

## DSJ Lecture – 11/7/01

This is the annual Gary Fryer Memorial Lecture at Yale which was established to honor a beloved and widely respected Director of Public Affairs for the University and Special Assistant to the President of the University. He rendered exceptional service to Yale between 1994 and 1997 and President Richard Levin and his fellow officers decided that it would be fitting to establish an annual living memorial to his service and his connection to Yale. We are fortunate to have with us today Adam Fryer, his son who is a junior at Saybrook College, and Joanne Fryer, his widow, and it's a pleasure to welcome both of them to this event in Gary Fryer's honor. The Fryer Memorial Lecture is part of an ongoing series brought to you by the Pointer Journalism Fellowships. Helene Klasky, who is now the Director of Public Affairs at the University and a Special Assistant to President Levin, is here as well. She has been gracious about letting me do the introductions today because the speaker today is my friend and former colleague at *U.S. News and World Report*, Jim Fallows, who is the national correspondent for the *Atlantic Monthly* magazine, and I'll say more about him in a minute. Because Jim's topic today is "New Media, New Menaces—What America's New War is Showing Us About Ourselves," this lecture is also part of a new series at Yale which has been organized by Professors John Gaddis and Cynthia Farrar, called "Democracy, Security and Justice." The next event will be a speech this coming Sunday night and I apologize if I'm going to get this name wrong. I haven't been able to find Cynthia to make sure that I pronounce it correctly. It will be by Avie Schlaeem and the subject will be the Arab-Israeli conflict and its role in the new, wider conflict that preoccupies us all. We're also fortunate today in having a distinguished panel of journalists, whose luster is even brighter because they're all graduates of Yale College. From your right to left, they are Seth Shezel of the *New York Times*. He's a Media and Communications Correspondent for the Business Section of the *Times*, Ruth Coniff, who is a Political Editor for *The Progressive* magazine, Jacob Weisberg, who is the Chief Political Writer for *Slate*, the on-line magazine, and Tish Derkin, who is a Correspondent for *The Atlantic* and also a Staff Writer for the *National Journal*. Let me tell you a bit more about Jim Fallows because it's relevant to his talk. It's important to begin, in this setting, by saying that Jim began to stand out as a journalist as President of the *Harvard Crimson*. He was a Rhodes Scholar and, in his mid-20s, served as Chief Speech Writer to President Jimmy Carter for the first two years of the Carter administration. He then began a long association with the *Atlantic Monthly*. I believe it's correct that he has contributed more articles to the *Atlantic* than anyone else in that magazine's illustrious history. He has stopped out on a couple of occasions and during one of them, he was Editor of *U.S. News and World Report* during an innovative and very successful period for the magazine, and he also had a period as a consultant to Microsoft. In writing for the *Atlantic* and in books, Jim has covered a wide range of subjects—politics, economics, immigration, computer technology and many others. And he has earned a reputation as one of the most influential and important journalists of his generation because, in virtually every major piece that he has done, he has found something original and penetrating to say about a fundamental choice for this society or some other. For those of you who know his books, it's possible that your favorite is his recent book, called *Free Flight*. I mention this not because I have a cameo role in this book but because it's the first book in which Jim combines a kind of adventure story with an analysis. He writes about his own experiences as a pilot, as well as framing the fundamental problems of the American airline system and how they might be fixed. It's also possible that your favorite book, or the one that stays with you, is his book called *Breaking the News*, which is about how

the American media undermines democracy, and it's possible that one of his others is your favorite. What's striking about this work is how seemingly disparate subjects, whether the press or computer technology or, most strikingly of all, war is something that Jim has written about for an extended period of time, and which will frame his remarks today.

In 1975, Jim published an article called "What did you do in the Class War, Daddy?" which was the first significant article which talked about the undemocratic disgrace of how, during the Vietnam War, it was largely underprivileged young men who served in the American military and how privileged young men—graduates of this university and others—found ways not to serve. That's now become a classic in American journalism. Not long after, Jim wrote a book called *National Defense*, which framed a fresh way of thinking about national security and national defense, and it was awarded the American Book Award. In Jim's most recent piece for the *Atlantic*, filed this week, he's writing again about war, this time in the current context. Today, as I said, he'll be talking about "New Media, New Menaces," and then our format will be that, after he talks, each of our panelists will respond with a comment and, perhaps, a question in five minutes, and they'll have time for a back and forth. I may intervene as a moderator. I will certainly intervene on your behalf and make sure that there's time at the end for you to comment on what you've heard, to ask questions, and otherwise participate. Jim Fallows-- [applause]

JF: Thank you, very much, Link. It, perhaps, will not come as a dumbfounding shock if I say, right now, that Link and I have been close friends for many years, and I'm very grateful for his introduction. I should say a little bit about Link and his role in this community. I paved the way for Link's graciousness by dutifully losing to him, year in and year out, on the tennis court. Link is a gifted athlete. I now reap my reward in his kindness on the stage. He also has performed tremendously valuable services for me in journalism and for the journalistic community. In the last several books I've written, the last person I wanted to see them and go over them and edit them and save me from error was Link as he went through the manuscript. He had an invaluable role at *U.S. News and World Report*, and he's come here to Yale, among his many other functions, to start an exciting new magazine about legal affairs. So my loss in losing Link as a friend in Washington is Yale's gain and the reading public's gain, but I'm glad to have a chance to see him this afternoon. I'm also honored, of course, to be this year's Gary Fryer Memorial Lecturer. I actually met Gary Fryer when he was working for Mario Cuomo and had only one experience with him, but liked him very much and thought that he embodied the best part of the communications system of having causes and people and institutions he believed in, finding ways to explain their purposes and ambitions clearly to the press. So I am honored and thank you to the Fryer family for including me here, honored to be part of the Poynter Program and to be here with this panel of young, aggressive Yale graduate journalists who will keep me on my toes as a decrepit, over the hill Harvard guy. So thanks for including me. And it is, also, seriously, an honor to be part of Yale's 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations. In my gray beard role, I say to my young colleagues here and to any students in the crowd that, as time goes on, you come to respect people and institutions, among other things for their continuing to perform at a high level of quality, a high level of commitment and excellence. And while, for students in the audience or on the campus, 300 years may seem something you just—it's the celebration that happens to be going on while you're undergraduates—the magnitude of an institution serving so

well, so long, I think needs to be recognized. So thank you for including me in this. Congratulations to Yale and thanks to all the institutions who have made this event possible.

Now, the plans. What I intend to speak about for the next few minutes has changed quite a bit since 6 or 8 months ago when Link and I first talked about my coming here. And it's changed even in the last few days since the title of the program went out because of the way events have been evolving in the world. When Link and I first spoke, early this year, I was in the middle of reporting on the tech economy. My wife and I had been living, first in Seattle, then in Berkeley, for a total of about three years and I had been writing mainly about computer companies, venture capitalists, internet companies, what they were trying to do, where they were succeeding, where they were failing. I've been also thinking, for the last 5-6 years, as hard as I can about what's happening to my own institution of the press—the ways in which it's getting better, the ways in which it's getting worse—and all such institutional thoughts about the technology, about the economy, about the press, are naturally put in a different perspective, a different focus with a different urgency by the national and world events of the last two months. On the strength of those longstanding interests in technology and the media and the immediate acuteness, the immediate sense of urgency about what's happening to the nation and in the world, I'd like to try to talk with you for the next few minutes about a theme that connects them and that will for students in the audience and, appropriately, with a hopeful, uplifting, positive sounding theme, a way that I find useful as a different way of thinking about a familiar problem in light of the current political changes. I think of this theme or this issue as defining the public, defining us-ness, defining usable communities. Let me introduce it with a few little parables, a few little episodes from my life that will, I think, introduce the problem I'd like to explore. The first of these came during the years in the late 1980s when I was living in Japan. I spent, with my family, four years living in Asia when I was writing for the *Atlantic*. Two of those years were living in Japan. Those were mind expanding and character building in many ways. One of the ways in which they were so important for us was the consciousness forced on us every moment that we were foreigners, that we were different from the rest of the Japanese norm because we looked different. It was a society that was sort of optimized for detecting differentness and sameness. And I would find myself, during the endless hours I spent on the subway trains in Japan, going from our home in the Yokohama suburbs to Tokyo, reflecting on the ways in which us-ness and them-ness affected my identity in Japan. For example, when I first got in the car in downtown Tokyo, I'd often spy 2 or 3 other foreigners in the car. They might be Russians, they might be Spaniards, we were all generally taller than the other people in the car, and we looked across the car at each other and we had a kind of bond. There was an us-ness among us because we knew what it was like to live on the margins of the society. It sometimes happened that, while we were in this car with a couple of these foreigners, some genuine Third Worlders would get on the subway car. There would be people from Bangladesh, people from Indonesia, people working as day laborers or so-called dirty laborers in Japan. As they crowded onto the car, being poorer than everyone else, sometimes the Japanese people would be pushed towards my end of the car and there would be a kind of us-ness between me and the Japanese people because we weren't those Third Worlders who had no money and didn't know the norms. Sometimes it would happen that the train would run into trouble. There would be a stoppage, there would be a crash somewhere else down the line. Something would go not according to plan. Suddenly, everyone in the car was an "us," because we were trying to find a way to solve a problem collectively. As the problem was resolved and the train thinned out, suddenly the us and them

borders would be re-established once again. I would be “them,” everybody else would be “us,” until we got to our home neighborhood in Yokohama, when people getting out at the same stop recognized some sort of connection that bonded them together. Point one, I was made aware of the many layers of an onion in which people could feel as if they belonged or did not belong. It made me think constantly of the times when, as a child, I would write the elaborate return address on an envelope. I think something every child has done—my room, my house, my street address, my town, my county, my state, my country, the hemisphere, the world, etc., etc., the solar system—the same kind of layers of us-ness in Japan.

A second episode on this theme: when I was working for Jimmy Carter, as Link mentioned, I had occasion to travel sometimes with the President on his foreign journeys including one to West Africa. I was on a trip on which he went both to Liberia and Nigeria. In Liberia, this was pre-Civil War, pre-overthrow, pre-chaos Liberia, I had the as yet unmatched experience of eating dinner off actual golden plates—plates made out of gold in the Presidential palace. It was not a terrible mystery to me when there was a revolution soon after that in Liberia. But on the trip, when we were going towards Liberia from the U.S. and the long flight over, my seatmate on Air Force One was a black American who was also working in the White House and the closer we came across the Atlantic Ocean from the United States towards our landing point in Liberia, the more a kind of tension grew up between us. We were going, after all, to Africa. We were going to a place from which his ancestors were taken, a place where I would be the minority or he would feel some kind of minority. And so there was a real sort of friction between us, that neither of us mentioned but it was, obviously, there because of the different them and us-ness involved by these situations. As we got there—and we spent the next couple of days in Liberia and Africa—we kept running into each other and realizing we had so much more in common with each other than either of us did with the Nigerians and Liberians around us. We were from a rich country, we knew pop music, we both liked the L.A. Dodgers, etc. Suddenly we saw each other across a crowded street in Lagos and we were us in a way that we had been in the U.S. but not on the flight over.

Another parable on this theme: probably like many of you in this room, I have close friends, thanks to the internet, whom I have never met. These are people on discussion groups—e-mail pals, people who chime in on the various boards on subjects I care about, from the design of certain software programs to piloting themes. I realize how important it is that I never actually do meet these people from the few times when I have, when I’ve gone to gatherings at air shows or computer conventions and I see the person with whom I’ve been having this intelligent conversation is actually somebody I don’t want to have anything to do with at all, and it’s either somebody who seems like a nut or somebody who, obviously, has a horrible life. And by contrast, I’m sure we’ve all had the experience of going into someplace where we have no pre-existing connection and realizing that in some demographic or statistical way, we already are bonded to people who are there. This struck me most forcefully when we were living in Seattle. We got in a ferry to one of the San Juan islands. I saw around me people wearing the same Polar Tek vest I was wearing, carrying the same Saturday *New York Times*, even carrying the same novels I was reading and I thought, “This is too pat, this is too comfortable. I am like these people and yet, that makes life seem too confined.” Again, my point here is there are different sorts of strange us-ness. And I have one or two us strange-nesses to introduce.

I'm struck by two and one-half TV broadcasts in the immediate aftermath of the attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup>. One, of course, was the constant stream of United We Stand symbolism—the flags on all news shows, the benefit concerts, the constant reinforcement of the ideas that, as Americans—indeed, as citizens of the non-terrorist world—there was something that everyone had in common. There was something that bound together the citizens from 60 different nations who died that day—or however many it was—and especially American citizens—that made them all together. I don't know how many of you also saw, three or four days after the attack, a documentary on PBS called "People Like Us." It was an astonishing documentary, something that had obviously been planned many years in advance. It was essentially a taxonomy of class differences in the United States—the battles in high schools over cars and clothes, the battle between the people who build houses and the rich people who could afford to have houses built on contract. And it was almost a Jane Austin type social observation of the modern United States and how little people had in common, how little their lives actually intersected when you thought about their opportunities and education. It wasn't a sort of Marxist or determinist thing, but simply observing how different our lives were from the giant tractor poles to the polo games or whatever. These were different sorts of things. And yet, we had the conjunction of the United We Stand flag symbolism willing together in a sense of us-ness people whose real life prospects were quite different. The half-broadcast, or the extra thing I would mention here is a speech that President Bush gave 10 days after the attacks. Many people in the United State, including—I will confess—me, did not vote for George W. Bush when he ran for office and were unhappy about the circumstances in which he had taken office with the Florida long vote count. And yet I think there was an effect on many people in the United States, thanks to his performance that evening, saying nothing about anything before that, nothing about anything after that, which made them hope, as Americans, that the person who was the American President then proved himself up to the task, proved himself the worthy leader of us and the cause he had to embody.

My final example and parable here involves what I think will be the part of the September 11<sup>th</sup> events which historically has most resonance which is United Flight 93. It is one of the miracles of modern "civilized" life that people who travel on airlines have gotten used to sitting three inches away from another human being and having no contact with them. Perhaps some of you are friendlier than I am, but I find myself on an airplane, usually, trying to do everything I can to discourage conversation or acknowledge of the person next door, so I can read my paper, type on my laptop, etc. And I assume that most people on that United Flight 93, for the first half hour of the flight, were in exactly that mode—trying to avoid any sense of connection with those around them. And yet, within a period of minutes, they were converted into the most powerful sort of "us" group, of feeling that it was worth sacrificing their lives, not even for their own good but for the good of some broader "us," of the nation they thought they were helping.

The point of these parables is that the sense of us-ness, the sense of a public is a malleable and interesting and interesting one. It is significant because it is what uniquely equips people to look beyond their own personal interest, their own personal convenience, their own personal desires, and think there is some other part of humanity that deserves their empathy, that deserves their sacrifice, that deserves their consideration when they are deciding what to do. And the point that I reflected on in these different episodes is how changeable this is—our definition of where the borders of us-ness, the borders of a relevant public, from our point of view, reach. Partly and often it's defined by external shock or threat. That was the case on United Flight 93, it was the

case for this nation after the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>. Partly, it depends on first hand experience of having day by day contact with people which forces you to the realization that they deserve your attention. Partly, it depends on institutions. Partly, it depends on leadership. I have no doubt that there were some people on Flight 93 who led the charge, who convinced the others it was worth taking suicidal action. And the question this leads me to wonder is that how this sense of us-ness and of the public can be maintained at its maximum useful level for democratic functioning in circumstances like those we find ourselves in now.

It is true that, in every society, there will be the many overlapping layers, the many skins of the onion, as I observed in Japan. But when societies have only the innermost layers, only the family or the tribe or only the region or only the legend or only the race, then it's very hard to run those countries as any more than a fiefdom, and it's very hard for them to make decent deals to accommodate different interests or get along with the rest of the world. And for democracies as a whole, of course, it is necessary that, finally, each member of the democracy must at some point acknowledge the us-ness of other members of that system because only then can we all accommodate both the victories of those in the majority and the interest of those in the minority. And we see this . . . In a jury room there must be a sense of a public, that they are all working towards a common goal and have the interest of a larger public in mind. The city or the school district, when it passes a bond issue, the people who don't have kids face the choice of still voting for school funding. And the nation, one makes any kind of difficult choice.

So what I would like to consider now is the ways in which the concept of the public, the concept of the "us" is now changing—what parts are changing by forces of nature, what parts are in our control to change. And I will argue in the following sequence: first, I'm going to contend that there are changes well under way in the press that are largely destructive to the concept of us-ness, the concept of a public, and that require the attention of people in the press to try to arrest, but that will be difficult. Second, I will argue there are changes that are driven by technology, especially communications technology which are powerfully mixed in their impact but, at least, potentially positive. Then I will argue there are changes driven by the latest world news or the emergency we are in which may, ultimately, be the most important of the ones I am mentioning and will ripple back to affect the press and technology, but whose nature is, at the moment, unknowable. Or, to put it differently, is probably within our power to shape. And this will be the sort of inspirational conclusion for the students about ways they can help shape it in a positive way.

So that's the plan. The bad news from the press, the mixed news from technology, and the potentially beneficial news from world crisis.

When it comes to the press, the problem we face, in my view, is the mismatch between two kinds of us-ness. That is, the market us-ness, the market public that any publication, any news organization needs in order to succeed and the us-ness on which democracy depends. To put it different ways, the difference between a market public, an economic public and a democratic or political public. This has been a tension built into the press from the beginning, but I think it has now taken particularly difficult forms which all of the young journalists will have to take up the burden of fixing.

When we think of a market public, markets, by definition, find the public they need. If they don't find any public, the institution goes out of business. There's no more market. But any sort of commercial venture will, by definition, find the right kind of audience for its goods. The market could be as small as the number of collectors of million dollar impressionist art. It could be as large as the buyers of Coca Cola drinks around the world or Kleenex or whatever is the mass product. But the point is, one way or another, a market will connect buyers and sellers with the right kind of public for that good. The difficulty here is that the largeness and smallness of these various economic markets match only imperfectly and less and less well with the kind of public or the kind of us-ness that democracy needs. Let me be specific about what I mean here.

It seems to me that, while the press is a business, it's worth remembering that, from the beginning in the United States, it's been set up as something more than just another business. That's why it enjoys the special status in the First Amendment of being protected in a way that the car business is not or other businesses. The explicit reason or the most obvious reason for the press needing this kind of protection in federal law is to provide independent criticism, independent judgment, independent scrutiny of the government—it's another branch of the checks and balances built into our government. But I would contend that the less clearly stated but equally important role for the press being more than just a normal business is that it is the sensory system of democracy, that if we know about anything that's happening beyond our own immediate ken or beyond the realm of rumor, it is because someone working in the press has told us about it. It's because they've written a book, they've produced a TV documentary, they've done reports, they've done radio broadcasts. That's the way we know about things we haven't seen, because somebody has gone out there and done reports. And since democracies depend on some sort of reading of what's happening in the world around them, how other people live in the rest of their society, some institution to provide this data is necessary and that's what the press does and that's why it's protected.

Historically, there have been a variety of ways in which the public democratic function of telling a democratic populace the things it needs to know has been matched with the market function of keeping people in business, of paying the salaries that we all "enjoy" for doing our journalistic work. And there have been different ways that this match has been arranged. One way the match was made historically was that newspapers were generally confined by technology to a particular geographic area. You had a bunch of New York papers in New York, you had Los Angeles papers in Los Angeles, and they were pretty much confined that way by distribution, technology and other things. There might be lots of papers in each town addressing lots of different audiences who had lived kind of striated lives, but there would be a sense of the public of that area being addressed by the newspapers. I grew up outside Los Angeles and this was clearly the consciousness of the *Los Angeles Times*. It had its excesses but it thought of itself as being the "voice of the Southland" and addressing everyone in the region. Radio stations initially had this geographic bias. There were magazines. Magazines, by definition, address different niches. But some of them, especially earlier in the last century, magazines like *Life*, for example, or even *Sports Illustrated*, consciously addressed what they thought of as broad parts of middle class America. There was also explicit public policy encouraging the idea that the news media had to address a kind of democratic audience. They couldn't be just market institutions. The limits on chain ownership of newspapers, which kept them somewhat local in their consciousness, had this effect. Broadcasters had all kinds of restrictions—the public service

hour, all the things that people of my vintage remember from the earlier days. The idea was that the press was a business but it had extra commercial responsibilities too and for informal and explicit legal reasons, it was encouraged to carry those out. There was even, always, an exception proving the rule of what the press would be like if it were strictly on a commercial basis and this exception proving the rule was local TV news. Local TV news, for at least 30 or 40 years, has been the way it is now. You start with a car crash, you have a rape, you have a tornado from some other state, then you tease the sports results, and you do the same cycle. And that's what it takes to get a large audience for local TV news. And that's what news on a purely commercial basis would be.

What has happened, I contend and won't belabor—just briefly tick off—is that in the last decade, the press has shifted from being a business with extra business responsibilities to being increasingly just a business. And it has become just a business. Its sense of the appropriate market, the appropriate public, the appropriate us has become much more like that of just other businesses. And not like those with these spill over democratic effects. There are a lot of reasons that push the press in this direction. There are pressures inside the business for individual journalists to become more and more like stars. The limits on chain ownership have been relax. There was a crucial discovery by CBS that *60 Minutes* could make a ton of money, that news shows could make money if they were presented as a kind of entertainment—with an entertainment quotient—we've seen more and more info-tainment type news. There's been a shift towards corporate management of news organizations with the same pressure for quarterly returns you find elsewhere. And the result is that we have news, I contend, not all but increasingly run just as a business. The organizations represented here on the panel have, in addition to their being all graduates of your find school, they also represent exceptions to the rule. Their institutions, for one reason or another, don't have to run purely on the corporate basis and that's one reason they are renowned for what they do. But a result of this is, if you have news run just on a corporate basis, you have publics to find in ways that are either too big or too small for appropriate democratic use. What do I mean here? The too small part may be obvious. If you're running a magazine and all that matters is staying in business, you find the niche. You have *Bass Angler* magazine. You have a magazine I get called *IFR Refresher*. This is for people training for their refresher courses in instrument readings and airplanes. You have the most narrowly sliced carpaccio-like niches of magazines you can have, and that's what you find in the magazine business. And on the too big scale, you have more and more news competing with normal entertainment, competing with the Emmys, competing with football, competing with movies, and having to become just entertainment itself. And the result of this, I contend, is we have the multi-layered publics but not the one big public when it comes to the U.S. news environment. What do I mean? I mean, #1, the NPR Diaspora across the country. Only about 10 million people listen to NPR but it seems like anywhere you go you run into some of them because they're people like us, they're people who listen to NPR. You have the Rush Limbaugh Diaspora. I also listen to Rush Limbaugh. So you have those diasporas who are around the country. You have the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* addressing increasingly a national audience. So that people in Los Angeles, interested in the world, may no longer . . . Are less likely to get the LA papers, more like to get the *Times* or the *Wall Street Journal*. You have a corresponding weakening of some of the broad organs like *Life* magazine or the news weeklies. And essentially, when it comes to the big public events that unite us, they are mainly entertainment type events. They are sports events or news become spectacle, like the OJ trial or

the Monica Lewinsky story. And the current disaster is an exception proving the rule—an actual news event that unites us. But generally, we are split. To sum up this point about changes in the press, as it has converted to more of a market driven, corporate run institutions, increasingly, its definition of the public is like that of other market products and this is a problem for democracy in my view.

The second wave of changes are those involving the new technologies, the new media. We have been through, already, even though the internet is less than a decade old, we have been through two eras of what already look like pie-in-the-sky-ism about the effects of the internet on our public life. One, of course was the internet utopianism in which connectedness would get rid, essentially, of every problem mankind had ever known. I have a long list here, which I won't read, about people making these sorts of fatuous predictions. Only one of them is me on the list of these dozen or so quotes. I will quote John Perry Barlow from the Grateful Dead who went to conference after conference on the internet's early years, saying, "Everything is wrong." And, in fact, everything we used to know is pretty much right, we now see. But that was one kind of utopianism. There would be no more international tensions, no more money in politics, etc. etc. etc. The other kind of utopianism we have, of course, heard is the business utopianism of the internet. Jeff Basos was Man of the Year for *Time* two years ago and that symbolized the idea that unemployment was gone, cycles were gone, cash value was gone, etc., etc. And so we had the connected political, cultural and economic pie-in-the-sky utopianism of the internet. They were met in kind of a muted way with something that's become more prominent in the last year or two which was internet distopianism, that the internet was not merely going to destroy everyone's 401K account, but also was going to destroy some of the ways people live together. That is, it was going to reduce the need for people actually to see each other. It was going to divide us all into mutually incomprehensible little out-archies. Cass Sunstein at the University of Chicago Law School is probably the most articulate exponent of this view in his book, *Republic.com*, essentially saying that if you could choose your own internet news site, you wouldn't have to know anything else and you'd live in perfect hermetic isolation from your neighbors, you'd disengage from public life. It would seem to me that they're all wrong—the utopianists and the distopianists—that the evidence suggests the effects of the internet are going to be less night and day in either account than we thought. This is obvious in economics. I won't belabor this point. I will say that it seems to me likely that, five years from now and ten years from now, we'll take the internet for granted as a crucial business factor, even though the bubble has gone. The chestnut that's most often repeated in Silicon Valley and yet bears repeating here is that people chronically overestimate how much change technology can make in one year and chronically underestimate how much it can make in ten years. I think that's true of the Internet as well. It will be important but the bubble is over. It's clear that the utopianists were about the Internet's effect in transforming politics, ending world war, having nations all come to understanding with each other. Indeed, last year's presidential election, the Internet election, was the one decided on the primitive, pre-internet type of bases of any election probably in a century. Similarly, I think the evidence goes against the distopianists. There have been increasing studies, the most interesting of which coming from the Pew Center on the Internet, suggesting that, in fact, the Internet is mildly augmenting the sense of useful public, that people are somewhat more likely to have public connections in their own region, despite my cautionary tale of associating only with weirdoes in my Internet chat groups, that most people

have some associations in their school district, in their town. So there is being some positive effect.

Also, there were dramatic effects of the Internet in our recent crisis. As we all know, the cell phone networks were down for a number of hours after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attack. Many land lines were able to remain in operation, mainly because they could shunt and divert some of their traffic through Internet routing. Of course, Internet messaging was a crucial part of the communication system.

So, in short, to very briefly wrap up this second part of what the Internet has in store, I'll say that it is likely that it will stimulate our economy in the longer run, and it's likely that it will change our sense of the public and expand it. But the ways in which it will do so are not yet clear because they are at war with each other. And the tentative nature of this—I'll come back to it in a moment to say that it gives us some potential.

This brings me to the third point which is the way in which “the war” of the last two months is affecting our sense of public, our sense of us, and how that may connect with the previous two things I've been mentioning, and then we'll be done.

My starting premise here is that the United States has not spent most of its history at war. Most of the time it's not been in declared war with any other party. But a surprisingly large amount of America's history can be traced to wars—its institutional developments, the role of the government, technological growth, social changes. Very, very often they have their roots in war time exigencies, war time experiments. This may be for a reason similar to what the evolutionary biologists call punctuated equilibrium. That is, things go along for a long time, and suddenly they change in a big hurry. I think something like that is true of American democracy. Thomas Jefferson got much of America's engineering skill under way by setting up West Point in preparation for war. The Mexican American War set the continental limits of the United States. The Civil War has its effect on the industrial nature of the U.S. It was also, I think, interestingly, the consciousness of the hideous casualties during the Civil War that led the U.S. to wage the Spanish American War in sort of a no-risk basis, very much the way awareness of Vietnam is affecting that the current war or subsequent wars have been waged. The Spanish American War gave the U.S. a kind of empire, World War I, a different, intellectual empire. The list of effects of World War II is too long for me even to go into here. Should anyone ask later on, I will say. In short, we don't know how long this war will go on, or even if it will be a real war in the sense that we are familiar with. But it's worth assuming that it will leave us in some different circumstance from the way we were before and to start thinking about whether the sense of the public is going to be affected by this change in circumstance.

What have been the effects so far on the institutions I've mentioned and their role on the public. I would say the effect on the press of the recent war circumstances has been generally good. And I illustrate my case here with two words—Gary Condit. The economic structure of the press in the last 10 years, as I've described it, is one that's more and more spectacle dependent. And it really doesn't depend that much on the intrinsic importance of the spectacle. Gary Condit, the death of Princess Diana, Monica Lewinsky, O.J., Rodney King, or War on Terrorism—they all are sort of the transfixing event of the moment and there has been, I think,

both the low road explanation is we've had people . . . Gary Condit has been pushed off the Larry King show and off the front pages. The higher explanation is the press, like the rest of America, may have been sobered about its explanatory, investigative, reportorial mission to help people explain the world they are getting into. I will mention one, and perhaps Mr. Shezel may have a thought on this. One particularly heartening illustration, to me, is the *New York Times* has done a phenomenally good job during this last time. It's been impressive to me, under the watch of Hal Raines, this has occurred. When Hal Raines was running the Editorial Page of the *New York Times*, I got into a weird tong war with him. He went out of his way to write an editorial about my book, *Breaking the News*, and about how destructive it was for journalists to think they had this kind of public duty. You know, journalists shouldn't think this. They were out of the fray. They shouldn't be involved. And I think the best illustration of what publicly minded journalism can do has been the *New York Times* under Hal Raines. Everything from a section called "A Nation Challenged," which is the perfect journalism title, to the biographies of the victims, which present them all in the most positive light possible—aware of the public effect of doing this. So I think that the question for the press now is, whether the effort it has made in the last two months to be serious and understand and explain what's going on is sustainable—sustainable in two ways: #1, sheer cost. This is ruinously expensive for newspapers and magazines and networks to do the kind of reporting they are doing, and they're doing it when the advertising climate is worse than it's been in a decade. So how long can they afford to do this? Also, is it sustainable in sort of a maintaining interest way. And that we will have to see, when people lose their attention. The effect on technology and its role in us-ness of the war, I think, also has been positive. The Internet, you may recall, was initially established as part of the National Security System. The Defense Department set it up. Indeed, it's being seen that way again—that the Internet was an indispensable communications tool during times of trouble and maybe people from the Internet world were thinking only about IPOs and ROI and their declining market values may realize that there is a public service they form in being the background of public consciousness.

The effect on us-ness of the war, in a broader sense, is what is most difficult to determine right now. At the superficial level, you'd have to say that everything about this event has illustrated the famous William James essay about the moral equivalent of war, that there are often positive moral and civic effects of the most destructive and disastrous undertakings. The unfeigned admiration people felt for the emergency personnel in New York, the largely feigned sympathy that the rest of the country felt for New York—at least for a while. But there were parts that were very touching. I was speaking to a person from Eastern Montana a week after the attacks who said that, in her home town, which is a very, very poor town, people had held a fund raiser, selling brownies for 25 cents and they raised a total of \$500 in this little impoverished town to send out to New York. Even the fact that the *New Yorker* could recently run a cartoon, saying, "Hmm, I'm starting to hate people again"—that shows how deep was the sense of us-ness that immediately came after the event. Similarly, the popularity ratings for the President, I interpret as being mainly senses of us-ness with the nation, a sense of public solidarity, there is something we all have in mind. The question is, again, whether this is sustainable. Is it more than an inch deep? Will it last any longer than the reconstruction effort in New York City, although they may last a while. And I think that will depend, #1, on the policies that the government, reflecting us as a public, undertakes in the next year or so. Are they mainly divisive partisan policies where each side is trying to get its digs in for the battles it's had in the past, or not? If it's going to be

run as a war time government and war time cabinet, will the parties behave that way? My observation is that Democrats have behaved somewhat more that way—some of them were like a war time government—than the Republicans have recently but that's still up for observation in the coming year. A second and important way will determine how long the us-ness lasts is whether the initial wave of sympathy and support for people who serve in the fire department, the police department is converted to anything more than that, whether there's any real sense of service that lasts, any change in mentality of service. The Vietnam War had a huge impact on the consciousness of the draft. The draft was enacted, of course, just before World War II by one vote in the House of Representatives, and for the next 30 plus years, it seemed inevitable the U.S. would have a draft. After Vietnam, it seemed inevitable the U.S. would not have a draft. I'm not recommending a draft now. It seems to me the nature of today's military is such that large infusions of manpower are not feasible for it. But there have been recent proposals for some form of national service would reflect the fact that it's more than policemen, more than firemen, more than the people who happen to have enlisted, who are serving in some way. The way we play out this argument, the argument of service, I think will be the most important indicator of how much us-ness is left. And the final determiner will be, in what ways we think the fabric of our national life has actually been changed. Is the message we're getting from our readership that our duty is simply, #1, to shop, and #2, to go back to normal while being told to remain on a state of highest alert, or is there any deeper thing that normal life and normal sense of us-ness will mean?

Let me close with a minute and one-half pitch to those of you in the audience who are students, or student age, or considering that one way you might try to address the public is through the life of the press—as all five of us up here have done. I've been complaining a lot about the press. My colleagues may or may not do the same thing. Let me tell you why you should do it, why I've found it a very useful way to spend the last 30 years of my life. And the reasons are, in brief, these: #1, it's the most interesting thing a person can do. You can have the equivalent of 20 lifetimes worth of experience in one lifetime because you keep learning about different things. Second, it is a challenging thing to do in the sense the limits of the quality of what you do are mainly up to you. If you're part of a great big company, you're just implementing the company policy. If you're writing a book, if you're writing an essay, if you're producing a broadcast, usually, the limits on its qualities are ones that are in you. That's exhilarating, it's terrifying, but if you like that kind of exhilaration, there's a way to live. #3, it's one of the main forms of American life that can be invented and reinvented by young people coming into it. That young people came up with new documentary forms, new reporting forms, etc., the people on this panel are part of that effort of re-inventing journalism. And, finally, you can tell yourself that, in contrast to most other things you could do, it matters, reportentially matters. If you give people a realistic sense of the world, you affect the way they view that world and you increase the chance that America will leave this emergency with an enhanced and useful sense of its democratic public. Thank you and thanks for having me here. [applause]