

CBS Drops Instant Analyses, Will Offer Free Equal Time

By Peter Milius

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The Columbia Broadcasting System yesterday announced a new system for giving the President and his critics equal time on the air.

In the future, CBS said, after every presidential radio or television speech "on matters of major policy concerning which there is significant national disagreement," it will give free time to holders of opposing views.

At the same time, the network said it will no longer broadcast the familiar instant analyses "immediately after presidential appearances." It will offer such analyses instead during its normal news programs, it said.

The ability of presidents almost to commandeer free television and radio time has been a touchy and increasing problem for the networks for years. The problem has been how to give the opposition equal access to the public. CBS said its new policy was a step in that direction.

The network, in a statement by its chairman, William S. Paley, said it will decide which presidential broadcasts are significant and controversial enough to merit free time for reply. It will also determine the length and format of replies, it said, and choose the person or persons to make them.

Those chosen to reply, said Richard W. Jencks, CBS' vice president here, will not necessarily be members of the opposing political party. Paley

said replies will be scheduled "as soon as practicable, but generally no later than one week after the President speaks."

Jencks said the new policy would be suspended during presidential election years, when the Federal Communications Commission's "equal time" regulations apply.

The custom of providing instant analysis immediately after presidential speeches was one of the things Vice President Agnew criticized the networks for during his attacks on the media in President Nixon's first term.

Jencks said the new policy of free time for opposing views goes farther than the old one of simply providing comment. He added that, if the network continued to provide immediate analysis of the President's speeches, it would have to do the same for the replies. Now it will do neither.

NBC and ABC said late yesterday, in response to queries, that they had no plans to change the way they handle presidential speeches. NBC said through a spokesman that it would "continue to evaluate each presidential speech on its own, and what response is required."

In a speech in Des Moines in November, 1969, the Vice President lashed out at what he called "a small and unelected elite" of television commentators; he complained of their "querulous criticism"

of a presidential speech on Vietnam.

FCC Rejects Request To Counter Severeid

Associated Press

The Federal Communications Commission refused yesterday to require CBS to broadcast opposing comments back-to-back to those of Eric Severeid on the CBS Evening News.

Horace P. Rowley II of New York had requested the order,

contending that Severeid, the only commentator on the program, is identified by the public's only "reasonable opportunity" under the Communications Act to decide between conflicting views.

Rowley said back-to-back counter comments are the public's only "reasonable opportunity" under the Communications Act to decide between conflicting views.

The FCC said the Fairness Doctrine does not require a broadcaster to present contrasting views on the same program.