

F. Y. I.

Today's release is the first of a two-part series on the public's appraisal of the Presidential press conference. The second article will be for release Wednesday, May 9.

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The Public Appraises The Presidential Press Conference

No. 1 — The President's Performance

JFK Gets High Rating From Press Conference 'Audience'

Kennedy's Impromptu Handling Of Conference Impresses, But Some Question 'Live' Approach

By GEORGE GALLUP
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PRINCETON, N. J., May 5—Highly impressed with the way President Kennedy handles himself at his press conferences, most Americans who have seen him in action recently like the impromptu atmosphere of the President's sessions with the press.

To a sizable minority of his nationwide "audience," however, these free-swinging conferences contain the pitfalls of "off-the-cuff diplomacy" where a chance remark by Kennedy might cause serious repercussions.

They would prefer that the President only answer questions which have been submitted in writing one or two days in advance of a scheduled press conference.

The spontaneous nature of today's televised Presidential press conference has led some observers to question the wisdom of having the Chief Executive speak off-the-cuff on any and all topics.

To see how the audience across the country is reacting to this, the Gallup Poll assigned its reporters to ask a series of questions concerning both Kennedy's performance and the manner in which the press conferences are handled.

The survey finds that an estimated 78 million adults have seen or heard one or more of the President's conferences during the last six months — or nearly three out of every four adults.

The consensus from this audience is overwhelming that Kennedy performs impressively in these sessions.

To the people across the country, he is projecting a favorable "image" of a forceful leader who is very well-informed and extremely capable in the verbal footwork of the press conference.

All of those in the survey who said they had seen or heard a conference in the last six months were asked:

"Do you have a favorable or unfavorable impression of the way President Kennedy handles himself in these press conferences?"

The vote among the nearly three in four who have seen one or more conferences:

Favorably impressed	.....	91%
Unfavorably impressed	.....	4
No opinion	.....	5

In commenting about the Kennedy performance, people say things like: "He never gets rattled." "He always knows the answers." "He handles it with dignity and charm."

A Mobile, Ala. voter summed up much of the majority reaction:

"He's so direct and not wishy-washy — yet he does not commit himself if he thinks it best not to."

Although Kennedy personally gets an extremely high rating, a substantial minority of persons agree with criticism that has been made about the general way in which the press conferences are handled.

All of those who have been in the audience at some point in the last six months were further asked:



THE PRESIDENT AND THE PRESS

Highly impressed with the way President Kennedy handles himself at his press conferences, most Americans who have seen him in action like the impromptu atmosphere of his sessions with the press.

"Some people see a danger in having a President express his views offhand and without time to think out his answers. These people say it would be better to have the questions put in writing and submitted a day or two before he appears at the press conference. Do you agree or disagree with this?"

Agree, should be in writing	.....	32%
Disagree, keep as it is now	.....	61
No opinion	.....	7

The Gallup Poll's study of public reactions to the Presidential press conference also focused on the job being done by the reporters present at the sessions.

On Wednesday, it will report the public's rating of the questions asked by the press, as well as the questions that the average American would ask if he could attend a press conference.

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