

BOSTON-KENNEDY INSTITUTE OF POLITICS  
KENNEDY SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT  
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

*my first administrative set - changing place -  
as chairman -*

~~THANK YOU VERY MUCH, FOR A GENEROUS INTRODUCTION~~

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 29, 1983

~~AND WARM WELCOME.~~

~~I MUST ADMIT~~, HAVING THIS MANY MEDIA PEOPLE TOGETHER AT  
THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS THINK-TANK IS A LITTLE FRIGHTENING.

HERE AT HARVARD, HISTORY COUNTS FOR MORE THAN HEADLINES,  
AND THEORY TAKES ITS PLACE ABOVE THE GALLUP POLL. I APPRECIATE  
YOU ASKING ME TO SHARE SOME THOUGHTS ON CONGRESS, THE MEDIA AND  
THEIR RESPECTIVE PERFORMANCE.

AT THE OUTSET, I SHOULD SAY I HAVE NO ANSWERS -- JUST  
OBSERVATIONS.

I AM, OF COURSE, FAMILIAR WITH THE USUAL CRITIQUE OF  
MEDIA COVERAGE OF CAPITOL HILL. THOSE WHO RIDICULE MEMBERS  
OF CONGRESS AS CAPTIVES OF THE MEDIA, HUNGRY FOR NATIONAL  
EXPOSURE OR THOSE WHO ~~X~~ SIMPLY RIP THE MEDIA AS LEFT-WING HATCHET  
MEN OR WOMEN. CONFERENCES LIKE THIS ONE COULD GO A LONG WAY  
TOWARD RETIRING THESE KINDS OF CLICHES.

#### THE MARVELS OF THE MEDIA

IN THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS ALL OF US HAVE BEEN DEEPLY

-2-

TOUCHED BY SOME AGONIZING DEVELOPMENTS AROUND THE GLOBE:  
FROM THE DOWNING OF A COMMERCIAL AIRLINER OVER THE SEA OF  
JAPAN, TO THE SHOCKING MURDER OF MARINES THE MIDDLE EAST,  
TO THE STARTLING MILITARY ACTION ON GRENADA. ALTHOUGH  
PHYSICALLY DISTANT AND REMOTE, AND ALTHOUGH ACCESS WAS DENIED  
DURING THE FIRST ASSAULT ON GRENADA, THESE DRAMATIC EVENTS  
WERE BROUGHT TO OUR LIVING ROOMS, OUR OFFICES, OUR AUTOMOBILES  
AND OUR DOORSTEPS BY THE MARVELS OF THE MEDIA-1983 STYLE.  
TELEVISION AND RADIO CATAPULTED US IMMEDIATELY INTO THE  
STORY . . . WITH GRAPHICS, "LIVE" REPORTS, WHITE HOUSE AND  
CONGRESSIONAL REACTIONS, NEWS CONFERENCES, BULLETINS AND  
UPDATES AND COMMENTS FROM THE EXPERTS. THE MEDIA HAVE PUT  
ON QUITE A SHOW LATELY THANKS TO ELECTRONIC TECHNOLOGY.  
IT'S ALL QUITE IMPRESSIVE. IN FACT, WE HAVE LEARNED TO EXPECT  
IT. IF WE DON'T GET THE INSTANTANEOUS SATELLITE PICTURE OF  
THE EVENT, WE SWITCH OUR DIALS UNTIL WE HAVE THE NETWORK  
THAT DOES. ~~IT'S ALL PART OF OUR "INSTANT" SOCIETY WE HAVE~~  
~~COME TO ENJOY.~~

*Seems a  
long time  
ago*



-3-

AND WITH ALL THE FAST-BREAKING NEWS WE'VE BEEN OVERWHELMED  
WITH LATELY, MILLIONS OF AMERICANS HAVE ~~NO DOUBT~~ BEEN GATHERING  
AROUND THEIR FAVORITE NEWS SOURCES FOR ~~SOME~~ INSTANT COVERAGE.  
~~THE FEELING, I BELIEVE, IS THAT~~ IF IT'S SOMETHING WE DON'T  
UNDERSTAND -- WHERE IS GRENADA? WHO IS GEMAYEL? FOR EXAMPLE,  
-- THEN TV, ~~OR~~ RADIO OR NEWSPAPERS WILL TELL US . . . AND TELL  
US ALL. THOSE KINDS OF EXPECTATIONS BRING WITH THEM A BURDEN,  
BECAUSE AS YOUR COVERAGE EXPANDS, THEN SO DO YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES.  
YOU ARE <sup>most important</sup> OUR DIRECT AND INSTANT LINK TO THE PEOPLE. AND THIS  
RESPONSIBILITY IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY SIGNIFICANT WHEN WE  
TALK ABOUT THE MEDIA AND THE CONGRESS.

#### MEDIA CRUSH ON CAPITOL HILL

IN WASHINGTON, FOR EXAMPLE, I HAVE WITNESSED THE RAPID  
EXPANSION OF THE MEDIA'S PRESENCE DURING THE PAST 23 YEARS,  
AN EXPANSION THAT IN MY VIEW IS SLOWLY BRINGING THE NEWSMEN

-4-

AND NEWSWOMEN INTO THE POLITICAL PROCESS. AS YOUR COMMISSIONED  
REPORT BY MR. ORNSTEIN<sup>TEEN</sup> INDICATES, THERE HAVE INDEED BEEN ~~SOME~~  
PROFOUND CHANGES ON CAPITOL HILL ~~EVER~~ SINCE THE FIRST UNWIELDY  
TV CAMERAS MADE THEIR WAY INTO THE HALLS OF CONGRESS.

THE ONLY THING THAT HAS GROWN FASTER THAN THE NATIONAL  
DEBT IS THE NUMBER OF MEDIA PERSONS NOW ON CAPITOL HILL.  
LOOK AT THE RADIO AND TV GALLERIES IN THE CAPITOL: THEY ARE  
BURSTING AT THE SEAMS. THE PRESENT FACILITIES ARE WOEFULLY  
INADEQUATE -- SOME WOULD EVEN SAY DANGEROUS -- TO HANDLE THE  
CRUSH. THERE ARE MORE CORRESPONDENTS, MORE EQUIPMENT, MORE  
CREWS, MORE BUREAUS AND CONSEQUENTLY MORE QUESTIONS TO ANSWER  
OR DODGE THAN EVER BEFORE. PREVIOUSLY ONLY A HANDFUL OF  
WELL-KNOW BIG CITY REPORTERS COVERED THE CONGRESS. BUT NOW  
THERE ARE CORRESPONDENTS FOR TOPEKA AND WICHITA AND OKLAHOMA CITY  
AND FORT MEYERS AND YOU NAME IT. RELYING ON THE TECHNOLOGICAL

-5-

CAPABILITIES AVAILABLE TO THIS NEW WAVE OF JOURNALISTS, THEIR MESSAGE IS NOW DISSEMINATED INSTANTLY, ~~AND THOROUGHLY~~.

WHAT IS NEWS?

I SUPPOSE ONE OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES FACING THIS NEW GENERATION OF REPORTERS IS DECIDING WHAT IS REALLY NEWS. IT CAN'T BE VERY EASY, CONSIDERING THE RAT RACE ON CAPITOL HILL, OF HEARINGS, PRESS CONFERENCES, RALLIES, EVENTS AND SPEECHES. THERE ARE ONLY SO MANY REPORTERS AND WE KNOW YOU CAN'T COVER IT ALL. MUCH OF THE COMMITTEE WORK, AT FIRST GLANCE, DOESN'T EXCITE ANYONE, SO THE TEMPTATION IS TO COVER SOMETHING THAT MAKES FOR BETTER TV, OR LENDS ITSELF TO A SUPERFICIAL KIND OF INTEREST.

~~I AM~~ <sup>being</sup> NOT A JOURNALIST, ~~AND~~ <sup>I</sup> PERHAPS DON'T UNDERSTAND THE DEFINITION OF NEWS, BUT I SUGGEST THAT ~~THAT~~ THERE'S A LOT OF <sup>Minor</sup> ~~BACK-PAGE~~ STORIES PASSING FOR HEADLINE NEWS THESE DAYS; ~~OR~~ <sup>Don't</sup> A LOT OF POTENTIAL NEWS THAT ~~DOESN'T~~ MAKE IT. LAST YEAR,



-6-

FOR EXAMPLE, THE MEDIA DECIDED THAT OUR CONGRESSIONAL AND WHITE HOUSE "GANG OF 17" BUDGET DELIBERATIONS WERE WORTHY OF SOME COVERAGE. I CAN'T ARGUE WITH THAT GIVEN THE STATE OF THE ECONOMY AND THE HIGH STAKES BEFORE US AT THE TIME. HOWEVER, REPORTERS SEEMED MORE INTERESTED IN FINDING OUT WHERE WE WERE MEETING, RATHER THAN WHY WE WERE MEETING.

ALMOST EVERY MORNING, "GANG" MEMBERS WERE STAKED OUT AT OUR HOMES. WE WERE FOLLOWED BY CARS, TRACKED BY MOTORCYCLES AND PURSUED LIKE UNDERCOVER AGENTS. HOUSE BUDGET COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN JIM JONES WAS INTERVIEWED WHILE HE PEDALED HIS BICYCLE TO BLAIR HOUSE. ( *He liked it -- He made the news* )

OF COURSE, OUR "SECRET" MEETINGS WERE HARDLY SECRET. IN FACT, "THE GANG" HAD TO RUN THE GAUNTLET OF REPORTERS AFTER THE MEETINGS. UNFORTUNATELY, THE QUESTIONS MOSTLY FOCUSED ON "DID IT BREAK DOWN?" WELL, WE WERE STILL NEGOTIATING AND THE DETAILS WERE COMPLEX, AND THE ANSWERS

-7-

DIFFICULT. BUT IT MAKES BETTER NEWS, IT SEEMS, TO SAY THE  
NEGOTIATIONS "BROKE DOWN," OR "ALMOST BROKE DOWN," OR WHATEVER  
LENDS ITSELF TO SOME FORM OF FINALITY THAT CAN BE PACKAGED  
AND DELIVERED. (*it did finally break down*)

ANY MORE IT SEEMS THAT CONGRESS DEALS WITH PUBLIC  
OPINION THAT HAS BEEN SIGNIFICANTLY SHAPED BY THE MEDIA.  
*may believe*  
POLITICIANS ~~LIKE TO THINK~~ THEY SHAPE OPINION -- AND SOME DO --  
BUT IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO COMPETE WITH SATELLITES AND COMPUTERS,  
OR 50-SECOND NEWS REPORTS. BY THE TIME CONGRESS MOVES ON AN  
ISSUE OR A CONTROVERSY, THE GRASS ROOTS HAVE USUALLY BEEN  
FERTILIZED. AND WE'RE TRYING TO DEAL WITH THIS NEW VARIABLE  
IN THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS. IN FACT, SOME MEMBERS OF CONGRESS  
HAVE COME TO MASTER THIS DIMENSION, BY PLAYING EXCLUSIVELY TO  
THEIR NEW CONSTITUENCY -- THE INSTANT MEDIA. IN THE OLD  
CONGRESS -- THE DIRKSEN, JOHNSON CONGRESSES -- OPINION WAS  
CAREFULLY DEVELOPED IN PRIVATE CAUCUS. THE PRESS WOULD TRY

*As a member of  
the House I never  
thought of going  
to press. I was  
lucky to be  
in a "Prayer"  
to "Eugene"  
Seward.*

*① Prime Time  
Amst  
Hearings  
② Press Conference  
③*

-8-

TO TRACK IT, REPORT IT AND THEN LATER ANALYZE IT. THE PROCESS WAS ANYTHING BUT FAST. IT WAS PURPOSELY SLOW, AND THE BUILDING BLOCKS WERE SOLID. HOWEVER, THE MEDIA HAVE HELPED CHANGE ALL THAT, AND NOW THE HOUSE AND THE SENATE, MORE OPEN THAN EVER BEFORE, MUST CONFRONT CONSTITUENCIES ALREADY INFORMED AND SOMETIMES HARDENED. OFTENTIMES, THE BEST-LAID PLANS OF SENATORS AND CONGRESSMEN COME BOUNCING BACK AT THEM.

#### THE INSTANT MEDIA

*Well, almost no one.*

THE MEDIA WAITS FOR NO ONE. AS A MATTER OF FACT, IT'S <sup>just</sup> SO ~~INSTANT ANYMORE~~, WE MIGHT CALL IT ~~THE~~ "INSTANT MEDIA."

HOWEVER, ONE OF THE GROWING PROBLEMS I SEE HERE IS THE RUSH TO REACT TO EVENTS BEFORE ANYONE HAS A CHANCE TO DIGEST ~~ALL~~ *Of course some members react before the event happens.* THE FACTS. THIS ENHANCED ROLE OF THE MEDIA, FUELED BY

PUBLIC EXPECTATIONS OF EVEN MORE RAPID DISSECTION OF WORLD EVENTS, MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY A HEIGHTENED RESPONSIBILITY -- A MANDATE TO RESPONSIBLY DEFINE WHAT IS NEWS.



### BOX SCORE JOURNALISM

THERE IS ONE KIND OF REPORTING THAT IN MY VIEW IS  
BEGINNING TO WEIGH HEAVILY ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE  
MEDIA AND THE CONGRESS. LET'S CALL IT "BOX SCORE" JOURNALISM.  
AMERICA'S OBSESSION WITH SPORTS HAS APPARENTLY CARRIED OVER  
TO POLITICAL REPORTING.

POLLS ARE PARTICULARLY GOOD EXAMPLES OF THIS TREND.  
IT JUST SEEMS TO ME THAT POLLS BASED ON SAMPLES BASED ON  
NEWS REPORTS BASED ON FIRST BLUSH REACTIONS MAY NOT BE  
ENTIRELY ACCURATE. YET THEY DO RELAY TO VIEWERS, LISTENERS  
AND READERS A BOX SCORE-TYPE RESULT: GET-OUT-OF-LEBANON 60%,  
STAY 30%. FROM THESE INSTANT RESULTS PUBLIC OPINION IS SHAPED  
AND, AS I SAID BEFORE, HARDENED. THE INTENSE COMPETITION  
BETWEEN NEWS ORGANIZATIONS SEEMS ONLY TO HAVE MADE THE POLL --  
THE BOX SCORE REPORTING -- MORE NECESSARY.

*if you ask  
where  
Lebanon?*

-10-

ONCE THE BOX SCORE IS OUT, AND OPINIONS GALVANIZE,  
ACTION BECOMES MORE PREDICTABLE IN OUR RESPECTIVE CHAMBERS.  
AS YOU KNOW, THERE'S A NATURAL TIMIDITY IN ALL OF US. NOBODY  
WANTS TO TAKE THE HEAT. BUT SOMETIMES WE MUST. HOWEVER,  
IT ISN'T ANY EASIER WHEN THE MOOD IS SET BEFORE THE FACTS ARE  
OUT, AND AN INNOVATION OR A MERE HOPE IS SHOT DOWN. < LET'S  
CONSIDER SOME RECENT EXAMPLES. >

#### LEGISLATIVE PARALYSIS

BY ALL ACCOUNTS, THE SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM AT THE  
START OF THIS DECADE WAS DRASTICALLY UNDERFUNDED.  
DEMOGRAPHICS -- THE BIRTH RATE HAD SLOWED DOWN AND FEWER  
WORKERS SUPPORTED EACH RETIREE -- COMBINED PERHAPS WITH  
OVERLY GENEROUS BENEFIT INCREASES -- WERE LARGELY TO BLAME.

~~LAST YEAR, MOST OF CONGRESS FINALLY SAID -- "OK, WE HAVE A  
MESS ON OUR HANDS. LET'S NOT POINT FINGERS. LET'S FIND A  
SOLUTION."~~

In 1981 there  
was a general  
feeling --  
The White House?  
The Commission?  
The President in Nov. 82  
The Legislature Remotely  
Congress?



-11-

BUT THAT WAS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE. AS SOON AS ANYBODY  
MENTIONED POSSIBLE MODIFICATION OF FUTURE BENEFIT INCREASES,  
*War*  
AN ELECTION ISSUE HAD ~~JUST BEEN~~ CREATED. IT BECAME ~~FASHIONABLE~~  
*Customary*  
TO SAY THAT "REPUBLICANS" WERE IN FAVOR OF CUTTING SOCIAL  
SECURITY BENEFITS. THE MESSAGE WAS CONCISE AND PERFECT AND  
QUICKLY BECAME A CATCH-PHRASE. UNDERSTAND, NOBODY WAS EVER  
TALKING ABOUT CUTTING PRESENT BENEFITS . . . NOBODY ~~EVER~~ HAD  
TO EXCITE ALL THOSE NICE PEOPLE IN REST HOMES. BUT SOMEHOW  
THE MESSAGE GOT LOST, AND THE PUBLIC WONDERS WHAT'S GOING ON  
ON CAPITOL HILL.

I SUGGEST THAT THE WAY WE DO BUSINESS IS SUBTLY BEING  
CHANGED. FOR EVERY PAINFUL BUT NECESSARY SOLUTION TO A  
DIFFICULT PROBLEM, THERE IS A PHRASE WHICH AROUSES PUBLIC  
EMOTION AND ULTIMATELY IMPEDES THE PATH TO THE SOLUTION.  
THE SLOGANS ARE AS OLD AS POLITICS -- IT IS THE ~~"INSTANT~~  
*Particularly T. J.*  
MEDIA" THAT HAVE MADE THEM SO POWERFUL.

-12-

### THE BUDGET STORY

MANY HAVE OVERLOOKED THE SINGLE MOST URGENT PROBLEM ON THE DOMESTIC LANDSCAPE: FEDERAL DEFICITS. RESPONSIBLE ACTION HAS BEEN STUCK SOMEWHERE BETWEEN SLOW AND COMATOSE.

LET'S TALK ABOUT DEFICITS. IT IS A DIFFICULT SUBJECT. YOU CAN'T TAKE PICTURES OF IT AND WRITING ABOUT IT IS NOT SO INTERESTING EITHER. IN FACT, SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE HEARINGS CAN BE BORING. BUT CONSIDER OUR FRUSTRATION WHEN THE CAMERAS AND THE REST OF THE PRESS CORPS SHOW UP FOR A STAR WITNESS -- AND THEN DISAPPEAR. THE SPECIALIZED AND BEAT REPORTERS DO A TREMENDOUS JOB, BUT DESPITE SOME TRULY SIGNIFICANT ISSUES, THE GENERAL "INSTANT MEDIA" ISN'T INTERESTED. THIS YEAR ALONE MAJOR ISSUES SUCH AS PENSION EQUITY, TAX REFORM, HOMEBUYERS ASSISTANCE, INTERNATIONAL TRADE, HEALTH CARE AND UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS HAVE RECEIVED LITTLE ATTENTION.



-13-

IF CONGRESS DOES NOT ALTER THE COURSE OF FISCAL POLICY,  
WE WILL ACCUMULATE AN ADDITIONAL \$1.2 TRILLION IN NEW DEBT  
IN THE NEXT 4 YEARS. <sup>Wanted</sup> CONSEQUENTLY, WE NEED A 20% INDIVIDUAL  
<sup>as one thing</sup> TAX INCREASE, JUST TO PAY INTEREST ON THE NEW DEBT. ~~UNLESS WE DO~~  
~~SOMETHING SOON. STOP AND REFLECT ON THAT FOR A MOMENT. A~~  
20% TAX INCREASE JUST TO PAY THE INTEREST ON THE NEW DEBT --  
<sup>Current</sup> ON TOP OF THE \$134 BILLION IN <sup>A</sup> INTEREST PAYMENTS ~~WE CURRENTLY~~  
~~MAKE. THE ALTERNATIVE IS TO ELIMINATE A LOT OF WORTHWHILE~~  
~~GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS AND SPEND THAT MONEY INSTEAD TO SERVICE~~  
~~THE DEBT. EITHER OPTION IS NOT PLEASANT AND SHOULD BE AVOIDED.~~

THE SOLUTION TO OUR BUDGET CRISIS WILL ONE OF THESE DAYS --  
<sup>Some</sup> COME ABOUT THROUGH <sup>A</sup> COMBINATION OF MORE REVENUES AND LESS  
SPENDING. THERE'S NOT A LOT OF SUPPORT FOR EITHER.  
BUT IF THE PUBLIC UNDERSTANDS THE CONSEQUENCES OF DOING NOTHING,  
ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES WILL RESPOND.

-14-

### COMMUNICATION

COMMUNICATION, I BELIEVE, IS THE KEY TO SATISFYING THE DEMANDS OF BOTH SIDES OF THE CONGRESS AND MEDIA EQUATION. PERHAPS WE HAVE GROWN SUSPICIOUS OF EACH OTHER: PRESS RELEASES AND NEWS CONFERENCES ARE INHERENTLY SELF-SERVING AND REPORTERS AND EDITORS ARE INTRINSICALLY CYNICAL AND NEGATIVE. OF COURSE, THESE CHARACTERIZATIONS ARE GENERALLY WRONG, BUT THE IMPRESSIONS LINGER. AND THAT IS REGRETTABLE.

THE LINES OF COMMUNICATION MUST BE IMPROVED. MAYBE BOTH SIDES SHOULD RELAX AND REALIZE THAT THE CRUSH AND THE RUSH DO NOT HAVE TO DICTATE STYLE OR CONTENT. PRESS SECRETARIES AND ASSIGNMENT EDITORS MIGHT ESTABLISH A DIFFERENT RAPPORT, WHERE INFORMATION AND NOT HYPE IS THE KEY.

FOR OUR PART, ELECTED OFFICIALS SHOULD CONTINUE IN THE TRADITION OF OPEN AND ACCESSIBLE GOVERNMENT, WHILE THE NEWS MEDIA UPHOLDS ITS UNIQUE AND TREASURED ROLE AS THE VOICE OF A FREE SOCIETY.



-15-

LET ME SAY... SOME POLITICIANS MAY ~~TRY TO~~ FOOL THE PEOPLE,  
BUT REST ASSURED THEY DON'T FOOL THE PRESS. THE TRADITIONAL  
WATCHDOG ROLE FLOURISHES.

CONGRESS IS HEADING INTO SOME EXTRAORDINARY TIMES AND  
THE MEDIA WILL BE WATCHING. LET US WORK WITH SUBSTANCE,  
NOT SHADOWS.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

*But the watchdog  
must be responsibly  
balanced, objective,*

## Observation

The Media -

Generally

(a) Liberal - Democrat

(b) More interested in big picture  
" " " Liberal View  
" " " " "

The Media -

- Media Oriented

- "Prime - Time" Audits

- Hearings - Bus. Conf., New. Release,

→ Result -