvania, Missouri and upstate New York, said it had editorialized on national issues and on the President but had never received any inquiries from the White House. Reven Frank, president of news for the National Broadcasting Company, also said that he had received no inquiries on any commentaries. N.B.C. stations do not editorialize.



The New York Times
ADDRESSES BROADCASTERS: Herbert G. Klein, Director of Communications for the Nixon Administration, at the Plaza Hotel yesterday. He discussed presentation of views.