

EDITOR'S NOTES

• Now that Simon & Schuster has had a chance to circulate "The Final Days" in its "final" form, response to the book has taken a rather dramatic turn.

Authors Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein are no longer taking the heat they did in late March and early April. It came, you recall, from practically all corners, including some respected fellow investigative reporters. Much of the criticism from press circles had to do with the authors' methodology, particularly the apparent lack of direct attribution from any of the 394 persons Woodward and Bernstein say they used as sources.

"I think it's a shame that they wrote a book that's based on 394 'Deep Throats,'" Jack Nelson of the Los Angeles *Times* told *Media Report*, a Washington-based newsletter. David Kraslow, Washington bureau chief for Cox Newspapers, said in that same issue: "If the material down the road ever comes into question on the matter of attribution, I think that could have some negative impact on journalism as a whole."

But, also, much of the criticism was based solely on the initial newspaper accounts about the book (several days before it reached the bookstores) and on two 15,000-word excerpts in *Newsweek*, which some readers feel selected the more sensational revelations by the authors of Richard Nixon's last days in the White House.

The book itself is 175,000 words. It is replete with details, many of them minute. Regardless of how it is finally to be judged, it was obviously a massive undertaking. Clifford A. Ridley of the *National Observer* echoed what others have said after reading the

book, calling it "a model of exhaustive reportage." To have read the installments from *Newsweek*, Ridley said, "is not to have read 'The Final Days' at all."

Still, this does not answer satisfactorily questions raised by the early critics — about the use of unnamed sources, about the taste and validity of delving into the private lives of the Nixon family, about a possible disturbing precedent Woodward and Bernstein may be setting as to reporting technique. Which raises a related question: Are newspapers and books (such as "The Final Days") subject to different standards?

Ben H. Bagdikian was a logical choice to explore these areas for *The QUILL*. Bagdikian brings the highest credentials to press criticism. He has spoken and written extensively on the subject of journalism over the years, and brings to this or any assignment a distinguished career as reporter, editor and newspaper ombudsman.

Practically every major periodical has carried his byline. He is the author of four books, including two on the press. He is called upon to chair major newspaper studies and advise on numerous projects. He has been the recipient of fellowships and honorary degrees. He is the winner of a Sigma Delta Chi Distinguished Service Award for magazine reporting, shared in a Pulitzer Prize for newspaper reporting, and won a Peabody Award for broadcasting.

Beyond all that, *The QUILL* and other publications know that most of what Ben Bagdikian has to say stands the test of time. And, with that, we invite you to turn to page 21.

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