

Point/Counterpoint with Shana Alexander and James (Jack) Kilpatrick – January 1, 1978

YouTube video segment posted on The Media Hoarder taken from a segment of *60 Minutes* called *Point/Counterpoint*.

Video Length: 00:03:27

Dan Rather: This is a time of year when it seems particularly fitting to take stock of where we are as a nation. Where we've been and where we're going. Adding up, in effect, our pluses and our minuses. Are we winning or are we losing? Well, that depends on whether you're Shana Alexander or Jack Kilpatrick. Here is Point/Counterpoint.

Shana Alexander 00:00:18-00:00:40: Jack. I spent the holidays flying back and forth across this country and I'm worried. The place seems all out of focus. Sea to shining sea. Everybody's mad as hell, but they're not sure what at. The cities are rotting, farmlands are idle, inflation is up, unemployment is up and taxes are way up. The only value left is looking out for number one.

(00:00:41-00:01:11) The president works 16-hour days but can't get anything done while the first brother swills a product called Billy's Beer and banks the bucks. The only other part of the world we seem to care about is a tropical ditch down in Panama. At home, the holly is plastic, the turkey is cardboard. Most American food is disgusting, most American people are overweight. The rest of the world is starving and nobody gives a damn. News doesn't sell. Our newsstands are hip-deep in filthy pictures.

(00:01:12-00:01:39) And yet the woman *Good Housekeeping* readers admire most is Anita Bryant. If you're not a Paul, Jack, I am. It's awful to be old today and it's worse to be young. They have no flag to rally around except the almighty dollar. Only the package counts anymore. And it sometimes seems as if under every Cadillac hood there chugs a Chevrolet engine. The ordinary people you meet have never seemed friendlier and more lost.

(00:01:40-00:01:55) If, as the movie says, we are not alone, we are certainly adrift. This is the day to cry Happy New Year. But what most of us feel is bah humbug. Say it ain't so, Jack. For once, I can hardly wait to hear you.

Jack Kilpatrick (00:01:56-00:02:16): We've both flown many times, Shana, coast to coast. But we see a different land below. You see the bad aspects of American society. They're there. As a

critic, I write about these aspects all the time and I don't mean to minimize them. But there's so much more. On a clear day flying out of Kennedy, you make a climbing turn over Manhattan and the greatest city in the world lifts its fingers to hold you back.

(00:02:17-00:02:48) You head west, passing high over Washington and the Capitol symbolizes all those intangibles you think the people have forgotten. Well, they haven't forgotten a written constitution, the rule of law, our precious freedoms of speech and press and religion. You bet we have something to be for the westward flight passes right over my own home in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia. I know what's down below. Good people, hard working people. People who help their neighbors. There's a pretty fair country school system down there, a library, churches with old fashioned steeples.

(00:02:49-00:03:27) There's cattle and horses and orchards that give good fruit. You think things are bad today? 110 years ago that same country was red with the blood of Civil War. Americans have never had it as good as they have it today. The flight takes us over the plains country, over black earth, green fields that move like oceans, over factories and oil wells, over deserts that remind us of hardships surmounted over mountains that once had to be crossed and finally, with a sudden rush of wings into the variety and vitality of California. We are 200 million free people, Shayna, in the richest land on earth. And my grandchildren, with God's grace, will find it better still.