To the Editor:
The press conference is a charade. Once an opportunity for US citizens to gain an insight into the President’s policies, it has become a stylized competition between embittered rivals that one suspects, were the television cameras suddenly turned off, it would rapidly degenerate into a fistfight.

On one side we have a crowd of reporters, each representing as many as two or three competing news wires, jockeying over each other in their eagerness to catch every embarrassing slip-up; every evidence of hesitation or indecision on the part of the Chief Executive. Facing them is the President, reading wordlessly from a teleprompter and defiantly refusing to answer questions with anything but the vaguest generalities or, in some cases, outright deceptions. The relationship between press and President, in Franklin D. Roosevelt’s day, a friendly competition between but mutually respectful rivals, has soured to become little less than mutual disdain. Said Jack Nelson of the New York Times, “I think there’s real contempt for the press.”

On the other side of the fence, we’ve witnessed recent Presidents linking to new lows of deception and obfuscation in the name of national defense. The bustle in Grenada was apparently such a close contest that the appearance of the American forces might have tipped the scales in favor of the Grenadians. The evidence of massive Nicaraguan arms shipments to Salvadoran rebels was indisputable, but also underestimable. In a similar manner did Richard Nixon claim executive privilege to conceal the truth based upon the precedent established by President Truman during World War II, as if the Viet Cong were as much a threat to American security as the Third Reich.

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To the Editor: is always out to deceive and to break the law. Reporters “will not let any potential scandal go unexposed, even if this means the press is no longer able to fulfill its fantastically important roles of research and investigation.” And to judge from the executive privilege to conceal the press within the Reagan Administration, “it would rapidly degenerate into a fistfight.”

On the other side of the fence, the press and the President must realize that they together are essential components of our democracy. Perhaps Dan Rather should run for President, or Reagan should take up journalism as a second career. By being so in- tent upon duping each other, riots, strikes, and the like will end, to the chagrin of the American people, whom they both profess to serve.

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