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Consensus Among Editors: Nixon Improved His Image

By Jack Nelson
Los Angeles Times

ORLANDO, Fla., Nov. 18 —After President Nixon's press conference here, some of America's managing editors were divided on whether they got the "straight talk" they had requested or whether, as one editor said, "the President did a snow job on us."

But there was a strong consensus that even if the President did little to enhance his credibility with the editors, members of the Associated Press Managing Editors Association, his performance probably helped his image with a more important group—the public.

"He put on a great performance, a great act," said Tenney S. Griffin of the Valdosta, Ga., Times. "He snowed us. But it helped him with the public."

John L. Stallings of the Corpus Christi, Tex., Caller-Times said, "He was probably more convincing to the people in the television audience. I doubt that he changed many minds among editors who already were skeptical."

One who did change his mind was Charles W. Stine of the Winter Haven, Fla., News-Chief who said, "He was the most human I've ever seen him. I have been in favor of impeachment, but about two-thirds of the way through his speech I changed my mind. I'm convinced now that he made mistakes but there was no plot."

Ed J. Doherty of the Boston Globe was critical of the editors for responding to the President's banter with laughter and for applauding Mr. Nixon before and after

the conference. He and other editors said they felt this compromised the press conference, turning it into more of a political forum for the President.

"He was trying to put on a new face—the new Nixon," said Doherty. "He was going to tell all, even ask his own questions. I don't know whether people will buy it."

"I was surprised at the editors applauding. And the whole thing got to be too chatty. It was exactly the kind of thing editors would lecture Washington correspondents for doing."

[Henry MacLeod of the Seattle Times said that editors are skeptical by occupation but that he believed the general public probably reacted favorably to the President's performance.]

"Mr. Nixon may have turned the corner in his campaign to recapture public confidence — if no further scandal erupts on the scene," he said.

[Charles S. Rowe of the Fredericksburg, Va., Free Lance-Star said the television press conference format gave the President too much control and prevented followup questions.]

"I think his answer about his participation in milk price hikes was just inadequate," he said.]

Some editors said Mr. Nixon fared so well they could not understand why he has not held more such conferences.

Robert J. Lauffer of the Camarillo, Calif., Daily News said, "He's not dead yet, he showed that. He's finally decided to answer some questions and I don't know why he didn't do it before. He's got a long way to go, but he's helped himself."

Don Carter of the Macon, Ga., Telegraph and News said, "He was prepared. He expected tough questions and I think he got them. He helped himself and I don't see why he doesn't use this kind of forum more often."

Richard F. Chappell of the Flint, Mich., journal said, "The President was in fine fettle and showed a great sense of humor. He was straightforward. I think we've got what we asked for from him."

Other comments included: Wallace Allen, Minneapolis Tribune: "He did an expert job and probably scored some points with the TV audience. He scored

some points with some of the editors, too."

Steve Cousiey, Alton, Ill., Telegraph: "He seemed to rise to the occasion. Everybody was watching his expressions and mannerisms because of the talk about his stability. He handled himself well and I think he helped himself."

Robert Fleischer, Clinton, Iowa, Herald: "He carried it off pretty well. I thought it was straight talk."

Stewart Haas, Waterloo, Iowa, Courier: "He attempted to establish credibility and he seemed to do some good. But I don't think we can judge yet. We have to have more information."

Robert A. Meloon, Capitol Times of Madison, Wis.: "He was the same old Nixon—glib and using every opportunity to make his own points, even asking his own questions."