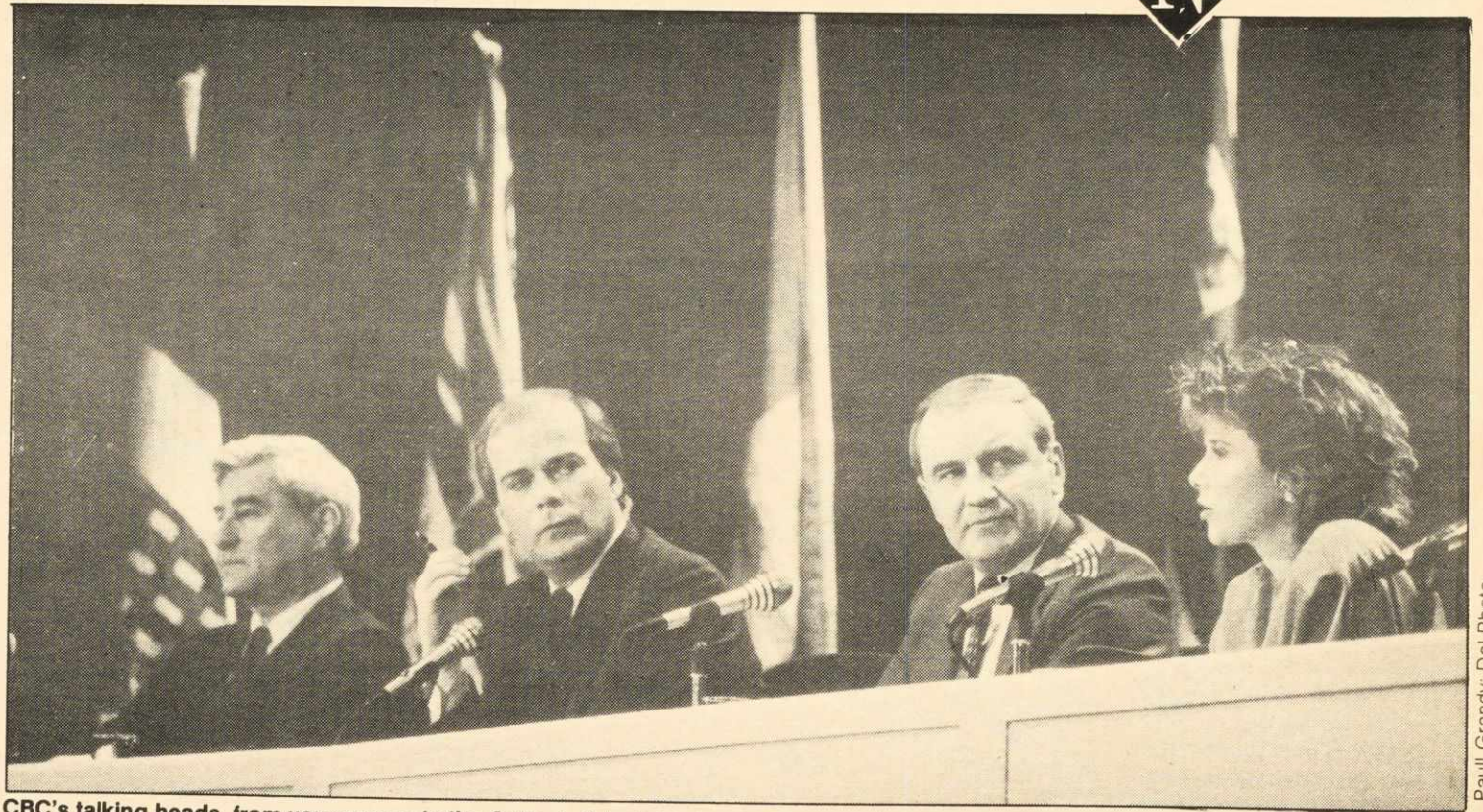


CBC forum comes down home

by Alison Auld

The annual CBC Correspondents Forum has customarily been held in either Ottawa or Toronto. This year, however, CBC's sixth forum was held in Halifax, at the Rebecca Cohn auditorium on January 4. Moderator Peter Mansbridge explained the CBC's decision to move outside of Central Canada as a means of letting their "real viewers" question the reporters of Canada's highest-



CBC's talking heads, from your screen to the Cohn. Left to right: Joe Schiesinger, Peter Mansbridge, David Halton, Sheila MacVicar.

Paul Grandy: Dal Photo

rated news program. Mansbridge seemed to imply that viewers on the East coast were more consistent in choosing CBC as their news program.

The panel consisted of four

Canadian-based correspondents and six journalists who operate out of various foreign offices. Foreign correspondents included Claude Adams (London), Patrick Brown (London), Jean-Francois Lepine (Middle East), Michael McIvor (London), Don Murray (Moscow), and Joe Schiesinger (Washington). Comprising the panel of reporters stationed in Canada were David Halton (CBC's chief political correspondent), Tom Kennedy (national reporter), Sheila MacVicar (Fifth Estate), and Peter Mansbridge (chief correspondent and anchor of The National).

Prior to the question period, each panelist briefly outlined some of the major issues covered in the news in 1988. Mentioned were the war and ensuing famine in the Sudan, the Iran-Iraq cease-

fire, the earthquake in Armenia, the crash of the Pan Am flight over Lockerbie, the U.S. presidential elections, and effects of the Soviet Union's policy of glasnost.

Following the introductions, panelists fielded questions from the audience. The questions were generally concise and concerned issues that needed clarification and elaboration. Topics ranged from the future of the Chinese economy to the deterioration of the environment and the status of P.L.O.-U.S. negotiations.

On a more critical level, the panelists were questioned on the relevance of programs in which reporters interview other reporters, the presence of racism in criminal reports, the lack of coverage of Hurricane Gilbert, and the problem of journalists who

have insufficient background on a story they are covering.

Interrupting a series of serious questions, a young man added a degree of levity to the evening, by asking Mansbridge whether or not Elvis was, in fact, dead. Mansbridge, who had just finished responding to a question critical of CBC's special reports, stated jokingly that a Special Assignment team had been directed to investigate the matter.

The highly informative evening concluded one and a half hours after it had begun, with each correspondent providing a forecast of the future. Sheila MacVicar and Don Murray stated that there would possibly be more international efforts made at achieving peaceful resolutions in volatile regions, such as Iran, Iraq and Israel.

Korean prisoner free thanks to Halifax A.I.

by Karen Bergin

This is an update on the fate of political prisoner Kang Jong-hon, profiled in a November issue of the Gazette.

Kang Jong-hon is experiencing freedom for the first time in 18 years. The adopted prisoner of the Halifax Amnesty International (AI) Group. Jong-hon was released on parole December 21, 1988 after the Republic of Korea granted an amnesty to 130 political and criminal prisoners.

Jong-hon was arrested in 1975 while participating in a march. He was sentenced first to death for espionage under South Korea's National Security Law. This sentence was later reduced to 20 years imprisonment.

"There was no violence involved in the student demonstration", says Lynda Cassels, Press Contact of the Halifax AI group. Determining this after a review of Jong-hon's case, the organization then began to work for the prisoners' unconditional release.

More than five years later Jong-hon's release has taken place, however it is not unconditional. Cassels says the group is "not sure of the conditions" of Jong-hon's parole, and says it will be following his situation in the future.

"Amnesty will work again for Kang" says Cassels, should he be imprisoned again in Korea. Jong-hon has been free now for three weeks. Japanese by birth, Cassels

believes he may have travelled to Japan.

Kang Jong-hon's chance at freedom is a very real success in Korea today. AI reports document up to 230 political prisoners presently being held in South Korea. The fate of a group of 50 prisoners is of particular concern. "These people have been held in custody, without charge or trial, for several years" says Cassels. Under Korean Public Security Law, the Minister of Justice has the power to renew sentences every two years against any prisoner who has been involved in activities described as against the state, and against those who appear capable of repeating such a crime. Only a prisoner who has proven himself to be "thoroughly anti-communist", says Cassels, may be freed under such custody. According to AI reports, two people currently in jail under this custody have been imprisoned since the Korean War.

However, prisoners today in Korea may still have more reason to hope for release than they did in the past. The Public Security Law which currently sentences prisoners without making distinctions between violent and non-violent political beliefs is under review.

As well, a first amnesty was granted by South Korea to prisoners in October in addition to the second amnesty made by the Republic in December, which freed Kang Jong-hon.

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