

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION  
FALK AUDITORIUM

“ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE”  
A BOOK DISCUSSION WITH MARVIN KALB AND DAN RATHER

Washington, D.C.  
Wednesday, October 17, 2018

**Welcome:**

DARRELL WEST  
Vice President and Director, Governance Studies  
The Brookings Institution

**Conversation:**

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DAN RATHER  
President and Chief Executive Officer, News-and-Guts Media  
Former Anchor, CBS News

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## P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. WEST: Wow, what a nice crowd. It's a great testimony to Marvin Kalb. (Applause) Marvin clearly, and Dan as well, have many fans here.

So I'm Darrell West of the Brookings Institution. I'd like to welcome you to this forum. We are pleased to host this event on an exciting new book by Marvin Kalb, "Enemy of the People: Trump's War on the Press, the New McCarthyism, and the Threat to American Democracy." It's published by Brookings Institution Press. And those of you who have not yet picked up copies, we're selling them right outside the auditorium so you can make sure you get your copy right after the event.

And I will volunteer this on Marvin's behalf, he did not authorize me to make this statement, I'm sure he'd be happy to autograph your book for you. (Laughter) Isn't that right? Yeah. Because no author ever wants to turn down something like that.

It's a terrific book. It's well-written, it's very smart, it's very provocative. And I think all of us would agree it's very timely given the state of American politics these days.

I am also honored to welcome Dan Rather to the Brookings Institution. I was telling him before the event I actually met him many years ago. I think this is probably 15 years ago at Brown University, where I used to teach. He came to deliver a lecture and did, of course, an amazing job. So it's great to reconnect with him.

Obviously, all of you remember him as the former anchor of CBS News. He is now the president and CEO of News-and-Guts Media. I love that title. And, of course, he is a keen observer of American politics and international affairs.

For those of you who are on Twitter, we have set up a Twitter hashtag for this event and for the promotion of the book. It's #FreePress, so feel free to offer any comments that you want during the course of the event.

And with that, I'd like to invite both Marvin and Dan up on the stage and they will take it over from there. Thank you very much. (Applause)

MR. KALB: Dan, do you know how to use those microphones?

MR. RATHER: No. (Laughter) Well, good afternoon, everyone.

GROUP: Good afternoon.

MR. RATHER: I want to plunge right into it. But, you know, there's an anchorman creed that goes candor when convenient. It's convenient to be candid with you that I'm here to sell a book. (Laughter) Marvin's book, if you don't have a copy of the book, I hope you will get a copy of the book.

And this is very important because this is an important book. I try hard not to diminish the coin of praise, but this book is an important book with important things to say at an important time. So I encourage you not only to read the book yourself, but to spread the word because in the book business -- and if there's a crazier business than television, which I doubt, it's got to be the book business, but spread the word.

And I also want to say that it's a pleasure to be here today to speak up for Marvin's book. Marvin has been so wonderful to me. We were colleagues at CBS News, of course, but we're virtually lifetime friends, certainly from our early thirties and forward. And that old saying that if Marvin is your friend, you don't need other friends applies. So let's get to business.

MR. KALB: Good. Thank you, Dan.

MR. RATHER: Marvin, first of all, why did you write this book and why now?

MR. KALB: Let me start by saying this was not a book I wanted to write. I've written a lot of books, but most of them, almost all of them I hope, have been books of analysis about foreign policy with the Middle East, China, Vietnam, the Soviet Union. I,

like you, Dan, was raised by people like Murrow and Severeid, and the whole idea was you went out and you got a story, you reported it, but your particular opinion was not terribly important.

But on February 17, 2017, when I learned that the President of the United States declared that the American press was the enemy of the people, I was stunned by that. Because the phrase to me, as someone who covered the Soviet Union in the '50s and '60s, in 1956 Nikita Khrushchev, who was the leader of the Soviet Union, said at the 20th Party Congress, a very important congress of the Communist Party leadership, that Joseph Stalin was a terrible guy. And one of the reasons he was so terrible was that he used the expression "enemy of the people" to target those people who criticized the government, who were not 1,000 percent in line with what it is that the government was trying to do, who were not totally devoted to Joseph Stalin and his legacy. In other words, a Communist leader was repelled by the thought that enemy of the people could be used by a Communist leader.

And then the leader of a democratic country uses that expression and it stunned me. Why did he do that? And I simply felt I had to say something about it. It was too important to just let go, to just have a luncheon conversation here at Brookings, which is great, but then you go away and you think about economics and one other thing. It totally absorbed me.

MR. RATHER: How big a decision and how long did it take you to make the decision? You've spent your lifetime being basically a straight reporter, we said before. This is a break with the Marvin Kalb many people have known for the better part of a half a century.

MR. KALB: Yes.

MR. RATHER: So how long did it take you to make that decision and

how tough was that decision?

MR. KALB: It was an extremely difficult decision to make and it took a lot of encouragement by some members of the family and some key friends of mine with whom I would meet quite regularly. And we all came up with the idea that -- not to load this up with the personal too much, but that it wasn't 50 years. I've been at this business of journalism now for 65 years. I felt I had a right to say something. I had a right to break away from traditional news and to state my opinion.

And my opinion stated as baldly as I think I stated it in the book is this: I am not saying in any way that President Trump has any leanings whatever towards Communism, Fascism, or anything like that, so put that aside. What I am saying is that when you examine what it is that he has done and what he has said, that to me adds up a program of weakening certain fundamental pillars of American democracy.

And I go back to a man who means a great deal to both of us, Edward R. Murrow. Murrow, in 1957, hired me and I was thrilled, absolutely thrilled, and had many occasions to talk to him. And one of the issues that came up which I remember very clearly, and I don't remember many things that clearly -- (Laughter) -- but one thing I remember very clearly is Murrow told me a story about a conversation that he had with an Oxford don. The don asked him for a definition of democracy, and Ed said freedom. And the don said, no, that's not good enough. Give me something more than that.

And when Ed began to think about democracy, he thought not just about a word. The point that Murrow made time and time again was that words like "democracy" are only words. A word can be believed or not believed depending on what it is that people vest in that word, what kind of value systems are put into that word, what kind of meaning does that word have. Why is it accepted by a mass of people? In our country it is accepted that we are a democracy.

Okay. And Murrow said what holds up that democracy? How firm is that democracy? And he would say that the system itself, the democracy, by its very nature is fragile because it is dependent upon people, and people can change and they themselves are fragile instruments, and that there are two structures that keep up that democracy. One of them he called the "sanctity of the court," the judicial system. And the other was the freedom and independence of the press.

And Murrow's view, which I totally accept, is that if those two stand firm and democracy sits on top of it, we're okay. If they stand firm. But if they are weakened, then the system itself is weakened. And in my judgment what the President has done, wittingly in my judgment, is weaken the structure of a free press by calling it an enemy of the people.

And let me quickly add 31 percent, according to recent polls, of the American people accept the view -- 31 percent accept the view -- that the American press is the enemy of the American people. Think about that for a second. And that has all happened in the time that Trump has been President.

And what he has done with the judicial system, his attacks on so much that we now call the judicial system, starting with Mueller, but going in all kinds of other places, suggest to me that by his words and actions he is weakening and, therefore, the subhead of the book, "The Threat to American Democracy," is to me something that we have to be mindful of and do the best we can to stop it.

MR. RATHER: I think one of the strengths of the book, and there are so many strengths in this book -- and by the way, as you pointed out, this is not a tome of a book. This is a very readable book in terms of time invested. But you draw parallels while emphasizing that you are not saying that Donald Trump is one of the great dictators of the last 150 years. In fact, you go to some pains to say that's not what you're saying.

But you draw a line that connects some of what's been going on during the Trump era that goes from Stalin to Hitler to Mao. Did you at the time you were writing it and do you now have any second thoughts that when you move that way, when you start mentioning Stalin and Hitler and Mao, some people will get the wrong idea?

MR. KALB: Yeah, and it is a risk, there's no question about that. I have to be careful about the way I write it. I hope I was. I cannot ignore the fact that a Communist leader, the Soviet Union, thought the phrase was so awful. And to find that an American President would use it just blew me away. And I began to look at why Trump would use that expression and what I found is the most remarkable thing.

It is not that Trump got that idea from Nikita Khrushchev. I'm not sure he ever read Nikita Khrushchev or anything like that. (Laughter) I don't believe -- and by the way, the President himself says the he doesn't spend a great deal of time reading books. He occasionally will read a chapter, which is good, depending on what the chapter is. (Laughter) But my thought was that he's using it for a reason. How did he get it?

Do you remember the name Pat Caddell?

MR. RATHER: Absolutely.

MR. KALB: Absolutely. Pat Caddell was a liberal pollster who had a great deal to do with Jimmy Carter's election in 1976. And at that time, Pat Caddell was way over on the left side of American politics. Now he is way over on the right side of American politics. And he writes for Breitbart, which is this alt-right website once run by Steve Bannon, who for a period of time was in the White House helping President Trump. And Bannon found a kindred spirit in Pat Caddell and they became reasonably good friends.

And Bannon brought the idea that Caddell raised, that the problems in America today are primarily problems caused by the press; that if only the press would do

the right thing, then we wouldn't have the problems that we do. And the press, Caddell said, was the enemy of the people in that context. He didn't draw it, he didn't go back to Fascist times, Communist times at all. He was thinking of it in American times and he used that expression several times.

And if you were of a mind to accept that view, that was very persuasive and Bannon bought into it. And when Bannon came to the White House in December of 2016, he brought that expression with him, used it with the President, the President liked it and attached himself to it.

He did say that the expression "fake news" was more successful than "enemy of the people," but I don't agree with that. I think it's more successful in the sense that more people are using it now. It has spread all over the world. Authoritarian rulers from one country to another are using the terminology "fake news," but they're also using this other one.

And the other one, for a reporter, is the one that cuts deep because we know, we know from what we both did and so many other reporters in this room know, that American reporters may not get it right all the time, but their instincts are not to be enemies. Their instincts are to be the best friends of the American people. And for an American President to say that I find just unacceptable, quite appalling.

MR. RATHER: Well, Marvin, you were a big-time -- and I mean big-time; there weren't any bigger -- big-time television correspondent during the Richard Nixon years.

MR. KALB: Yeah.

MR. RATHER: Including the Watergate years.

MR. KALB: Yes.

MR. RATHER: Always like to remind ourselves that Watergate is a

shorthand way of saying a widespread criminal conspiracy led by the President of the United States himself. But I want to take you back, and you do deal with this in the book, but put this in some context and perspective for us, that Richard Nixon, generally speaking, used his Vice President Spiro Agnew as the point person against the press. And what Agnew and President Nixon by reference were trying to do was something you described that President Trump and his allies are trying to do, Pat Caddell. And that is convince people that the country's problems are not the problems, it's the people who call attention to the problems, these pesky people in the press who are the problem.

Now, you point out, and I think correctly so, that he's made some headway with that. But you could compare the Trump years as we've had them thus far with the Nixon era?

MR. KALB: Well, with respect specifically to how both look upon the press, I have to go back here and ask myself the difference between the two men. Richard Nixon was an accomplished, professional politician.

MR. RATHER: Absolutely.

MR. KALB: He ran for office first in 1946 for the Congress, he won, tricky election there, but he won; 1950 for the Senate, he won; 1952, he became Vice President; '56, again Vice President. And then he ran for President and didn't make it then, but in '68, he did. So he has gone through the entire system.

He was during World War II a naval officer. He had put his life on the line. He did everything that a political person does, and he was very successful as far as he went.

I was on his enemies list and had all kinds of things done with income tax, listening in on our telephone, all of that stuff. I didn't like it, but somehow or other, maybe I was just wrong, but somehow or another, I did not think of Richard Nixon as a

threat to our democracy. The more I think about that maybe I was wrong. (Laughter)

But seriously, there is in my mind still a large distinction to be made between Richard Nixon and Donald Trump because Donald Trump never did serve in the military, I think got four deferments. He had never been elected to a political office. And I'm not sure about what his ultimate aims are except the accumulation of greater and greater power.

Both of them will set no landmark for the appreciation of a free press. But you asked for my judgment and mine is that Trump is in the way in which I described it before, a fundamental threat to our democracy as it is currently structured.

MR. RATHER: Well, as you point out in the book and have done so here, that a major goal of President Trump personally and of his administration is to delegitimize the press. It's a hard word for me to pronounce, I'm not even sure it's a proper English word, but to undercut the legitimacy of the press.

Now, whether we like it or not, he has made some headway. Honest people can differ on how much headway he's made, some question it. How much of that does the press have and the media have only itself to blame for it? Because in many ways, Donald Trump is a creation of the media and he exploited it very successfully, free media all during the campaign.

So while we're lamenting what has happened and raising signals about the dangers of what happened, what about our responsibility?

MR. KALB: I think considerable responsibility for the election of Donald Trump. I think in the book I have a figure there about the amount of time on CBS, NBC, and ABC during the campaign -- that's called "free time," by the way -- the amount of free time that was given to Trump was something like 1,100 minutes.

MR. RATHER: Hours I think.

MR. KALB: Was it hours?

MR. RATHER: Yeah, I think so.

MR. KALB: And the amount of time given to Hillary Clinton was exactly half that. And when you realize the enormous importance of television coverage in a political campaign and hundreds of millions of dollars are spent on that, you realize that immediately Trump had a huge advantage.

In addition, cable news. Cable news was obsessed by Donald Trump. Even when they tried not to be, they were. (Laughter) An example, Trump would put out the word that at 9:00 at night Eastern Time he was going to do a news conference. Starting at 6:00 in the evening, CNN would have across the bottom of their screen: Trump coming up 9:00 with so-and-so. So his name, the image, the impending arrival of this great guy was going to happen at 9:00. And that was on the air for three hours until he arrived on the scene.

And then it was not for a news conference. It was for one of his --

MR. RATHER: It was for a rally.

MR. KALB: Exactly. It was for one of his rallies. It would be for a harangue of some sort or another. And they did that night after night after night. And so he was hot copy. He was what my old friend Barrie Dunsmore used to call great, clean copy, because he was there, everybody wanted to watch him and see him and listen to him.

And that is the yeast of political growth. You are giving them all of this without a nickel on his part being spent.

MR. RATHER: With that in mind, Marvin, do you agree or disagree with President Trump when he says, and he has said this on several occasions, if the media needs him as much as he needs them?

MR. KALB: Certainly the media needs him to make the kind of money that they're making right now. It is said to say, but Donald Trump is one of the principal reasons why the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, other major newspapers, the three large cable news operations are all making the kind of money that they're making now.

In 2016, CNN had scaled beyond \$1 billion for the first time in their history. Why? Because of the coverage that they gave to Trump. Because people -- and this is important not just because you supported him, even if you opposed him, you were somehow fascinated by the guy. He was simply interesting in the same way that he is today. There is a fascination that he provides to many people, even those who cannot stand him.

MR. RATHER: Marvin, I want to get back to some things that are specifically in the book. Part of the subtitle of the book is *Trump's War on the Press, the New McCarthyism, and the Threat to Democracy*. What is the "new McCarthyism?" And subhead into that, on reflection, too strong to call it that?

MR. KALB: You mean about the threat?

MR. RATHER: Yeah.

MR. KALB: The new McCarthyism for me is a pick-up on what it is that several of us in this room as I look around may remember, the McCarthy period of the early 1950s. At that time, there was another major American politician, not a President, a senator, who captivated the press, who brought them along for the ride. The press went along for the ride. They spread the idea of McCarthyism in much the same way that President Trump won that campaign in 2016 and the way in which he governs today.

McCarthy made the idea of any kind of association with the left wing in American political life to be almost -- well, that you were going to lose your job. There

were an awful lot of people, you think about what happened out in Hollywood, what happened in New York, and any number of the creative arts. People lost their jobs because when they were a kid in college they once knew somebody who would become a Communist and that meant that he or she was also suspect. And so everybody was suspect and many families were ripped apart, lives were destroyed, and this was a nationwide scandal.

And it took Edward R. Murrow and a number of reporters, but Murrow led the pack without any doubt. He did it on radio. He had a 7:45 radio broadcast every night in which he did an analysis for four minutes, and quite often he would talk about the effect that McCarthy was having. And he was relentless. He went after McCarthy nonstop.

And then there was a great broadcast, I think it was March 9, 1954, in which Murrow -- in that half-hour broadcast, Murrow allowed McCarthy to speak for 22 of those minutes. Murrow came in with a phenomenal close, a dynamite close. But he let McCarthy hang himself and McCarthy did. And that gave the courage to the Republicans up on the Hill to go after McCarthy. And within six months, McCarthy was finished. He was censured and finished.

If we think today where are those Republicans from 1954, where are they today, there is a similarity in that back then, McCarthy had such power that people were afraid to take him on. And the Republicans up on the Hill did not take him on even until Murrow did.

MR. RATHER: Even when he lied, even when he misrepresented things.

MR. KALB: Absolutely.

MR. RATHER: No one stood up to him.

MR. KALB: They did not take him on. And it's something very similar to what we have today and that's why I use the expression "the new McCarthyism." There's something about what is happening today and the relationship with the President or the senator and the Hill that struck me as something that the American people have to be reminded of.

MR. RATHER: Marvin, we're going to go to questions here fairly soon, but before we do, two questions.

First of all, to the person in the audience who's saying, whether they've read the book or not, I got it, I heard what Marvin is saying, I'm concerned about it, so far -- and you've been brilliant in the book of describing what the problem is -- for individual people who are worried, what can they do? This is a question I get many times almost every day. Well, what can I do?

So what can be done? You've outlined the problem. What can we do?

MR. KALB: That's a tough question, Mr. Rather.

MR. RATHER: I try. (Laughter)

MR. KALB: Well, I don't want to sound like a politician, but vote. We here that.

There's going to be a phenomenally important election coming up in a couple of weeks. The result of that will determine pretty much in my judgment who our President is going to be for an additional six years. So that's a very important thing to do, to vote.

But as far as ordinary folks are concerned, there is an enormous amount of information out there that people ought to know about. But it takes time to figure out where the information is, to find it, and then to read it.

MR. RATHER: Yeah.

MR. KALB: Now, you do a Facebook essay quite often. That is something that a lot of people read and a lot more people should read. You're doing your part in that way.

We can all do our part only in what it is that we individually analyzing ourselves, knowing our strengths can do. We can't accomplish miracles, but each person is a miracle unto himself. And for me, the only thing I could do was to write this book. So if somebody says, well, Marvin, what the heck are you going to do? I did that.

And I feel very strongly, and this comes from something that Justice Douglas has talked about in a very famous speech he did, that if you feel in your society that there is something seriously underway that you do not like and you think is bad for the country, you have an individual responsibility to do something about that, not to sit back and say let those other guys do it. You have something you can do yourself. And when you think about it, I'm sure you can come up with something.

For me it was the writing of this book and I hope continuing to talk about its central theme.

MR. RATHER: Well, Marvin, we're going to go to questions now, but just before we do I want to remind people that the book is *Enemy of the People: Trump's War on the Press, the New McCarthyism, and the Threat to American Democracy*. What is the main takeaway you want people to have from the book?

MR. KALB: That we all have an individual responsibility to recognize what is happening in the country right now; to realize that the two fundamental pillars to our democracy are being weakened day by day; to understand that that weakening cuts to the heart of what it is that we are as a people and a country; and that we each have an individual responsibility to do something about it.

MR. RATHER: Now we'll go to questions. We have about maybe 20

minutes of questions. Just before we get to the questions I have to ask for your indulgence, that I don't hear as well as I once heard. (Laughter) I lost about 40 percent of my hearing in Vietnam and old age is taking care of the rest. So if you can speak loudly, speak clearly, be gentle, and don't be insulted if we don't understand it right away, that'd be appreciated.

With that, we'll go to your questions. Yes, sir.

MR. KALB: Yeah, we should have a microphone. In fact, there should be --

MR. RATHER: A microphone would be handy.

MR. KALB: -- two microphones.

MR. RATHER: But if a microphone is not here, just speak up.

MR. KALB: Okay. Well, let's -- we'll wait for the mic. Go ahead, please.

MR. GALLIVAN: Hi, Karl Golovin. I'm a retired special agent, U.S. Customs Service. I was a 9-11 responder; domain reference: AnIdealLivesOn.net.

On February 2016, President Trump stated you, or we, the people, will find out if he's elected who really knocked down the World Trade Center. Mr. Rather, on September 11, 2001 --

MR. KALB: Speak right into the mic.

MR. GALLIVAN: Mr. Rather, on September 11, 2001, at 5:20 in the afternoon, you faithfully reported that World Trade Center 7, 47 stories, collapsed in 7 seconds into its own footprint and you accurately described it as a controlled demolition and thousands of architects and engineers, AE911Trust.org, agree with your analysis even with respect to all three towers.

Mr. Kalb, last year you had Jake Tapper of CNN on your show and I raised the question with him, would the media, would CNN please wake up the public to

this anomaly with the evidence of 9-11 that tends to undermine the entire official conspiracy theory. And to this day the media won't and President Trump hasn't fulfilled his promise.

So after John Kennedy was assassinated the media helped us get to the truth with hearings, but since 9-11 you haven't. So will the media disclose the truth about World Trade Center 7 to the American people?

MR. KALB: Okay. Dan, you can take a first crack at that or I will.

(Laughter)

MR. RATHER: Be my guest.

MR. KALB: What you're asking is not really a question absolutely relevant to what it is that we're talking about. You know that as well as everybody in this room and so I'm not going to pay too much time on it. (Applause)

But I would ask that all of the other people who ask questions -- I'm not saying don't ask questions about what you like, but I don't have to answer it. (Laughter and applause) And I'm not going to answer this one.

So what's the next? Dan, you can select.

MR. RATHER: Well, I think we move on. I have respect for you asking the question, but I said at the beginning we're here to talk about Marvin's book. We're here to sell his book without apology. I do respect your right to ask the question. You raised your hand, I called on you. Best we can do. It's a deep subject.

I think everybody in the room understands where you're coming from as you think there's more to the story. Let me say clearly and definitively I don't agree with you. I do not agree with you. But that doesn't mean you should stop following your own instincts and your own information to whatever.

But let's get back to the book, with all respect. Thank you very much, sir.

(Applause)

I'm going to let you call the next question. (Laughter)

MR. KALB: In the back there somewhere. Way in the back to the right.

SPEAKER: Hi. Can you hear me? Oh, perfect. Mr. Kalb, I have a question about the characteristics associated with the rise of Trump and the state of the press right now. Do you think a lot of it has to do with the deregulation of media companies that occurred in the 1980s and the 1990s? Up until today we see large corporations just buying out major stations, including Sinclair Broadcasting --

MR. KALB: Yes.

SPEAKER: -- almost trying to buy out Tribune.

MR. KALB: The answer to your question is yes, it does have something to do with it. And there is a larger, more fundamental question about the public's loss of trust in what it is that the press is saying. That, to me, is at the heart of the dilemma today with the press and the public.

That is something that started in the Nixon years. It's just gotten worse and worse. And President Trump really stepped on it very hard and by his actions, by his comments has magnified the problem so that you can, as I said before, reach a point where 31 percent of the American people agree with the President that the press is the enemy of the American people.

So the issue is a real one and it has to be addressed in many different ways.

MR. RATHER: You call on the questions.

MR. KALB: This young man right in the front here.

MR. ROSE: Herb Rose. I recall that when I was taking a course in civics in junior high school coincided with the McCarthy era hearings and that McCarthy

was questioned by Welch, who I think represented the Army when McCarthy was attacking some young officer. And Welch asked the rhetorical, "Have you no decency?" In my memory and from watching news clips since that seemed to be the beginning of the demise of McCarthyism.

I'm wondering if you can foresee any event, considering that this President has no decency, you can see any event which might end in the same results.

MR. KALB: Number one, when the attorney, Mr. Welch from Boston, asked that question that was already after, two months after, the Murrow program that I made reference. Murrow's program was far more significant than what it is that Welch said.

Right after Murrow's program, McCarthy's standing with the American people went from 46 percent to 32. And throughout the entire Army-McCarthy hearings it stayed at 32. In other words, the hearings themselves did not further lower McCarthy's standing. It was a charming moment that seemed to say much more than the words themselves.

But I don't know that there is anything right now, that's a sad commentary, I don't know there is anything right now that can be said about President Trump that will damage him. He seems to be able to ride above all of the negativity. And one would have imagined that so much of the stuff that came out in 2016 would have made it impossible for the American people to elect him, but they did. And many things that have happened since then.

The support for the President remains somewhere floating between the mid-30s and the mid-40s. Not great, but still quite solid, and it doesn't appear to be going away.

So you have an election coming up. Let's see what happens.

MR. RATHER: Shall we go in the middle? Perhaps over here in the middle. Yes, sir, or is it a ma'am?

SPEAKER: Hi, my name is Kumar and I'm unaffiliated. But I'd like to know if the President should be elected by a majority of the vote rather than the Electoral College.

MR. KALB: I did not understand that, I'm sorry.

SPEAKER: Majority vote or Electoral College, which (inaudible; off mic)?

MR. KALB: I'm sorry, forgive me, I just did not get it.

SPEAKER: Is it better for us to have an election based on the Electoral College or directly from the vote?

MR. RATHER: The question is the Electoral College.

MR. KALB: I yield to you on that, buddy. (Laughter)

MR. RATHER: First of all, I apologize. It is not your voice or your diction, sir. It's just our hearing, so it's taking a minute to get the question.

Again, this is not something Marvin deals with directly in the book, but in a broad and general way it's all right. Trump has this war on the press. It's so vital to understand what's happening with that more -- as you say, a combined campaign to undermine the public's trust in rule of law and the press.

Now, when people say, listen, I get it, the war is on and we're going to change the war and how do we change it, the mind sometimes, depending on your political point of view, goes to, well, in terms of the overall votes in the last presidential election, and this has happened before recently, that the votes were not for Donald Trump. But he's in because the Electoral College.

In direct answer to your question, I'm not going to duck or dodge it, I have my concerns about the Electoral College. But number one, I personally am loathe

to change it because it gets down to change it to what? Number two, I do think that the talk is, frankly, in some ways, I won't say a waste of time, but we have to be careful because it would require a constitutional amendment. And if you do the math on the states that are likely to vote for or against, I won't say it's more likely that water will run uphill before you get that. (Laughter)

No, I don't mean to joke about it. But as a practical matter, number one, I personally don't think it's a good idea. I understand the argument for doing away with it. But number two, we can waste a lot of time by something that the odds are so strongly against getting enough states to approve a constitutional amendment that we, and this is my own opinion, we should concentrate on those things where there's a chance to effect real change. Not only do I not think it's a good idea to change it personally, but I think the chances of changing it are slim to none, and slim just left town. (Laughter)

MR. KALB: There's a very distinguished gentleman over there that would like to ask a question.

MR. RATHER: They're all distinguished gentlemen, remember.

MR. KALB: No, he knows that I know he's really distinguished.

(Laughter)

SPEAKER: Thank you very much for writing the book. And my question is you, Marvin, described the importance of the press as one of the two pillars holding up democracy. My related question is, how do you assess the danger of the Internet of technology changes, Facebook, all these challenges where there's no more editorial control, rumors spread around, facts don't value much anymore, lousy stories, lousy journalists don't get booted out of the profession, and people lose faith in the media?

MR. KALB: And let's bear in mind that when President Trump took office 20 months ago, he had a following on Twitter of 17 million. He now has a following of 53

million. And what he has told reporters over the last couple of months is that I don't need you anymore. I can go out to 53 million people on my own, so I don't really need you.

Now, those are big words because he really does need you and he proves that every single day by this love-hate relationship that he has with the standing media. The *New York Times* is the "failing *New York Times*," but he's desperate to get an exclusive interview with the *Times*. And, I mean, in the last couple of weeks he's been giving exclusive interviews it seems to everybody. (Laughter) Is it a coincidence that there's an election coming up very soon?

He uses the press regularly and the press, I don't think we use him. I think we're trying to cover him, but he makes it very, very difficult. And so news organizations today have to enlarge their bureaus covering the White House. When Dan was covering the White House he was there as a CBS News correspondent and I think Bob Pierpoint was a number two person, and that was pretty much it. Today the *New York Times* has six reporters at the White House; before Trump came in they had two. They're now looking for a seventh. (Laughter)

So we are at a point now where the media is there in its new, rich form to be exploited by someone who knows how to use that instrument and is not above using it. So we're going to be enjoying, suffering, the victim of, the beneficiary of his management of the new media. And that is tricky and I think rather explosive myself.

MR. RATHER: I think we better go to a feminine voice. We haven't had a feminine question yet.

MR. KALB: There's one right there.

MR. RATHER: Yes, ma'am.

MS. FERRIST: Claudia Ferrist. We have normalized Trump and people want to succeed, and I'm noticing in the press more and more kind of a go along to get

along attitude of reporting. So am I wrong about that perception or is it perceived by others?

Secondly, there's a punditry, a dynamics of punditry which, again in the context of people wanting to succeed, they do what is necessary to move their lives along. And it's becoming clear in the context of normalization of Trump that that is more accommodating the new way of being, thinking, doing in the Trump context.

MR. KALB: I am not sure that I got it all, but to the degree that I did, as far as the punditry is concerned that you mentioned, right, we love pundits. We love pundits. Every night when you tune in on cable television you have one pundit there after another. And some of these pundits know what they're talking about and should I say that some of them don't perhaps know what they're talking about? But they have time.

And something that is going on now has been going on for a long time. If you say something outrageous, you are apt to be called back again. If you say something very simple, but thoughtful, like I'm not sure of that answer, but maybe it's this, the likelihood of you being called back is remote. So punditry has a nice word to it, but in recent years it's like a cloak that envelopes all through worthy and unworthy, but it's all punditry.

MS. FERRIST: It's the go along to get along.

MR. KALB: The go along to get along, god, we've been doing that for a long time, haven't we? Golly.

MS. FERRIST: But the standard is now normalization of Trump. What you have to do to get along these days is it no longer matters.

MR. KALB: Well, I mean, the whole idea -- this is something that I consider very important, in fact. We are now living with Trump as President of the United States for 20, 21 months. In that period of time he has done a lot that you can either

praise or criticize, but he's done a lot. He is making the dramatic changes that he has imposed on this country normal. We are accepting as normal what is an abnormal assault on democracy, but we're accepting it. And that's part of the danger right now where everybody sort of sits back and says, well, there's not anything I can do about this, and so you do nothing. And that's rather bad.

I would like this young man out in front right here to ask a question.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you very much for the use of that adjective.

(Laughter) I'm Garrett Mitchell. I write "The Mitchell Report" and am an unabashed Marvin Kalb fan as are all those assembled.

The question that interests me is the process of writing this book. And Dan Rather made reference at the outset to the wide range of issues and subject matter on which you've written. I remember about a year ago, I think it was, you did a marvelous interview with the writer David McCullough in which he described how the writing of each of these books was a great learning experience for him.

And so I wonder in the process of writing this book, what did you learn of what did you come across that surprised you? What was the learning experience of writing this book like for Marvin Kalb?

MR. KALB: Thank you for that question, Garrett. Two things. One, I came to appreciate even more than I did in the past the value and the importance of a free press in society. And I began to think about the years that I spent covering the Soviet Union where there is no free press, of course. It's a totally controlled press. And what a free press does for people, the way it allows them to open their minds to all kinds of thoughts, the whole creative process.

It was such a shame, the Russian people have such a wonderful ability in my judgment to do great things and they're sat upon, in the Communist period, by a

totally lousy system. And even when the Communist period passed, they're still stuck. And part of the reason they're stuck is they don't have a free press. They're still stuck with a press that only reflects the view of the boss, in this case Mr. Putin.

The other thing that I learned to appreciate even more than I did before, the sensitivity and the fragility of the concept of democracy, that we can think of it because we take it for granted. It's part of our lives. We are born to it and we die to it. We are part of a democratic system. And yet, are we?

Is democracy written somewhere in concrete letters that cannot be changed, we must always be a democracy? I mean, people have come to me, Dan, often and said what happens when Trump is gone, for whatever reason, but we're post-Trump? And then are we going to go back to being what we were before? And there are some wonderful people, like Jon Meacham, who's done this book *The Soul of America*, and he writes that the likelihood is we will go back. And when I was talking to Jon twice in this environment here at Brookings and next door at Carnegie, asking the same question, where is it written that we are assured that it's going to go back to what we found to be comfortable, nowhere. And that to me is a deeper personal awareness of the fragility of the system in which we live.

I'm not saying that it's going to collapse tomorrow morning. God forbid. What I am saying, you asked me a question, what have I learned, what I've learned is to understand that great ideas like democracy are not here forever and that it's our responsibility if we live in a democracy to strengthen it and to enrich it, not to allow it to weaken because we ignore our individual responsibilities.

MR. RATHER: Ladies and gentleman, Marvin Kalb. The book is *Enemy of the People: Trump's War on the Press, the New McCarthyism, and the Threat to American Democracy*. I have a plane to catch and I'm going to be a man shot from a

cannon as soon as we leave this stage. (Laughter) But let's give Marvin a great round of applause. (Applause)

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