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12/12/90

Dear Sirs:

May I complement you, once again, for the benefits derived from your very complete coverage of the activities you show.

I refer in this letter, to your coverage of the Senate Ethics Committee hearings. They have, for me, provided unexpected clarifications of the shallowness of the existing Senate.

Let me start with a reference to John M. Barry's "The Ambition and The Power" pp 559 and 560, a book you brought to my attention in a discussion by Mr. Lamb with Brooks Jackson and John M. Barry.

The reference provides a very succinct, concise commentary on the "knowledge level" of both the House and the Senate, in the last two paragraphs (p 559) and concludes the second of these top (page 560).

On 12/6/90, the panel members, beginning with Sen. Heflin or Sen. Helms made, netted out, the clearest demonstration of Senatorial ignorance I've ever been privileged to witness. In summary context they (collectively) stressed "How can a Senator be expected to understand what you're talking about?" when Mr. Black was being questioned. And assuming the correctness of their position - vis-a-vis themselves, it may well be true that Sen. DiConcini had the same trouble, as also the other five. Since they are used to aide's reducing information to a succinct terse summary, they might have felt they (a) weren't hearing what they wanted to hear and (b) had no one to tell them what was being said. Not least until Mr. Patriarca mentioned "criminal referral". The only committee member who "appears" to understand what's going on is



Senator Rudman. And he is faced with the formidable task of making clear to the other five, with the significant assistance of Bob Bennett, just what breaches of conduct occurred.

Many call-in viewers "sense" their "shallowness" but don't have the referenced material (Barry book) to guide their analysis. Thus they comment on "bias", "arrogance" etc., which have a basis of truth in them. The panel, except for Rudman, wants a "yes" / "no" form of statement. It is far outside the pale of their experience and, of course, no one on the hill is going to tell them how "uninformed" they are, for all the obvious reasons Mr Paterson and Mr Black have mentioned in their testimony.

It is also noticeable that the Senators (except Rudman) expect expert witnesses to behave like "courtroom experts" they hear in all kinds of hearings. And, of course, "playing expert" is one of the more marvelous "art forms" of the Washington arena. Snow-balling Congress takes time to learn. And the psychologized setting of most hearings is, in fact, intimidating as it is intended to be. A novice in the game usually has a traumatic experience which results, in part, from the common belief that the Senators and/or House members "know what it's all about".

Therein lies the real value of your coverage. It gives those who know the process, a better feel for who does know something as contrasted with those who are "posturing" (a majority). On the House side particularly, I expect knowledgeable Reps. to "plant" questions for less aware ~~colleagues~~ colleagues.

(No wonder the public, which only senses this, grows more and more cynical.

Peace + Thank You