

AMERICAN BROADCASTING COMPANY

February 24, 1957

(FULL TEXT)

College News Conference at 4:00 P.M. over WMAL-TV (Washington)  
and the ABC Television Network:

Guest: Charles Edmundson, journalist

Moderator: Ruth Geri Nagy

Panel of young people

PANELIST: "Mr. Edmundson, after eight years in the United States foreign service, why did you suddenly decide to attack the U. S. foreign policy and resign your position?"

EDMUNDSON: "Well, I don't think I decided to attack U. S. foreign policy; I decided to exercise (the right?) of an American citizen to express his opinion. And why did I do it? I did it because I thought I could serve my country very much better by standing on the outside and making some remarks than I could by staying on the inside. I think there are some things that need to be bettered, need to be corrected, and I hope, in my feeble way that what I've done may help."

PANELIST: "How long have you held these views? Is this a sudden decision on your part or have you thought this way a long time?"

EDMUNDSON: "Well, I've thought this way for some time. I tried to get something done when I was in Afghanistan. If you remember, Afghanistan used to be, I would say, in the American orbit. And now I notice that Charles Sulzberger of the NEW YORK TIMES said that it may safely be considered to be in the Soviet orbit. I saw that happen. I think I was able to warn in advance that it was going to happen unless

we changed our policies there. We didn't change them. And I think we are somewhat in the same situation now in Korea, except the fact we have two armed divisions there. I don't think that bodes very well for America's international future."

PARSLIST: "Mr. Edmondson, your statement relates to the fact you said, 'I cannot conscientiously support a foreign policy that will lead us to the brink of an atomic war.' Can you tell us what you referred to in that statement?"

EDMONDSON: "Yes, I referred to the passage of the Middle East doctrine. I think that to do as much as we propose to do militarily there in the Middle East, so close to the borders of our particular enemies, and going it alone without the sanction of the United Nations, without the cooperation of any other power, I think that that's dangerous and I don't think it's a safe policy."

PARSLIST: "Well, do you think the Eisenhower Doctrine will lead us into a third world war?"

EDMONDSON: "I hope that it won't, but I think there is too great a danger of it."

PARSLIST: "Mr. Edmondson, I believe that the joint statement of Bulganin and Chou En Lai said this doctrine would start new tensions. Is that what you're saying?"

EDMONDSON: "Well, I don't like to have the words of Communists put in my mouth. I'm as strongly anti-communist as anyone listening to this program, but I would say that it will increase tensions, and that it will not accomplish what it's meant to accomplish toward helping us to prevent the spread of Communism."

PANELIST: "Mr. Edmundson, the Senate Committee and the House, after extensive hearings and much debate, have passed the President's Middle East doctrine; now do you have some information specifically which would cause you to oppose it, which the Senate Committee do not have?"

EDMUNDSON: "Well, some of the men in the Senate, and in the House, and especially in the Senate, whose opinions are, I'm inclined very strongly to accept, such as Senator Fulbright, Senator Mansfield. I think they do share my views. Senator Morse or Oregon, for example. I would personally let the views of those Senators outweigh the views of the rest."

PANELIST: "Mr. Edmundson, you've spoken of this Mid-East doctrine; what specifically is wrong with it in your view?"

EDMUNDSON: "With the Middle East doctrine? I think that the thing that is most wrong with it is this. That the United States in the United Nations is committed to taking action in the international community, not unilaterally, but multi-laterally, and multi-laterally through the United Nations. Now when the President saw France and Britain move in on Egypt about two months ago, we denounced France and Britain for doing that, and we forced them to back down, through the power of the United States, the influence moral and physical of the United States to back down. And now I find only a month or two later that we are doing precisely the same thing, we're taking precisely the same unilateral action as we denounced when Britain and France took it. (SIC) And I don't think that that is consistent, I don't think it makes us friends in the world, I don't think it makes for world peace."

PANELIST: "Mr. Edmundson, when you handed newspapermen on your staff in Tokyo--when you handed them this strictly personal statement,

you charged that profiteers, grafters and politicians around the world are getting hold of United States aid funds. Well, now don't you think that you could be promoting the Soviet Union with potential propaganda?"

QUESTION: "No, I don't think so at all. In the first place, that was slightly misquoted, I believe, in the papers. I looked up what I said after that appeared, and I don't think that I said 'around the world.' In some nations, I think, the International Cooperation Administration is doing a good job. In many nations, I don't think that it is. Your question was, was I giving potential propaganda to the other side. I thought that over very carefully. And I thought that if the Soviets, for example, could wash their filthy linen in public, as they did in the denunciation of Stalin, perhaps we should have the courage to wash some of our mildly discolored linen in public ourselves (if?) that's morally advantageous for us."

QUESTION: "You've said that the U. S. has no moral right to plant atomic bases miles from our shores. Do you feel that world tension would be reduced if we actually gave up these bases?"

ANSWER: "I think that world tension would be reduced if we took joint action toward preserving peace, and helping preserve the sovereignty of the nations of the Middle East, rather than taking unilateral action."

QUESTION: "How can we defend our country against attack without these bases?"

ANSWER: "Well, the world is very large. If my memory serves me, it's about 27 or 29 thousand miles around, and it seems to me that we would never for one moment think of allowing the Soviet Union to come and (set up?) bases in Mexico and Central America and even South America. When some effort was made by the Communists to take over Guatemala, the

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY and other elements of the American government --the American government defense system very quickly repulsed that. I think that a case could be made that another great nation on the other side of the globe from us has at least something of the same right to protect itself from quick attack, quick atomic attack, that we have to protect ourselves from quick atomic attack when we went into Guatemala."

WHEELER: "Well, Mr. Edmondson, you speak of this joint action and disarmament, would you also be in favor of complete disarmament in withdrawing troops from Germany and disbanding NATO and things of that sort, in line with what you just said?"

EDMONDSON: "Well, let me make it clear, Mr. Patterson, I make no pretension to omniscience at all. I have one or two fields in which I have some competence, but your question there is far too sweeping for me to attempt to answer, particularly in 30 minutes."

WHEELER: "Mr. Edmondson, your atomic bases statement concerns the aspect that how would you defend the nation without these bases that we have?"

EDMONDSON: "Well, I'm in favor of having atomic bases. I'm in favor of strong military defense for the United States. There's no argument between me and the Eisenhower administration about that at all, but there may be some argument as to whether we should press closer and closer toward the boundaries of our potential enemy, taking atomic bases and atomic artillery under the noses of these nations, when we would not for one minute allow them to come within a thousand miles of us. The Scriptures, I believe, say something about doing to others as you would

have others do unto you, and I admit that the Christian doctrine just doesn't serve as a code in this particular world we live in, but it seems to have some common sense relevance."

HAGY: "Mr. Edmundson, at what point--where would you draw the line--how many miles from Russia, for example, would you say it was moral to put an atomic base?"

EDMUNDSON: "Well, I think that's a (matter?) that should be worked out by the generals and not by one simple civilian."

HAGY: "But you have as a civilian criticized the fact that we are ringing the Soviet Union with atomic bases, and yet you do not want to particularize about what area we are right--about what part we are right and where we--what part we are wrong."

EDMUNDSON: "No, Mrs. Hagy, I would particularize but I don't want to seem omniscient. I would say we oughtn't to plant them right in the Middle East, in a few hours' flight, even less, of the Soviet border, whether the point is a thousand miles, or five thousand or ten thousand, I haven't the military (data?) at hand nor is it accessible to me to answer this question."

PANGLIST: "Mr. Edmundson, along those lines, I believe in your statement you said something about the fact that it was your country that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. Do you think that was wrong?"

EDMUNDSON: "I certainly do think that was wrong, Mr. Panglist. For 30 years the United States had preached about the sacred sanctions of international law, of moral law, against the killing of non-combatants. And there at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, we dropped the atomic bomb, as I said in that statement, on babies, on children, on maidens and mothers,

on the aged and infirm, without any thought of what we'd been practicing, of what we'd been preaching for 30 years."

FRANKLIN: "Mr. Edmondson, do you have any basis for stepping now into the military judgment—I mean, do you have any background to go into judgments along those lines?"

EDMONDSON: "Yes, I do have a slight basis, well, more than a slight basis. I think that Mason Baldwin, the military attache of the UNITED STATES, is recognized as one of the great military authorities—certainly one of the great civilian military authorities, although he had military training himself, and Baldwin has written an article in the ATLANTIC Monthly in which he said the dropping of the bombs was a mistake, unnecessary in order to win the war, and I was a war correspondent around the world in most of the theatres of war at one time or another during the Second World War. I followed the thing closely, and I don't think it was necessary."

FRANKLIN: "Well, why have you waited til now to bring this out, something like 11 or 12 years ago?"

EDMONDSON: "Well, I'm a very—I'm a relatively very unimportant citizen, and I have no platform to step forward and make sweeping statements, I'm not a Senator or something like that. But in this particular statement, when my conscience drove me to the point of view where I could no longer conscientiously support the foreign policy, then I did have a right to make a statement, and I did make a statement."

FRANKLIN: "Sir, in your statement to the press, the CIA figured very prominently and you had one statement concerning the reporters being barred from Red China, and you said that one of the reasons was that the State Department might fear that reporters might upset diplomatic appointments. What did you have in mind by that statement?"

EDMUNDSON: "Well, I quoted in my statement—I quoted the United Press as saying the State Department feared we might upset diplomatic appointments, and I don't know what appointments are there, but I have an idea. Now the United States says that it will not take any means toward extending trade relations with Communist China because they're still holding ten Americans prisoners there. And it just so happens that I know and the CIA knows, of course, and the Communist/China's government knows that some of those ten people at least are members of the Central Intelligence Agency and perhaps of other intelligence agencies. And it's possible that one reason the State Department does not want American correspondents in there is that they might interview those people and it might come out in public intelligence that some of those men were intelligence agents. And that might weaken the United States's case. I'm saying it now, and why am I saying that? I'm saying it because in the first place no harm can be done; the Chinese know it and some informed Americans who can read between the lines know that some of these people—certainly Fecteau and Bosney, two of the men who are held—are CIA men. And I think that distorts the whole picture of international relations to have intelligence men held, when the whole world, especially the United States, thinks that it's simple innocent American citizens who are held. Now these men are innocent but they're also intelligence agents."

PANELIST: "Well, you said (that?) should be brought out into plain sight. Now did you mean just that because it seems to me the Central Intelligence Agency by its very nature would have to have many things kept secret, so were you referring only to this situation where the two



men you mentioned are CIA agents were being held prisoner, or did you mean the whole operation of the Central Intelligence Agency?"

EDMUNDSON: "Well, Mr. Patterson, it's quite obvious in this particular sphere of world affairs you have to have spies, you have to have intelligence agents, you have to have good ones. And I know Mr. Allen Dulles, and I have known him for nearly 20 years, and let me say that I consider him an extremely able public servant, and a very patriotic one, but I do think the CIA is making a mistake in this respect: When some of its people get caught, that then the American--that the country that catches them treats them as it has every right to treat them under international law, then when these people, these agents, are portrayed to the American people as simple, innocent American businessmen and what not, and the emotions of the American people are lacerated and excoriated by their thinking that these are just ordinary citizens, then I think that you cause tensions and you create a national atmosphere that is the very essence of the kind of atmosphere that could lead a nation into war. Do I make myself clear?"

HAST: "Yes, we have some reactions here from our youngsters."

PANELIST: "What about Congressional investigation? Do you approve of Senator Mansfield's proposals for congressional control of the CIA?"

EDMUNDSON: "Oh, yes, absolutely. I thought it was a bad day in the Senate when the Senate voted down Senator Mansfield's resolution to set up a watchdog committee to look after the CIA. I think it's against the genius of democracy; it's particularly, I think, Mr. Cooper, against the genius of American institutions to have a great secret agency, which is subterranean, which the public knows nothing about,

to have it operate without any reasonably (safe?) or democratic control. And that's the way the CIA is operating here now. How many people are operating? I don't know. Have you any idea how many CIA agents are deployed around the world?"

PANELIST: "Aren't you going to/question of history of our country? Isn't that the way it's always been done? Can you tell specifically we had a number of spies, is that what you're advocating?"

EDMONDSON: "No, I'm not advocating that, but I am saying as a very minimum there should be some device, such as Senator Mansfield tried to set up in the watchdog committee. Now I have here an article in the SATURDAY EVENING POST on the CIA. Not much is written about the Central Intelligence Agency but in 1953 Dick Harkness's wife wrote a three-part series on the CIA, and they estimate--they and TIME magazine too--here's TIME magazine--it estimates the number of CIA agents deployed around the world as between 8,000 and 30,000. Now to take even a conservative average of those two--now you have CIA agents equal to about two slimmed-down infantry divisions. And that's an awful lot of people that you can operate to carry out any phantasy that the world may originate."

HAY: "Mr. Edmondson, do you have firsthand knowledge of any other situation in which you feel the CIA HAS been injurious to our foreign policy or injurious to the best interests of America?"

EDMONDSON: "Yes, there are two or three I could name. Perhaps the most flagrant is that when the CIA, when intelligence agents were supporting several thousand Nationalist Chinese troops up in the (Shan?) province, which is the Shan province of Burma. And up there you had an irresponsible military force. They were attacking with impartiality

the Chinese Communists one day, and U Hu's troops the next, and they were causing complications which resulted in the death of the Thailand people up there in that corner of the world, and that went on for four or five years. And finally, we had, if you recall, I suppose it was two or three years ago, we had a four-power conference. There wasn't much in the papers about it, but the conference was held anyway at Bangkok, and the four powers represented were Burma, Nationalist China, United States, and Thailand. And the countries concerned, Burma and Thailand, put so much pressure on us, that we sent transport planes in there and flew those troops out. But for several years before that, we had supported them with American military supplies flown in from Formosa; the operation, I believe--I've been told by what I considered a good authority--was known as 'Western Frontier.' We had American officers up there in uniform; we had, I believe, some German--some deserters from the French Foreign Legion that we were paying to help that--that Nationalist Chinese force, and it was a very (unsafe?) and, I would say, unseamy situation."

PANELIST: "Mr. Edmundson, I'm sorry but you've been a little vague in some of your statistics. Could you give us some sources for the points you've just brought out?"

EDMUNDSON: "Now which statistics am I vague on?"

PANELIST: "Well, on how long the war lasted, how many men were involved, so on and so forth."

EDMUNDSON: "Yes, the thing went on from 1952 to--from 1952 to 1956. I went down to the Congressional Library yesterday and I went through the NEW YORK TIMES files for about four years, and they had references

to this Nationalist Chinese force up there, and its depredations and its complications over a period from 1952 to 1956. Now what other statistics? I'd like to get that straightened out?"

PANELIST: "Well, I was just wondering--you mentioned something about deserters from the French and German armies--I was wondering--"

EDMUNDSON: "No. Deserters from the French Foreign Legion. There were three of those--at least there were three of them whose pictures after they were dead and corpses that were taken by Burmese photographers and were published in Burmese newspapers and Bangkok newspapers. I don't have copies of those papers here--"

PANELIST: "Mr. Edmundson, you stated that President Eisenhower has to turn his back upon the United Nations and take upon America's shoulders alone the task of preserving peace in the world. You've undoubtedly read his address this week-end on the Mideast crisis and do you now feel you'd like to withdraw your previous criticism?"

EDMUNDSON: "No, I don't think his address dealing with that would do anything to contradict what I said."

PANELIST: "Mr. Edmundson, may I say to you then that you said President Eisenhower wants to turn his back on the United Nations and Wednesday night he told this nation that the United Nations must not fail. Now how can you still maintain that position?"

EDMUNDSON: "Well, words of--the President--let me not be put in the position of being disputatious toward--being unnecessarily disputatious toward the President. I have respect for him. I've known him since he was a colonel; as a war correspondent, I've known him since he was a colonel. And nevertheless, regardless of what was said in that

speech to which you referred, I would say when we agree unilaterally to guarantee the Middle Eastern nations against Soviet aggression, they maintain by that action, regardless of what anybody said, regardless of who it is that said it, we have turned our back on the United Nations."

PANELIST: "Well, in another area, you said in your resignation, and I'm quoting, 'Profiteers, grafters and politicians around the world are getting hold of U. S. aid funds.' Could you be specific about that, who, and what evidence you have?"

EDMONDSON: "I didn't say 'around the world.' I answered that point a while ago. You have a newspaper clipping and 'around the world' is inaccuracy. But in Korea, where I'm very intimately acquainted with what is happening, I'll say without any fear of (contradiction?), that the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer and the grafters are getting more money, and that our aid program there is not accomplishing its purpose of binding the Korean people to our side, any more than our aid to Chiang Kai Shek on the Chinese mainland in 1945-6-7-8 accomplished the purpose of binding the Chinese people to us. I'm in favor of aid in a form that accomplishes what it's supposed to accomplish, and this aid in many cases is simply pouring money down a rathole."

PANELIST: "Mr. Edmondson, turning to a summing up area here briefly, your statements have had a rather resounding effect; I wonder if there's any widespread feeling among the USIA officers in other areas or in Korea--just how many people might have your ideas and are keeping them dormant?"

EDMONDSON: "Well, I don't want to try to consult or interpret my fellow employees in any country, but I will say this: that after I

made my statement--I don't think I was pariah before I made them, but when I went back to Korea, I think I sensed a certain warmth that I'd never sensed before. Some people came up to me, even to my house, several of them did and came repeatedly, and shook my hand and said you've been saying many things that we've been wanting to see said for a long time."

HAGY: "Mr. Edmondson, are you going to be testifying on these matters before any congressional committee?"

EDMONDSON: "Well, I was called on to make a statement to some representatives of the Senate Committee on Foreign Aid and I was told I'd be called on in March."

PAWELIST: "Mr. Edmondson, I understand that you were in Seoul, Korea, and you went up to Tokyo to make this statement--any particular reason?"

EDMONDSON: "That is not at all true. I'm glad you bring that up. I was in Seoul, Korea, and I did not seek this trip to Tokyo, but I--"

HAGY: "Our time has just run out."

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TRANSMITTAL SLIP		
25 Feb. 1957 <small>(Date)</small>		
TO: Mr. Norman Paul		
BUILDING Administration	ROOM NO. 330	
REMARKS:  F. Y. I. <i>amb</i>  <i>File</i>  <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 40px; width: 100%;"></div>		
FROM: Stanley J. Grogan		
BUILDING East	ROOM NO. 11	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 50px; height: 20px;"></div>
FORM NO. 36-8 SEP 1946		
<small>16-65268-1 GPO</small>		

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