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WMAL-TV (Washington)  
& ABC Television Network

21 February 1960

"WE SHOULD ERR ON THE SIDE OF SAFETY"College News Conference at 1:00 P.M. over WMAL-TV (Washington)  
and ABC Television Network:

MODERATOR: Ruth Hagy.  
 GUEST: Senator John Kennedy.  
 Panel: Student editors.

SENATOR KENNEDY WAS SEEN ON THE TELEVISION SCREEN  
 AS HE WAS INTERVIEWED BY THE PANEL OF STUDENTS.

CPYRGHT

QUESTION: "Senator Symington has led something of a frontal attack on the administration concerning the so-called misleading of the public concerning the American defense posture. In the first place, do you feel that the President is mis-leading the public in terms of this issue, and secondly do you think there might be an over-emphasis by the Democrats on war, rather than on peace, in this particular issue?"

KENNEDY: "Well I would say that I think the administration and the President reached his judgement in good faith—quite obviously he's not going to play with the security of the United States, but I do think it's extremely difficult to make a correct assessment with the precision as to what a dictatorship is doing. The British and French couldn't do it in the 30's we mis-calculated the speed with which they would develop the Russians, the atomic weapon, the hydrogen weapon, and missiles themselves. Therefore, I don't think that you can say that regardless of how broad and, —the information is that the CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY has, it is still limited in a dictatorship. I therefore think that you should err on the side of safety.

"When men who have the same information which the President has, such as Powers—General Powers—Ridgeway, Gavin and Taylor, come to exact opposite conclusions, say we are moving into a position of peril, I would err in the side of caution. I therefore would make a greater effort than this administration has indicated it's willing to make."