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SUBJECT Jack Anderson

LARRY KING: He's an old friend. He's the most widely read columnist in the history of this country. His column appears in over 900 newspapers. He's a muckraker in the highest sense of that word. He is Jack Anderson.

And I thank you very much for coming, Jack.

JACK ANDERSON: Larry, it's my pleasure.

[Applause]

KING: Before I ask about anything else. What is Jack Anderson writing a book called "Alice-in-Blunderland"? Are you starting to flip?

ANDERSON: Oh, I've ground my teeth. I've almost cried over the things that go on in Blunderland here in Washington. And I decided that the thing to do is to write maybe a little ridicule. Let's see if we can get a laugh out of it. You wind up crying, but...

KING: This is a fable?

ANDERSON: Yes. It's the Alice-in-Wonderland story adapted to Washington. It's a mixture of whimsy and reality. And I'll defy you to tell me which is which.

KING: How did you become what you've become? What got you interested in digging up that side of things other people in this business don't find? Why do you gravitate that way?

ANDERSON: I started as a very young repoter. Always

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had a great curiosity. Always thought it was sort of a waste of my time to be at a press conference because there were so many other reporters there. Always interested in knowing what they weren't talking about at the press conference. And that kind of curiosity just led me to Drew Pearson after World War II. I'd been a war correspondent during World War II.

KING: In a sense, shouldn't every reporter be that way? Shouldn't every reporter be an investigative reporter?

ANDERSON: I think they should. But they're not. Most of them -- most of them are reporting what the politicians tell them. They cover the newsmakers. That might seem like the best way to get news. But the newsmakers are politicians, and they have politics to play. And they're not, therefore, reliable sources.

KING: There's more, though, who've come around of late, certainly since Watergate, to that kind of thinking, of not believing the handout, not believing what the Senator or the President says. There are no sacred cows anymore.

ANDERSON: Well, that's true. And they ought not to believe them. Because, obviously, the people who govern us, they're decent people. I don't mean that they're evil people. But like all of us, they have their point of view. You or I, when we get involved in something, if you get into an automobile accident, your version is going to be different than the other driver's. The President gets involved in his policies. He comes to believe quite sincerely in what he's doing. That doesn't mean he's right. And the stories that he puts out are going to be his version of events.

I think it's absolutely urgent that we find out what's really happening, as opposed to what the President tells us is happening.

KING: Are you always conscious of the power you have? You have to be careful about it, don't you?

ANDERSON: Well, power in a democracy rests with the people. And, yes, anybody who can reach the people, I suppose, and can influence them would have power, but only if he's able to convince them. And that means you must have credibility. It means that you must present the facts.

KING: You must be like Caesar's wife.

ANDERSON: In Washington, if you're investigating the government, you know, you figure there's going to be half a dozen law enforcement agencies four blocks behind you all the time. It keeps you virtuous.

3

KING: Off the top, Jack, what do you think of the vote thus far? The public viewing this program, in large numbers --well, not large. The vote is close. But 2761 say no aid to El Salvador, 2194 say yes, aid to El Salvador. How do react off just the top to that?

ANDERSON: I'm a little surprised. I would have thought, from the publicity that I've seen, the stories, the television reports that I've seen, that more people would be opposed.

KING: But Mr. Reagan made a very effective speech this week, did he not?

ANDERSON: I thought he...

KING: In prime time? Some said his best-delivered speech of his presidency. Think that might have an effect?

ANDERSON: Might have an effect. And I think that, increasingly, the American people are getting disturbed about what's going on down there.

KING: We'll see the vote as it continues.

By the way, we'll take calls for Jack Anderson....

We've got things to talk about like grand jury reports and drugs in government and the Soviet Union and other things that Mr. Anderson so actively gets into.

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KING: How do you stand on the El Salvador situation? Which way would you call?

ANDERSON: Oh, I would say that we should help. I'm not pleased with the President's policies, but I think something must be done, something urgently must be done to stop the spread of communism in our backyard. It's our soft underbelly. I think we're in deep and dire danger.

And I would have to add to that, though, I don't think that the President's policies are going to solve the problem.

KING: Now let's touch some bases. This week you wrote a rather strong article, a well-written article, I might add, about a grand jury report, a report turned over to the --Califano and others investigating drugs that Senator Kennedy and others were involved on Capitol Hill. The Washington Post did not run that column, as is their choice. They buy the column.

They don't have to run it.

How did this all come about to you, one? And I have a question on grand jury report.

ANDERSON: Well, it -- I can't argue too much with the Washington Post editors. I had these names for about a year and a half, and didn't use them myself.

KING: 'Cause these are just mentioned. Right?

ANDERSON: Because they're accusations. It's not proof. I had held up the publication of the names even though I knew there had been grand jury testimony.

The real reason that I went ahead with this story was that some of the names were leaking out, some of the names were being used. And I thought that was unfair. And I thought that if newspapers, including the Washington Post, are going to print some of the names, then they really ought to print all of the names. And so I put out all of the names. And I think it's --you can call it either way.

KING: Mr. Califano, though, in a story in Boston, denied that Senator Kennedy was ever named.

ANDERSON: No, he didn't. If you read closely, he said, "We don't have evidence that he purchased drugs." That is not what I wrote. I didn't say that they had evidence that he purchased drugs. I said that he was named in grand jury testimony. He was named in grand jury testimony. He was named in House Ethics Committee testimony. And if Califano wants to deny that, I'll give him the page numbers.

KING: All right. Larger than that, though. The grand jury is an inherent part of the American system. And one of the great things about the grand jury system is it is not public, so that this board of eminent citizens selected, usually, every six months or a year, depending on federal or local, can look at a situation, thoroughly investigate it. The people there can come in and testify. Conjectures are often made. Thoughts are made, opinions. You can offer an opinion in a grand jury hearing, you say, "I think -- I thought that was Senator Kennedy coming around the street." It may never be offered at a trial. What's it our business? Why should I want to know what's in a grand jury?

ANDERSON: There are good arguments, Larry, against publishing material that goes before a grand jury.

KING: Ever.

ANDERSON: On the other hand, grand juries are also used to cover up scandals. If we hadn't published the grand jury --and I was also the one who published the grand jury reports on Watergate. And a week after I did so, Richard Nixon abandoned his stonewalling and permitted his aides to testify before the Senate. Up to that time, he'd kept them from testifying before the Senate on the excuse, with the alibi that there's a grand jury investigation going on, and they have to cooperate with the grand jury.

You remember that Richard Nixon, as President, can control the Justice Department. The Justice Department can control what goes on in a grand jury. And his plan, quite obvious -- it's more than obvious. It's known that his plan was to offer up a few scapegoats, but to cover up the Watergate scandal.

So, at this point, should you not report it?

There have been other cases, like Abscam, where the grand jury -- I'm not too sure that it should have been done, but it was done.

I have reason to believe that the Justice Department is trying to cover up the narcotics probe.

KING: This Justice Department?

ANDERSON: This Justice Department.

KING: Why?

ANDERSON: Well, because for what they consider to be good reason. They have a policy of not going after users, but going after only peddlers. In the case of the nine congressmen who've been identified by three or more informants, in the case of those nine congressmen, all of them were users or purchasers of drugs, according to the informants. Now, all of the nine deny it. But according to the testimony, they were users. Nobody is even claiming that they were drug pushers. The Justice Department has never gone after drug users. So they say they don't want to make an exception in the case of the congressmen. Congressmen ought not to be singled out.

KING: Maybe...

ANDERSON: My argument is different. I say the people who make the laws, the people who pass the laws ought to obey them. And if you're not going to make it -- if you're going to make it a crime to use drugs, then they ought not to use drugs.

I go further than that. Everyone who uses drugs

6

contributes to organized crime, because organized crime controls the drug racket in this country. And congressmen ought to know better.

KING: But you're not going to change someone's habit telling them that.

ANDERSON: Well, I'll tell you, that's the most serious -- one of the most serious things facing this country, the fact that drug purchases go into a multibillion-dollar fund for organized crime, a multibillion-dollar fund that organized crime uses to corrupt our society and to corrupt our government.

KING: Then why not legalize it?

ANDERSON: It would be beter than what's now happening.

KING: We will take phone calls for Jack Anderson right after these words.

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KING: We'll start with calls for Jack Anderson in Charlotte, North Carolina.

MAN: ...How intimate should the press's coverage of the President's life be? What do you think about that?

KING: How intimate should we cover a President's life? How much should we know about his wife or what his son is doing?

ANDERSON: Oh, that's a hard one to call. I tend to believe that a person's private life ought to be left out of the public spotlight, unless his private life somehow affects his public conduct. And it's a difficult one to call. But the trivia that we read about the President, I think, probably is their business and not to be ours.

KING: Have you ever printed something you wish you could take back?

ANDERSON: Oh, certainly. Oh, certainly. Investigative reorting is high-risk journalism. We're the first on the scene. We don't see -- we see only the tip of the iceberg. So we're writing about what we see. When time goes on and more of the iceberg is seen, it begins to take a different shape, a different dimension than we originally anticipated. And then you wish you hadn't've written it or that you'd known more at the beginning. Yes, that happens.

KING: Saranac Lake, New York.

7

MAN: You claim to use an intricate network of sources in your work. Who are they, where are they, and how do you work with them? By that I mean is it up front or do you meet in dark alleys? And do you consider yourself thick-skinned?

KING: Tell us your sources.

ANDERSON: Well, all right, I will, without naming them. My sources are the professionals. My sources are the people who tell the President what's happening. I decided 35 years ago that politicians weren't reliable sources. But I know, and I found out very quickly, that the politicians get their information from professionals, from experts. These are the people who tell the President, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of State what's happening.

KING: Why do they tell you?

ANDERSON: Well, I try to convince them to tell me. The information that goes to the President is classified, for the most part. So I'm dealing in classified information. This classified information -- it's classified, really, to censor it, so that the President can selectively release only those things that he wants us to know. And I thought we ought to know the other side of the story.

When the President goes on television, for example, to illustrate his Star Wars speech and shows top secret documents and top secret information, either he should be impeached for giving information to the enemy, or else why was it classified in the first place?

Now, my sources are themselves security experts.

KING: Do you have to be thick-skinned?

ANDERSON: Well, yes. Of course.

KING: Is it tough when you've got to break a story on a friend?

ANDERSON: Yes, but you've got to do it. It's just absolutely essential. Because if you start -- politicians, by their nature, are charming. That's how they get elected. And if you're going to allow them to charm you, then you're not going to be able to write about any of them.

KING: Arlington, Virginia.

MAN: ...I'd like your opinion of the massive U.S. defense buildup. What do you think of what the U.S. Government

and the Pentagon have to say about the size of the Soviet threat, of global communism?

ANDERSON: Well, the Soviet threat is real enough. There's no question that they're ahead of us in most military areas.

But the real threat, in my opinion, is the low-cost, low-profile, low-risk threat. What they do is they go into a place like El Salvador or Guatemala or some other Central American country, and they take out malcontents, malcontents who have charisma, leadership ability. They bring them back to the Soviet Union, to East Germany, to Hungary, they give them training, training that lasts up to four years. They go back thoroughly indoctrinated, form cadres. These cadres then seize upon legitimate grievances, absolutely real issues, and then they recruit non-communists, they recruit anti-communists, they build up a whole rebel movement. They promise everything. It's always easier to promise than it is to provide, much easier for them to say what they're going to do than it is for the government actually to do it.

And it costs the Soviets very little. And yet, it's a very real threat to us.

KING: Dawson, Georgia.

MAN: ...Of all the stories you've done, which one shocked you the most?

KING: Good question.

ANDERSON: Yes, it is.

I suppose the one that shocked me the most, and the one that was the hardest to dig out, was the story that our CIA was using Mafia killers to try to knock off Fidel Castro, that we were dealing with the underworld to kill a rival head of state.

KING: Our guest is Jack Anderson.

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KING: We go to Lockhaven, Pennsylvania.

WOMAN: ...I'd like to know, why hasn't the press been as tough on Reagan as it was on Carter?

ANDERSON: I think that Reagan is harder to attack. He's got more charm. He had a longer honeymoon. It was extended, unfortunately and unhappily, because of the shooting.

At this point, I think that the press is bearing down rather hard on him. And I don't think he's going to get off any longer. I think that the press is watching down his throat right now.

KING: Do you think he'd have had a lot more grief, if not for the shooting, earlier?

ANDERSON: Oh, yes. It would have started much earlier.

KING: Clinton, Connecticut.

MAN: ...Jack, did you ever fear for your life or livelihood during the Watergate era?

ANDERSON: Not exactly. I didn't find out until later that two of the -- two people on the White House payroll were actually thinking of knocking me off. One was G. Gordon Liddy, the other E. Howard Hunt. They discussed it. They actually talked to a CIA doctor about getting some kind of poisons or drugs to use against me. And G. Gordon Liddy has admitted this in his book.

KING: Liddy told...

ANDERSON: But at the time, I didn't know about it?

KING: Is it true Liddy said to you, when you met him -- and we obviously now know the man would have killed you, and threatened to kill you. Is it true he said to you, "Don't take it personally"? Nothing personal?

ANDERSON: Essentially, that is right. It was a professional matter with him, he said.

KING: Miami, Florida.

MAN: I'd like to know what type of influence does the Moral Majority have these days in Washington politics.

KING: Yes. Mr. Falwell was here last week. What is their influence here?

ANDERSON: I think that they have a negative influence here. I think that they do influence the President. I think they have influence at the White House. But I think it's probably a negative influence on Capitol Hill. I think the image of the Moral Majority has been tarnished. Their effectiveness in the congressional elections was poor. And I think that probably they do not frighten Congress.

10

KING: Gaffney, South Carolina.

WOMAN: Mr. Anderson, I just wondered if you have as yet published a retraction and an apology to Senator Strom Thurmond concerning the bribe which you said he took, but which the FBI has now found to be incorrect.

ANDERSON: No, the FBI hasn't found it to be incorrect. And there has been no retraction. What we reported was that there was grand jury testimony that he had accepted a bribe. This grand jury testimony by a man named W.W. Pierce -- I think it was on February 10th. We were reporting an event. This event should have been reported. I think other newspapers would have reported it if they'd have been able to get ahold of the grand jury information.

We also reported in considerable detail Strom Thurmond's denial.

So, what the Justice Department said was that they had no evidence to convict -- that they could use in court against him. Well, they had the testimony of one witness, testimony that was taken under oath. They should either send Mr. Pierce to jail for perjury or they should go ahead with the investigation of Mr. Thurmond.

KING: Let me get in one more quick call from Medford, Massachusetts.

MAN: Mr. Anderson, I'd like to get back to the question concerning your sense of governmental censorship. And I'd like you to comment on Reagan's new limits on the Freedom of Information Act, and also the attempt to treat supposed classified information by former governmental workers [unintelligible] on speeches. And do you think it'll pass?

ANDERSON: I didn't...

KING: Well, they want former government workers to sign that they will not write about what they did in government. And they're trying to put some sanctions on the Freedom of Information Act. Is it going to work?

ANDERSON: Just outrageous. It won't work. It shouldn't work. We have freedom of speech and freedom of the press in this country. It ought to apply to government workers. It ought to apply to anyone. We cannot permit the government to tell us what we can do and say and read and write. That is -- that's absolutely sacred. The government should keep its cotton-pickin' hands off of it.

KING: Thank you, Jack.