

The Stillwater Club

Thursday, September 8th 2016
The Lodge at Pebble Beach

[Somewhat polished draft with some typos and wordos and missing or inappropriate punctuation.]

Thank you, Bob, and thank you Stillwater Club for the invitation to speak with you again...five years after I gave a talk here about my "*Walk to the White House*." At the time, I didn't want to run. Today I'm here to announce my candidacy for...oh, wait a minute, that's next week.

[Did you hear about the atrocious job Matt Lauer did with Clinton and Trump last night? He's being excoriated by left and right. Or did you see Gary Johnson's stumble? During an interview, the Libertarian candidate said he didn't know what Aleppo was. The Syrian city, scene of terrible fighting, is the home of a quarter-million people. I told my media assistant this morning I was thinking of tossing out my prepared remarks and railing about the disaster that's overtaking us. She said I should resist the temptation. Okay]

Okay, so I'm here to speak to you about The Collapse of the Fourth Estate and How it Threatens the Future of Our Country.

By the way, do you know what is the origin of the term Fourth Estate? Back in the 18th century, Edmund Burke was said to have coined the phrase when he noted that "*there were Three Estates in Parliament*" - He was referring then to the clergy, the nobility, and the commoners - "*but, in the Reporters' Gallery yonder, there sat a Fourth Estate more important far than they all.*"

Our Fourth Estate is on a respirator. We are not being informed about what we need to know.

For instance, here are some stories that should be on the front page on a regular basis:

Our military budget is larger than the next ten countries combined.

We have more people in prison per capita than any other nation but the Seychelles.

Only ten countries have higher firearms death rates than the US, nine of them south of our border.

Though we by far spend more per capita on health care than any other country, we rank 31st in life expectancy worldwide and 58th in infant mortality.

Our 15 year olds rank 29th on maths and science tests.

50% U.S. adults are unable to read an 8th grade level book.

50MM Americans - 16MM children - are dealing with food insecurity,

that's government speak for they're going hungry.

American children are four times more likely than European children to be drugged for ADD and ADHD.

These are significant issues, and when effectively hidden from public view won't be address. It's the job of the Fourth Estate to keep us aware of such matters.

Oh, one more stat: Fox News viewers tend to be less informed about current affairs than people who get their news from other news sources and even than people "*who don't watch any news at all.*"

But for the past four decades, the Fourth Estate has been sliding into irrelevancy and disgrace. The mainstream media has become the lamestream media.

This is how it happened. Remember when the family sat around the dinner table and watched the evening news? And how dad, with his pipe and slippers, would read the local paper? Quaint maybe, but America was a far better informed country forty years ago. Then along came technology. Videotape replaced film, and microwave transmissions made "**live**" the first name in news coverage.

Then came satellite and cable distribution which offered limitless viewer choices. Followed by the Internet which offered not only more choices, but also immediacy.

Contrast this with the network newscasts. They're basically formatted five hours before they air on the East Coast. If a big story breaks too late to make changes in the East Coast feed, or after, the West Coast feed is updated but that is rare.

Meanwhile, the Internet - today coupled with two billion smartphones worldwide - drawing on myriad sources in every time zone, means that events are being put before us immediately. No wonder TV news ratings are declining. The Internet particularly hurt the newspaper industry, with newspapers going to print ten hours before they arrive at your doorstep. Circulation, readership, and advertising - particularly classifieds; hello Craigslist - began a serious downward spiral in the mid 90s.

Deepening that spiral was the failure of the media to understand the Internet. Not realizing that the Internet was not only a different platform, it was a different kind of platform, both print and broadcast tried to cut and paste their existing products on the Internet. That didn't work well, particularly later with the massive smartphone audience.

Today, online news delivery will soon eclipse the rest of the competition and become the primary source for news in this country and around the world. And it should, just from a basic business model. Consider an online news operation where the work is produced by computers and delivered via the Internet, against the huge expense and time of printing and delivering newspapers. Nor is there the need for high-priced Ken-and-Barbie's sitting in high-

overhead broadcast studios. They gives new meaning to the term “anchors.”

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The problem the networks faced was not just from new technology. From its start in the Fifties, news was a loss leader. Except for *Sixty Minutes*, news programs cost the networks money, but they aired them because the FCC told them they should. But in the early 70s, with the switch from film to tape and microwave, news coverage went from sedate explication to a live, unpredictable, in-your-face wild creature. This transformation came on the heels of the nation’s rapt attention to the Senate Watergate Hearings, the House Judiciary Committee impeachment hearings, and Nixon’s resignation. Remember 43 years and a month ago, as Nixon got into Marine One on the White House lawn, waving goodbye with both hands showing the vee for victory?

Anyway, television news became a big deal. The networks, and especially the local stations, added news coverage by the hour. There was a serious downside to this, in that all sorts of people decided they wanted to be on television. Not to be journalists – that didn’t matter and they thought they could fake that part – but to be celebrities and get a good table at the local Olive Garden. So a great many new television reporters were hired for their looks, and that brought down the quality of news coverage significantly. I call it Nixon’s revenge.

Advertisers didn’t care; they gobbled up the commercial time. For some stations, news programming generated two-thirds of their revenues. Later, with the advent of satellite and cable, local news revenues were essential the stations were competing against only two other local news operations, unlike the rest of the programming which was up again hundreds of channels.

Concomitantly, this put pressure on the news departments to bring in ratings, and however they could. The obvious way was to make their news look more like the sex-’n-violence shows of prime time. There was palpable shift in focus from serious news to tabloid coverage. Journalism wasn’t what mattered; it was the number of eyeballs they could promise the advertisers. The phrase “*If it bleeds, it leads*” became grotesquely popular.

The network news shows also had their problems which started when Walter Cronkite retired in 1981. The year following “Uncle Walter’s” departure from the anchor chair, more than two-and-a-half million network viewers left with him. By the way, Cronkite was reporting to 24 MM viewers a week; today, Lester Holt on NBC, David Muir on ABC, and Scott Pelley on CBS got 22MM viewers combined in the latest ratings.

And this note, back in 1981, 85% of television sets were tuned to the network evening news programs. Today, because of cable and satellite competition, because of the immediacy of the Internet, and because the quality of the network

newscasts has declined, the networks are drawing only 31% of the national audience.

Why is that a problem? Because it is a symptom of Americans having stopped caring about being informed about their government, their society and their future. While our military has tromped around the world, killing and dying and pouring our economy down the toilet, trying to install democracy in places like Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Libya, Panama, et cetera, our own democracy is in peril. The national voter turnout in 2014 was 36% – the lowest since 1942 when the country was at war. In the primaries and caucuses this year, the average turnout was 25%. Only half of the voting age population is expected to vote this year, if that.

Before I move on, a word about statistics. Mark Twain is said to have said that *“Statistics are like ladies of the evening. Once you get ‘em down, you can do anything you want with ‘em.”*

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A couple of more issues I have with television news...I was stuck in a hotel room last month and saw CNN and Fox go and stay live on speeches by Clinton and then by Trump. The role of journalism is to record and edit, to digest events, not to play them in their entirety. Especially political speeches which so rarely generate news.

Another example of the failed Fourth Estate are the Sunday talk shows. Whereas once they dug into a range of important issues, today the main goal seems to be hosting guests who will produce headlines. They’re like the nightly news coverage which gave Donald Trump virtually \$4 billion in free coverage but almost none to Bernie Sanders’ ideas about free college admission...until late this spring when Clinton reversed an earlier position and supported the idea.

Here’s a list of the last Sundays talk show guests: Tim Kaine, Kellyanne Conway, Mike Pence, Sen. Jeff Flake, Gov. Chris Christie, Labor Secretary Tom Perez; Mayor Rudy Giuliani, Ben Carson, and Jill Stein. By the way, four of them, all part of the Trump campaign, were also guests the week before.

News should focus on the ideas and what people have to say, rather than on the people themselves. Otherwise the election becomes a popularity contest, and people vote their emotions instead of their intellect. More on that in a moment. The former FCC chairman, Newton Minow, is known for calling television *“a vast wasteland.”* That was in a speech to the National Association of Broadcasters convention in 1961. A few years ago, Minow was asked if he stood by his *“vast wasteland”* comment, and he amended it to say that, *“Now it is a toxic dump.”* Minow charged television with falling short when it comes to news, saying *“Too much deals with covering controversy, crimes, fires, and not enough*

with the country's great issues." He also noted that presidential campaign coverage is "*obsessed with the trivial.*"

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It's significant that this collapse of the Fourth Estate has taken a long time. Similarly, we have watched our once-guaranteed Constitutional rights get sucked down the drain in the 15 years since the Patriot Act was hurriedly passed after the 9/11 attacks with but one member of Congress actually reading it. The fact is that we, as a society, are better able to react and come together in the time of crisis. We have a much more difficult time when, instead of it being abrupt, it's a slide into the darkness.

You've likely heard of Paul Ehrlich's metaphor. You put a frog in a pan of boiling water and it will jump out. But if you put the frog in a pan of cool water and then heat it to boiling, you'll cook the frog.

This is why paying attention to what's going on around us is so critical. There have been plenty of clues about what's happening in the early stages of the corruption and perversion of our values, but we haven't acted to correct our path.

When the Fourth Estate fails to put forth the truth – when we kowtow to the powers that be – the United States is misled...into disaster. Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, Rice, Powell, and others staged a strategic campaign to persuade Americans that we needed to invade Iraq, saying that Saddam Hussein was going to attack the United States, with nuclear weapons. Nothing could have been further from the truth.

I'm not just railing against conservatives. I think Barack Obama has been a failed leader on an epic level on many vital issues. But the fact is that virtually every problem our country faces today is because rather than tell us the truth, the press has given us he said-she said reporting, leaving the truth suspended in confusion. A Republican will make a charge, the press will get a Democrat to respond it. What's the truth? How are we to know?]

Here's how Russell Baker, the eminent columnist spoke of the problem: *In the classic example, a refugee from Nazi Germany who appears on television saying monstrous things are happening in his homeland must be followed by a Nazi spokesman saying Adolf Hitler is the greatest boon to humanity since pasteurized milk. Real objectivity would require not only hard work by news people to determine which report was accurate, but also a willingness to put up with the abuse certain to follow publication of an objectively formed judgment. To escape the hard work or the abuse, if one too many says Hitler is an ogre, we instantly give you another to say Hitler is a prince....The public may not learn much about these fairly sensitive matters, but neither does it get another excuse to denounce the media for unfairness and lack of objectivity.*

And, Baker added, *“In brief, society is teeming with people who become furious if told what the score is.”* He noted that the networks lacked the faith to report the news honestly, for fear of offending that portion of the audience that dissents against the truth, for fear of reducing their ratings and consequently their revenues.

I should underline this important fact that when reporting the truth, as Edward R. Murrow observed, there are not always two equal sides to a story.

[There’s another reason why the network news is so namby-pamby. Their reporters want to keep their prestigious positions so they avoid rocking the boat. That’s why they are so benign when it comes to reporting on misbehavior at the White House or on Capitol Hill. Their failure to stand up for the Fourth Estate explains why they are held in such low esteem, down with used car salesmen and members of Congress.]

Television is still the gorilla on the media scene, and as long as we have it in our lives as a source of information, we would do well to better understand it.

Murrow provided a clear picture in a speech in 1958. MURROW SOT

...But this nation is now in competition with malignant forces of evil who are using every instrument at their command to empty the minds of their subjects and fill those minds with slogans, determination and faith in the future. If we go on as we are, we are protecting the mind of the American public from any real contact with the menacing world that squeezes in upon us. We are engaged in a great experiment to discover whether a free public opinion can devise and direct methods of managing the affairs of the nation. We may fail. But in terms of information, we are handicapping ourselves needlessly.

Just once in a while let us exalt the importance of ideas and information.

But unless we get up off our fat surpluses and recognize that television in the main is being used to distract, delude, amuse and insulate us, then television and those who finance it, those who look at it and those who work at it, may see a totally different picture too late.

If we go on as we are, then history will take its revenge, and retribution will not limp in catching up with us.

This instrument can teach, it can illuminate; yes, and even it can inspire. But it can do so only to the extent that humans are determined to use it to those ends. Otherwise, it’s nothing but wires and lights in a box. There is a great and perhaps decisive battle to be

fought against ignorance, intolerance and indifference. This weapon of television could be useful.

Stonewall Jackson, who is generally believed to have known something about weapons, is reported to have said, "When war comes, you must draw the sword and throw away the scabbard." The trouble with television is that it is rusting in the scabbard during a battle for survival.

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It was after Walter Cronkite left that Americans started getting our network news from the B-team. I'm talking about Tom Brokaw, Peter Jennings, and Dan Rather. They didn't hold a candle to Cronkite, Reasoner, and Huntley and Brinkley or Chancellor. They were younger, handsomer, and more full of themselves. This may seem like a small point, but it wasn't enough that they were the anchors of national newscasts. They all had to have on-air credits noting them as "Managing Editor" of their newscasts. Jennings spent most of his days out of the office. Rather kept searching for an identity, not knowing if he should stand or sit, or wear a sweater. For a few weeks he sign off his newscast, "*Wherever you are, be there.*" And for a while it was simply, "*Courage.*"

Unlike most of the country, I wasn't a big fan of Brokaw. In 1987, Brokaw got the first American hour-long live interview with Mikhail Gorbachev. As it opened, the Soviet leader said to the anchorman, he would like to make a short statement to the audience. Brokaw said no. What? The leader of the second greatest power in the world, in his first live public interview before the American people, and this reporter was telling him he couldn't say an opening statement? Who did Brokaw think he was?

Well, they sat down and Brokaw asked his first question. And Gorbachev, before answering the question, made his brief statement, thanking him for the opportunity to speak to the American people.

Okay, that's old history, but Cronkite or Reasoner would never have done that. They were journalists, not jingoists. That said, Brokaw was better than any of today's anchors.

Jon Stewart, who was considered one of the most important information providers in the country, insisted that he was a comedian, not a journalist, but many of his viewers knew the value of his reporting. In a Bloomberg story about Stewart, Brian Williams, said that Stewart says what journalists are too afraid to say. What?

The truth is that Stewart then and now John Oliver, are doing a better job of keeping news-starved Americans informed on particular issues than any of the so-called "real" news anchors. Studies show that their viewers are better

informed about political issues than average. [You'll appreciate this comment by Stephen Colbert wh said, *Cable news is increasingly putting the 'me' in 'media' and the 'ew' in 'news'.*]

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A few words about the major cable networks. Without Fox News, George Bush would have lost Florida and the election in 2000. Without Fox, there wouldn't have been the support needed to invade Iraq. I'm not expressing a political position here. Objective analysis shows that Fox has always been a propaganda organ for the neo-con wing of the Republican Party.

CNN isn't slanted like Fox, but its news judgment is certainly questionable. They tend toward CAPS LOCK reporting – big headlines and wall-to-wall coverage, as they did on the Malaysian Airlines jet disappearance, and the Korean ferry disaster. Also, CNN smeared itself by hiring Corey Lewandowski, Trump's former campaign manager, to become a paid commentator. Lewandowski is still getting \$20,000 a month from Trump's campaign – they say it's severance pay but he's consulting Trump on an almost daily basis.

MSNBC, which is regarded as the weak liberal opposition to Fox, gets a lot of press and beat CNN in the ratings last month. Fox, which is far better at producing television, had more viewers than MSNBC & CNN combined.

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To be clear, news is not about left or right, it's about truth. There are a great many pretenders who manufacturer their own version of events, no where more so than in radio, where there is a plague, a dangerous mass of uninformed opinion and agenda-driven preaching. I'm speaking particularly of the talk show hosts like Rush Limbaugh and Sean Hannity, regrettably among the most powerful voices in America today. They spew lies and vitriol to loyal listeners who swallow their toxic Kool Aid with a smile on their faces and anger in their hearts.

The talk isn't just ugly. It legitimizes racism and justifies hatred. It undermines citizenship. People believe they are getting real information. So say the ditto-heads, people who take pride in not thinking for themselves.

Mark Twain said, *Loyalty to petrified opinions never yet broke a chain or freed a human soul in this world – and never will.... If a man doesn't believe as we do, we say he's a crank, and that settles it. I mean, it does nowadays, because now we can't burn him.*

And then there's the venomous sites which eschew integrity. You'd be forgiven if you don't remember the name Shirley Sherrod. A few years ago, when she was a well-respected administrator at the Department of Agriculture, the virulent neo-con website, Breitbart.com, put out a hit piece on her which included a sound bite

from a speech she gave. In short order, she was forced to resign by a shameless Secretary Tom Vilsnack, reportedly at the behest of the White House. Sherrod was even trashed by Ben Jealous, the head of the NAACP.

But then it turned out that Breitbart had edited the sound cut to make her sound the opposite of what she actually said. Sherrod was subsequently offered a better job, with apologies, but she reasonably turned down the offer. She sued Breitbart and settled with them last year.]

Oh, and Breitbart's head, Steve Bannon, is now running Trump's campaign.

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Speaking of Trump, this year's presidential race underscores a serious flaw in how the Fourth Estate has been doing its job. Both the candidates are hugely untrusted by the American people. With good reason. Clinton and Trump don't tell the truth. Even when confronted with evidence that they are wrong. Clinton sticks with her patently false explanations that have her supporters gritting their teeth. Trump changes his lines so often it's hard to keep track of what are his positions, but his supporters cheer him regardless.

So what is the press to do? First, they have to know the facts, and second they have to present them immediately when they are in contravention to something the candidates are saying.

When Trump spokeswoman Katrina Pierson blamed President Obama for the death of Captain Khan in Iraq, it was pointed out to her, gingerly, that Obama wasn't president when Khan was killed in 2004. It didn't seem to phase her a bit.

It's challenging for a reporter to tell a public figure they have something wrong, but it is essential that they do so and in the moment. First because a serious journalist has to be up front with the facts and the truth, and second because very few people ever hear about corrections.

The truth about both candidates - every public officials - is that they need fact-checkers, and bless them, they are the reason for the growth of a whole new industry devoted to instant fact-checking.

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I've been speaking mostly about television but of course there is still print, though even the most optimistic observers think daily papers will soon disappear from the racks. Already major papers have cut back their products and the frequency of their distribution. Some have shut down altogether. What newspapers should do is go electronic seven days a week, and also put out a print addition on Sunday. Some papers have changed their content, seemingly in an effort to attract more readers. Two of the most important papers in the country, the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*, have both gone heavily into features. Some of the stories have merit, but features above the fold push serious news stories out of sight. And consider this

recent WaPo lede headline: *"11 ways to think about the Anthony Weiner-Huma Abedin split."*

These papers have also focused heavily on race and sexual identify issues. While these are important social issues, much of the coverage is driven by top editors and marketers. Many observers think these matters should receive less attention, believing that less coverage would generate less confrontation and result in the social shifts taking place sooner.

Back in 2006, in advance of the elections, I did interviews with more than 250 House, Senate, and gubernatorial challengers. One of the questions I asked some of the candidates was about doing away with hyphenates – terms like African-American or Asian-American. My rationale was that I didn't think it appropriate for people to put their roots in front of being American. Every single white candidate whom I asked about not using such hyphenates hemmed and hawed, saying it wasn't really their call. But when I asked black candidates, everyone was enthusiastic in saying we should stop using hyphenates because they promoted division. One fellow said responded, *"Oh my God, let it be so in my lifetime."*

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I should mention our local news situation briefly. Here on the Monterey Peninsula we have some of the brightest, well-heeled people in the country, but our news outlets aren't nearly of the same quality. *The Monterey Peninsula Herald*, as it was called into the early 90s, was a good daily. Today the *Herald* is barely a shadow of its former self. Mainly put together in Chico and printed in San Jose, it shares a publisher, an editor, and an advertising manager with *Santa Cruz Sentinel*. The reporting staff has been cut to the bone. Further, *The Herald* is put to bed around 8:00 at night. With some stories, that doesn't matter, but it was woefully inadequate during the Sobranes Fire coverage. The *Herald* website is also lacking.

[For those of you who get the *San Francisco Chronicle* delivered to your home, did you know that what arrives in your driveway was put to bed around 6:30 the night before?]

KSBW television owns the broadcast market, reporting *Action News*. People who want to be informed don't need *Action*, they need facts. The coverage by KSBW is heavy on crime and pathos, and thin on what we need to know.

The Monterey Peninsula, with its money and education, should have a radio or online station to which we can tune in during an emergency. Like during the power outage a year ago, or the Sobranes fire.

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Local stations and networks have long depended on consultants to tell them how to attract more viewers. It is never about better writing, editing or reporting. A friend of mine who was the dominant anchor in Providence for decades said once they insisted

that wearing button-down collars would make a difference in the ratings. Early on, when consultants would ask focus groups why they watched the news, the answer inevitably would be to get the weather report. So the consultants told the news outlets to run more and longer weather segments, and to promote their weathercasters as important news personalities. Well, it doesn't take thirty seconds to report the weather – what it's been, what it is, what it's going to be – but today's weather casters often have three minutes or more of air time in a half-hour news program, and several appearances in an hour newscast.

My favorite broadcasting story of all times happened on a Sunday night late news on Channel 4 in San Francisco. Jim Paymar was anchoring the late news, and Sam Allred was doing the weather. Allred went on for three minutes and then strutted over to the anchor desk saying, "*So, Jim, no precip for the next twenty-four hours.*" That's when the director cut to a shot of Paymar hanging up the phone to the control room. He looked at Allred in amazement and told him, "*They say it's pouring outside.*"

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Many people have turned away from television news to social media. They inform themselves about their family and friends, and receive "news" items from sources that have no credibility. Perhaps you read last week about how Facebook, one of the major "news" sources in the world responded to complaints that their story selection was slanted. They replaced human "curators" with algorithms. And what happened? A couple of odd stories appeared on their "Trending Topics" list. One was about a man engaging sexually with a McChicken Sandwich. The other was that Fox News had fired Megyn Kelly because she had endorsed Hillary Clinton. Dunno about the sandwich story, but Kelly hadn't come out for Clinton. You can't replace quality journalists with software.

Another serious problem with the unlimited choices offered by the Internet is that people will choose to receive only the stories than interest them. It may be just sports or Beyonce. They think by seeing their selected "news" stories that they are being informed. In fact they are being taken ever further away from what is required to make intelligent decisions about our country.

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Why are the news and being informed so important? As George Orwell wrote, *Ignorance is bliss*. But bliss is in the short term; in the long term it can be suicide. A perfect example is climate change; 97% of the world's scientists involved in climate have evidence not only that climate change is happening, but that it is man-made and that we've reached the tipping point where some of the damage is now irreversible. Yet only 70% of Americans believe in climate change. That number is on the rise; it used to be below 50% because of the he said-she said coverage. The people on the mid-Atlantic coast and those in Louisiana have been flooded by this truth.

We are in a deep backwash of anti-intellectualism that has grown over the past six decades. Daniel Patrick Moynihan said, *Everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but not their own facts*, but many people are proud to be uninformed and apathetic. This is particularly dangerous now, as we are five billion over-populated, depleting our food sources, running out of potable water, and producing massive amounts of waste. Being stubbornly obtuse is making the crises worse, and faster.

We need to shift the social consciousness so that being bright is esteemed instead of derided.

Consider that in 2003, when we invaded Iraq, two-thirds of Americans couldn't find Iraq on a world map. But they could tell you the names of the judges on *American Idol*. Recent surveys have shown that only a third of Americans can name the three branches of government. I can't imagine how many would know the Fourth Estate. It's not just a problem of not knowing, but there has been a dramatic rise in apathy about our country. You might remember the story about the pollster asking people if they felt that Americans were ignorant of and didn't care about who was running for office. The response was, *"I don't know and I don't care."* What's not so funny is that people are disgusted with government, and outraged at the Trump-Clinton choice. Another sad fact that results from a failure to be informed is that many of those who do vote regularly cast ballots for people who will bring them down. It's because they were swayed by political commercials filled with half-truths and outright lies, designed to grab people by the gut and scare them into voting, not **for** anything but **against** their opponent.

Gore Vidal once observed *As societies grow decadent, the language grows decadent, too. Words are used to disguise, not to illuminate, action: you liberate a city by destroying it. Words are to confuse, so that at election time people will solemnly vote against their own interests.*

Do Americans keep electing terrible leaders because they are ill-informed? In part yes, but there is a far more over-riding reason. A number of years ago, I interviewed Drew Westen, the author of "The Political Brain," and I asked him if it was true, as he said in his book, that 95% of Americans voted their emotions. *No*, he said. *It's up to 96%*. Some of those emotions come from watching and listening but not really seeing and hearing. Yes, everyone including journalists have their own preferences, but the good reporters and anchors mostly don't show it. Mostly. Harvard University did a study of just how we get our messages from the news. It reported that 56% came from the anchor's body language...36% came from his tone and inflection...and only 8% came from the actual content of his words. Why do you think Fox has hired some many pretty women?

There's another view about why we're stuck, this from a journalism professor friend, who said, *The market for thinking and engagement is dwindling, and serious*

journalism along with it. Although the press itself deserves plenty of blame, the overall level of engagement, world/national/local knowledge, general give-a-shitness reflected in college students – our best hope for the future! – needs resuscitation.

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Is there too much going on in the world for a person to be aware of? Of course there is. And that's why quality journalism – selecting and editing the day's events – is so important. The news-hungry public needs to receive the information that Murrow defined as *that which interests AND AFFECTS the largest number of people*. But at the moment, without looking at a wide variety of sources, it's a challenge.

Av Westin, one of the early pioneers of television news said that people tune in to the news essentially to get answers to four questions – *Is my world safe? Is my country safe? Is my community safe? What else do I need to know?*

I suggest that those looking for a quality news source should ask whether it addresses the five most important issues affecting their lives. Nationally the issues might be health care, education, the environment, the economy, and our country's security. Locally it might be the water supply, the effects of tourism, gangs, fire protection, and the paucity of doctors. If your news sources aren't discussing these critical issues, then you're probably just being distracted.

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Responsible journalism in the Western World has all but collapsed, and without a healthy Fourth Estate, the very notion of democracy is threatened. As Thomas Jefferson warned, *"If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be."*

So what can be done about all this? What we need from the Fourth Estate are Facts, Truth, and Citizenship. Facts are accurate statements. Truth is facts in context that inform. Truth about our government, our society, and our world is essential for Citizens to do their part in maintaining a health democracy. Their role, thus-informed, is to select and elect candidates – not on the basis of campaign hype or like-ability but on the basis of the quality of their hearts and minds. We urgently need first rate leaders to pick up the reins of our government at the local, state, and national levels to get America back on track.

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I believe that someday soon to be informed, even bright, will be recognized as patriotic. I'm anticipating that an innovative news service will surface that will satisfy the needs of our information-starved citizenry. One which provides an hourly update on the latest events as well as a site with wide-ranging access to all of the important news of yesterday, today and tomorrow. And the icing on the cake, it will incorporate a training center for world-class journalists, so that from a new generation of ink-stained wretches will arise the Cronkites and Murrows, Dowds and Safires of

tomorrow. Why not?
It has been an honor to speak to you today.
Thank you. I welcome your questions.