By Edwin Diamond

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"There are more of us here," a leader at the Countdown-Inaugural Late show at the thousands amassed in front of the Washington Monument, "than there are at Nixon's parade..." The biggest roar of that chill January afternoon went up from the crowd. It was a warming thought, but the television networks called it otherwise. ABC News, CBS News, NBC, and US Park Police gave a count of 50,000 anti-war demonstrators. The Washington News that night reported the crowd "fell far short" of the expected 100,000. More important than the networks' missed count was the effect the anti-war rally was probably the last demonstration to have been given such media coverage. Over the years, the evidence is that the media has been careful to discourage network television from giving live coverage to protests. This was especially true of the huge Vietnam Moratorium that took place in 1969, mid-November, just before Election Day, with the White House and the shadow of the Capitol building on the horizon.

And looking at the coverage of subsequent demonstrations - right down to the last minute of the Jan. 20 Countdown-Inaugural - even a friend to the media might well score Rounds 2, 3, and 4 for Agnew too. Another of Agnew's tactics that brought results - his charge that marchers would probably try to jump up and blow away if the television cameras were not there to record the "antics" of the demonstration. The argument inevitably overstates the fact that dissension has always been honored, pro-television history in this country; indeed it is hard to remember a period when the mass media paid as little attention to the "concrete" or "theatrical" content of a demonstration as they do now.

There are some issues involved here that make it more than the media tendency to pigeonhole the anti-war marchers as "hippies," "hard-eyed revolutionaries," "housewives," or to play down their protest. One issue is the effect any demonstration has on public opinion. Why did public opinion about Vietnam have to be influenced by the persistence of protests and by the tide of bad news from halfway around the world. This is what the Nixon administration was afraid of, and why it has always been careful to discourage network television from giving live coverage to protest marches. The effect of the swarming of the demonstration was the message.

To the Editor:

We would appreciate your publishing this letter so that it may be read by the general student population. I am attempting to accomplish some much-needed distortions in one of the most important issues of concern in the country. We are planning to tap the voice of three or four people, up to any number, who are considered to be the current Twiggs, or the relevant person.

Sherry Goldstein

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