

CONFLICT OF WHOSE INTEREST?

STATEMENT BY U.S. SENATOR BOB DOLE
ON THE SENATE FLOOR
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Mr. President:

Last night the executive committee of WETA, Washington's Education Television Station, upheld the firing of newsman William Woestendiek because his wife works for Mrs. Martha Mitchell.

Committee members said Mr. Woestendiek did his job well, but because of his wife's new job he had a conflict of interest.

Mr. President, that kind of reasoning is unbelievable in 1970 in the United States of America where a woman is no longer chattel but her husband's equal with the right to pursue her own career.

Today, wherever we look we see women at work in jobs that conceivably could conflict with their husband's, if WETA's line of reasoning is valid -- that whatever a wife does affects her husband's perspective and reflects on his professional integrity.

I would like to cite a few cases of this, some of which might have been mentioned before, but all of which are valid.

The Executive Producer of the Walter Cronkite News is one Mrs. Midgley. Mr. Midgley is the husband of Betty Furness and was her husband during the period she was Lyndon Johnson's outspoken Consumer Counsel. Should he have been fired from the Walter Cronkite Show?

The bigots at WETA have not mentioned it, but one of their women, Walterene Swanston is the wife of a member of the staff of the Junior Senator from California. Should Mrs. Swanston be fired?

King Features Columnist Marianne Means, during the Johnson Administration was married to a member of the White House Staff, Emmett Riordan. Nobody ever suggested that King Features should fire Miss Means.

During the 1968 elections, four wives of very prominent newsmen, Mrs. Drew Pearson, Mrs. Eric Severeid, Mrs. David Brinkley and Mrs. Joseph Alsop were active in the Humphrey-Muskie campaign. Should their husbands have been fired?

Mr. Max Kampelman, Board Chairman of WETA and Moderator of one of WETA's News Programs was an integral part of the Humphrey-Muskie Campaign. Should he disqualify himself?

Columnists and Commentators Frank Mankiewicz and Tom Braden both have political backgrounds. Mr. Braden was a Democratic candidate for Lieutenant Governor in California and Mr. Mankiewicz was Robert Kennedy's Press Secretary.

Should they be fired?

Or should the Los Angeles Times fire one of its Editors, Mr. Guthman, because he too worked for Robert Kennedy?

Of course, all this is nonsense, and we know it. So do the people at WETA.

What they have really said and what they really mean is clear. It is this. If you work for WETA, don't let any hint of Republican bias show. It isn't politics that's bad; it's only the Republicans.

Mr. President, I resent the implication, I resent the pressure, I resent the blatant dishonesty. And, regardless of Party, it should not pass unchallenged. It isn't the Party that matters; it is the principle.

What is an anti-Republican bias today, could be anti-Democratic tomorrow. If any newsman is to be censored and banned for his wife's political ties, then press freedom is truly in trouble.