

Bad questions get bad replies

The answers were bad, but the questions were worse at President Ford's press conference in Phoenix last week.

Along with journalists' post-Watergate demands for an "open" presidency must come relevant, substantive questioning of the chief executive. Recently, American audiences have had to endure queries about what the President had for breakfast or whether he went swimming that morning.

In Phoenix, Ford fielded questions from the White House Press corps, the Arizona media and members of Sigma Delta Chi, a society of professional journalists. Not one group probed enough.

Instead, reporters posed vague, often unanswerable questions. For example, one reporter asked whether unemployment in the United States would rise to seven per cent. If he had reconsidered, the reporter might have realized that not even the nation's top economists can answer that question.

Another reporter asked Ford whether he supported the rumored movement in the House of Representatives to remove John Rhodes as minority leader. It so happens that Rhodes is from Arizona and was in the audience that night.

Even if Ford did support the action, could he have said so? At best, the situation would have been an awkward one.

A third questioner asked whether Ford's appearance at the journalism gathering pointed to a new openness between the chief executive and the press. Since taking office, Ford has maintained a relatively open relationship with the press. It's doubtful whether this press conference meant anything different.

Other questions involved Nelson Rockefeller's monetary gifts to friends.

No one asked about Rockefeller's public record as governor of New

York. His deeds and misdeeds in that role seem more significant than how much money a wealthy man has bestowed on his friends.

Why, for instance, were the average state taxes for a family of four increased from \$360 to \$1,840 during Rockefeller's stint as governor?

If Rockefeller is confirmed as vice president, will his stock holdings in corporations such as CBS, the New York Times, ABC and Time, Inc. unduly influence his actions?

Why are questions such as these asked so seldom?

Another area suffering from lack of attention at the press conference was the nation's economy. Only one or two imprecise questions were asked on the subject. The same held true for the topic of world food shortages.

It might be that Ford's answers to questions of real substance would be as vague as the questions now being asked. Regardless, the public should have the chance to judge that for themselves.

Members of the press need to do their homework before press conferences. They need to ask useful questions.

If they don't, perhaps the prediction made by Washington Post columnist Nicholas von Hoffman will prove true.

Von Hoffman contends that, if reporters continue asking self-righteous questions, without facts to back them up, if they continue to speak in vagaries at White House press conferences, "... Ford will be justified in abolishing the press conference as an institution that has not only grown to be archaic, but as an obnoxious intrusion on the television quiz shows, where at least they give away money."

Recently, one has wasted almost as much time as the other.

Jane Owens

Ghost of Spiro T. Marley warns Ebenezer Rocky

Once upon a time there was a rich old employer named Ebenezer Rocky. He was just about the jolliest, kindest, most generous employer in the whole wide world.

Among his thousands of employers was young Bob Cratchit, who had a little crippled son named Tiny Tim.

"Merry Christmas, fella," Rocky would say every day to Cratchit. (Every day was Christmas as far as Rocky was concerned.) "Kindly accept, as a token of my appreciation, this basket of filet mignons, pate de fois gras and thousand-dollar bills."

But then one night, Rocky was aroused from slumber by the clanking of chains. And there before him stood the wan ghost of old Spiro T. Marley.

"I, too, used to be a kindly, tender-hearted man," said old Spiro T. Marley in sepulchral tones. "There was hardly a needy contractor in all of Maryland who didn't benefit from my generosity."

arthur hoppe

innocent bystander

Hardly had Rocky recovered from the shock when the Ghost of Christmas Past appeared before him. It led him to the happy scenes of his childhood when he didn't have a nickel to his name that wasn't in a trust.

There was his grandfather, old John D. Rocky, giving away dimes. "Happiness, grandson" warned old John D., "is never giving anyone more than a dime."

Next came the Ghost of Christmas Present. It whisked him across town to the palatial home of Bob Cratchit where the family was feasting on filet mignon and reading the stock ticker.

"Gaze upon the victims of your largess," said the Ghost. "Observe the cholesterol they are ingesting. Listen to their cries of woe over the Dow Jones averages. Repent!"

Finally, the trembling Rocky was visited by the Ghost of Christmas Future. This grim specter showed him as he would be in 1976 if he failed to mend his ways—alone but for his last Picasso and his last billion dollars.

"I know who that is," cried Rocky in terror. "It is I!" And he fell to his knees before The Senate Rules Committee.

"That's the kind of leader our country needs!" shouted the Senators happily. And they agreed to make him Vice President.

A reformed Rocky hurried to Cratchit's mansion, seized the remains of the Christmas basket and told him he was fired.

"But, sir," pleaded Cratchit, "it's Christmas."

"Bah, fella," said Rocky, "humbug!"

"God help us," sobbed Tiny Tim, "every one."

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TV commercials insult intelligence

With reform seeming to be the trend nowadays, it is a wonder why nothing is being done about the most brazen example of dissimulation (next to Richard Nixon) the American public has seen in a long time—the television ads.

From 6 a.m. until after midnight, anytime we turn on the TV set, we run the risk of having our intelligence insulted by the execrable creatures of Madison Avenue Ad Men.

Washed-up actors, cats, faded beauty queens and money-hungry little kids, offer us nickel and dime analyses of what we are doing wrong with our lives, in regard to everything from sex to dog food.

joe dreesen

smiling grimly

If you're impotent, don't worry about it. Just buy the right kind of toothpaste, and you can count on instant virility.

And if your marriage is on the rocks, in all probability it's your coffee. If you're not sure, you might check with a senile Swedish woman named Mrs. Olson, who seems to be everybody's neighbor.

The panacea for all your afflictions can be found by using the proper laxative, which guarantees your health. And, as we all know, "When you have your health, you have just

about everything"—except relief from asinine television ads.

The most obviously hypocritical ad has to be the one in which a major oil company talks about how free enterprise needs to be preserved in America. What little free enterprise there was, the companies did away with in the recent oil "crisis."

How anyone can believe some of the chicanery seen in TV ads is beyond me. How anyone seriously can produce some of these ads...

So what can be done?

The easiest solution would be not to watch television. With the quality of programs nowadays that probably isn't too bad of an idea.

Public television is another alternative. At times its stations offer good programs but, due to money problems, they usually cannot compete with the privately owned networks. Increased public funding of ETV would help, although the private networks would lobby effectively against such an idea.

Perhaps the most realistic approach is to run the advertisements in sequence before and after a program, rather than in intervals throughout the program.

This way, anyone who did not care for the ads could, for example, run errands during the program intervals. This idea already is being used, with apparent success, in several other countries.

If something isn't done soon, you might turn on your TV someday and see George Wallace promoting "The National Enquirer" or, worse yet, Linda Lovelace trying to sell Chiquita brand bananas.

to the editor

Dear Editor,

I would like to compliment Amy Struthers on an exceptionally well done "broad side" column in the Nov. 15 issue of the **Daily Nebraskan**.

This University is a good example of the ultimate in stagnation. The students do not seem to realize that they are here to be served. It is the students' right to be the most forceful and influential body at UNL.

This is not Revolution, it is sense and honesty. If you don't like the student government, don't get swallowed into it. Abolish the damn thing. If you want alcohol on campus, then possess it as if no rule against it existed.

I appreciated Amy Struther's article because it had some sense to it. This campus sickens anyone who contemplates what the hell we're doing here.

I have worked in the student government extensively but now have given it up. I know it is a farce. I am tired of suck-happy students badgering others to change the student government. It cannot be changed until it is dismantled entirely. No government is better than fake government.

Jack Crabb