

But last September, just days before my contract with ABC was to expire, the network informed me that if I wished to sign a new one, I would have to break my contract with Regnery, return the advance and discontinue all work on the Gore book. ABC's new position was that there was an inherent conflict between writing a book on a subject and covering that subject.

In a written appeal to Roone Arledge and David Westin, respectively chairman and president of the news division, I objected to the ruling as unjust, contrary to ABC's own standards and procedures, and repugnant to the First Amendment values we all endorse. I pointed out that the decision was wildly excessive as regards any valid interest of ABC News, in that I was willing to submit the manuscript months before publication in order to address any editorial problems the company perceived. I noted that most news organizations encourage their correspondents to write books on subjects they cover, then point to them with pride as indicating staff depth, scholarship and authority. Examples from the print press are legion, but even in television, where a career spent writing 90-second spots can erode the ability to think and write in depth, correspondents such as Marvin Kalb, Bernard Kalb, Dan Rather, Sam Donaldson and I have published books on subjects close to our beats.

Nonetheless, Mr. Westin's written reply explained that "we cannot have a Washington correspondent writing a book about one of our national leaders whom that correspondent will undoubtedly have to cover." Otherwise, we could be "held up to ridicule that our reporting is influenced by views you/we have formed about the individual involved."

I eventually decided to complete the book and to leave ABC News after 21 years. Mr. Wald, asked by a newspaper reporter why he had granted permission in the first place, concocted a tale that I was about to be fired when I approached him, and he didn't want to impede my earning a living by writing books. Thanks, Dick.

Would I have faced the same problem if I were an avowedly liberal journalist undertaking a book that made conservatives mildly uncomfortable rather than a moderately conservative one writing about a liberal icon? Had the proposed title been "Gingrich: A Critical Look at the Man and His Climb to Power," would I have been forced to choose between my book and my career? I rather doubt it.

Nor does the double standard stop with books. My friend and former colleague Sam Donaldson is again covering the White House six days a week. On the seventh day he does not rest, but rather appears on "This Week With Sam and Cokie," where he is free with his concededly liberal opinions. Sam is a gifted reporter, and in 21 years I have never seen evidence of deliberate bias in his work. I think ABC is wisely using his talents. But where is his conservative counterpart, licensed both to report and to ruminate?

My original sin may have been my earlier book, "Backfire: A Reporter's Look at Affirmative Action," also published by Regnery. In 1996, when "This Week" decided to interview Gary Aldrich—author of yet another Regnery book, "Unlimited Access: An FBI Agent Inside the Clinton White House"—and I was asked to prepare the setup piece, George Stephanopoulos, then a White House spinmeister (now an ABC commentator), blasted ABC News for anti-Clinton bias, specifically citing my limited involvement with the program. Months later, Jane Mayer, a New Yorker reporter, did the same. Is this what Mr. Westin had in mind when he said he feared "ridicule"?

Like others at ABC News, I committed my life, my fortune and my sacred honor to the

furtherance of the First Amendment and the pursuit of truth. Along with a brave and resourceful crew, I was thrown into a Moscow prison for refusing to stop interviewing a dissident on her way to court. I accompanied soldiers who came under fire in South Lebanon and Somalia. In these times I was conscious of the far greater physical dangers that other correspondents had faced in times and places as different as Gettysburg, Normandy, Khe Sanh and Srebrenica.

But the principal dangers that threaten television journalists today are not those of an errant bullet, or even a well-aimed one. Rather, they spring on the one hand from the merciless demands of the news cycle, the dumping down of public affairs programming and the belief in viewers' shrinking attention span. The end results of these dangers are poorly sourced, factually insubstantial, overly sensational stories that, in the end, harm our credibility and make us easy targets for political demagogues.

IDEOLOGICAL ORTHODOXY

The other danger—the one that led to my departure from the industry—involves ideological orthodoxy, political correctness and complete lack of self-confidence regarding the management of a news organization, partly because so many of those at the top have little or no background as working journalists.

For most of my career I felt honored to serve as a correspondent for ABC News. But the ABC News I served did not practice prior restraint.

The ABC News I served did not demand that its reporters shatter their integrity by breaching contracts.

The ABC News I served did not look for a rock to crawl under when the Jane Meyers of the world attacked.

The ABC News I served did not seek to destroy correspondents who had performed for the company over two decades with dignity, integrity and excellence.

The ABC News I served did not break its word, ignore its standards or brazenly lie to explain its actions.

Sad to say, the ABC News I served is not the ABC News I left.

ASTHMA AND AIR POLLUTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. SERRANO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SERRANO. Mr. Speaker, in a week-long special series in New York this week, the New York Daily News is documenting what we in the South Bronx district that I represent have been saying for years: The concentration of waste treatment facilities and their fleets of diesel trucks are killing our children, our families, our older folks with asthma and respiratory illness.

One-half million New Yorkers suffer from asthma. Six percent of the population. The worst rate in the country. New York City's asthma hospitalization rate is three times the national average. More than 35,000 residents are treated at city hospitals for severe asthma attacks each year, a 24 percent rise over the last decade. Deaths accountable to asthma are up 50 percent since 1980. 284 died of asthma in 1995.

The asthma epidemic hits children the hardest. More than 10 percent of New York City's one million students,

130,000, suffer from asthma. 15,000 are admitted to the hospital each year, which is twice the national average. The hardest hit of all the children are those with families in the Hunts Point area of the South Bronx in my district and East Harlem in the district of my colleague (Mr. RANGEL).

New York City's asthma admission rates are highest in the Bronx, along with Harlem. Almost 13 percent of Bronx children under the age of 17 were estimated to suffer from asthma several years ago. Children in poor New York City neighborhoods are five times more likely to be hospitalized than their better-off neighbors.

Lincoln Hospital, the primary medical center in the South Bronx, recorded 14,300 asthma emergency room visits last year; 4,500 of these involved children. Lincoln Hospital now operates two, 24-hour emergency rooms devoted exclusively to dealing with the problem of asthma, one for children and one for adults. Eleven died there last year, more than double the usual number. The youngest was only 5 years old.

Now, listen to this fact. There is a school in my congressional district where 30 percent of the children in Public School 48 in Hunts Point have asthma. Asthma threatens our children's chance of success as well. Asthma has become the leading cause of children who are absent among New York City schoolchildren.

Now, while researchers debate the root causes of asthma and New York public health officials focus on every theory other than pollution, our communities continue to breathe foul air and continue to sicken and die from respiratory illness.

Like neighborhood residents who spend their time dealing with these issues, take, for instance, a woman by the name of Lora Lucks, who is the principal at Public School 48 in the Hunts Point area of the Bronx. She blames the area's poor air quality. She says her students get sicker and sicker every year and that the air sometimes smells bad enough to make you sick to your stomach.

Now, what is really interesting here is that 200 of Public School 48's 800 students required emergency treatment last year at the same Lincoln Hospital.

And perhaps the best test that something is terribly wrong with the air quality in that community is the fact that teachers that come from outside the South Bronx neighborhood, upon spending the 8 months or whatever time they spend in the school during the year, not counting weekends, they complain that the condition under which they live, their inability to breathe properly, the tearing of the eyes, the sick stomach, all the asthmatic conditions that prevail, happen not when they are living during the summer months outside the South Bronx area but only when they come into the South Bronx.

Now, where could the problem be? Well, the South Bronx area of the

Bronx now has over 40 sitings for waste transfer stations. One of the big mysteries in New York City is why one community got to the point to where over 40 waste recycling centers appear only in that community. New York City's Department of Sanitation currently licenses at least 85 private waste transfer stations in New York City, handling at least 13,000 to 14,000 tons per day of commercial solid waste.

Today I begin to introduce this series which the New York Daily News has been working on all week long; and I will close with this, Mr. Speaker: 500,000 New Yorkers have asthma, the silent killer, and there is a child trying to breathe. This may look dramatic and some people may think in some way it is grandstanding by a newspaper, but this is the truth. This is a condition not in a foreign country. This is a condition in the Sixteenth Congressional District in New York.

THE HAYWORTH EDUCATION LAND GRANT ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. HAYWORTH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HAYWORTH. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to report to my colleagues and to the people of the Sixth Congressional District of Arizona and, indeed, Mr. Speaker, to those who watch us across the country on C-SPAN of the latest progress on what I believe can form a firm foundation for educational improvement across America but especially in rural America. For this morning, Mr. Speaker, a subcommittee of the Committee on Resources held hearings on H.R. 2223, what my staff has taken to calling HELGA, the Hayworth Education Land Grant Act.

I think this is very important, Mr. Speaker, because this legislation is borne out of two historical achievements, one small and little noticed, the other of momentous import in our Nation's history vis-a-vis education.

The first feature was a little-known bill that was passed into law in the final days of the 104th Congress, in my first term representing the people of the Sixth District of Arizona, that had to do with the tiny Alpine School District located on the Arizona-New Mexico border.

You see, Mr. Speaker, the people of Alpine came to me and they said, we do not have much of a tax base. We no longer are able to really harvest the timber in this area. But we have been able to scrimp and save and we think we have enough money to build a new school building.

Now, we should note that the people of Alpine and the students there in that school district were holding classes in a small building that was formerly a church facility, and these people desperately needed a new school. They came and they said, Congressman, we have the money to build a new school, but we do not have the money

to buy the land on which the school would be situated. It would cost us some, well, almost one quarter of a million dollars. That is too much for us to handle.

But the irony is that Alpine sits on the edge of a national forest. A federally controlled land. So they asked, would it be possible for the Congress to grant a conveyance of 30 acres of land for the construction of new athletic and academic facilities to educate the children of the Alpine School District? And the good news is that that passed on the final day of the 104th Congress; and the people of Alpine, Arizona, are building their new school facility.

Well, Mr. Speaker, as I have often pointed out, one of the most accurate observations of life in these United States, indeed of what has transpired on the historical stage worldwide, was the observation of Mark Twain that history does not repeat itself but it rhymes. And in the wake of what transpired with the Alpine School District, I got to thinking about what else had been done similarly in American education, and I looked back to something that had happened really over one century ago when another Member of Congress and another member of the Committee on Ways and Means, Justin Smith Morrill of Vermont, revolutionized, I do not think that is too strong a term, Madam Speaker, revolutionized the whole notion of higher education in this country by working for and achieving passage of the Federal Land Grant Act, the process of ceding federally controlled land back to the States with a promise that those respective States would establish institutions of higher learning with a concentration in the agricultural and mechanical arts.

Congressman Morrill looked back at his own life and, more importantly, the life of his father. He talked about the fact that his father was a blacksmith, a laborer, who spent all of about 6 months receiving instruction within the classroom. And he thought it was important for the sons and daughters of farmers and laborers to have an opportunity to go on to college.

Passage of the Federal Land Grant Act brought down the barriers to higher education one century ago. What had formerly been something only for the elite was now available to many.

In that same spirit, I have introduced the Federal Land Grant Act of this 105th Congress that would allow for a uniform procedure for school districts to apply for conveyances of land for the construction of new school facilities. It carries no budget impact because the land already belongs to the Federal Government. But what it can mean to the education of schoolchildren in rural America is priceless.

Madam Speaker, I look forward to speaking more about this perhaps later tonight and in further proceedings of this Congress but, Madam Speaker, I would also urge Members to actively support H.R. 2223.

TORNADOES WREAK DEVASTATION IN FLORIDA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. Northup). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MCCOLLUM) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCCOLLUM. Madam Speaker, I come tonight before this body to express my deep concern for what has happened in my congressional district this past day. We had one of the great tragedies in the State of Florida in three tornadoes that touched down in that area, two of them in my district, one in the Kissimmee area, one in Winter Garden, one in the district of my colleague (Mr. Mica) in the Sanford area, which wreaked deaths that are almost 40 in number, and maybe more, we just do not know.

There were more people I believe killed in those three tornadoes that occurred two nights ago in my area than died in Hurricane Andrew, which was a huge natural disaster many people are aware of that hit the State of Florida a couple years back and caused millions and millions of dollars worth of damage.

It is hard to express the feelings that one sees when you walk out into the areas where those tragedies occur. I spent most of the day yesterday with our Governor and Senator MACK and others walking through the devastation in three counties, Osceola, Orange and Seminole in Florida.

The amount of damage we see in the photographs are probably just as real on television or in the newspapers that the Nation can see as indeed exists there, but it is very, very hard to express in the written words or even over the communicated radio or television word the feelings and the emotions that you feel yourself when you go out there and see all of that that has been wreaked by God and when you see the feelings of the people and you empathize with those who have lost loved ones or whose loved ones have been badly injured or who have lost possessions that were their life's savings, their life's possessions, things that cannot be replaced.

I know that one of the tornadoes, the most serious one that killed the most people, sat down just a short distance from the Silver Spurs Rodeo in Kissimmee, where I attended with a German exchange student living with me on Saturday. I looked yesterday across the field where that was and realized the calmness of that, where little or nothing had been disturbed where the Houston Astros have their spring training and their ballpark, the stadium where the radio takes place, the area where they had a State fair, an open field between where I was standing in there, and then right at the moment where I was standing this tornado had come down to start a 10-mile rampage across that county.

It came down and destroyed a convenience store. It left, leaving nothing but a handful of concrete blocks. It