

# TELEVISION

VOLUME IX      NUMBER 1

WINTER 1970

# QUARTERLY

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THE JOURNAL OF  
THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF  
TELEVISION ARTS  
AND SCIENCES

Published by The National Academy  
of Television Arts and Sciences in  
cooperation with the School of Public  
Communication, Boston University

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**“Write the  
shortest possible  
imperative sentence  
embracing  
adventure, drama,  
comedy, sports,  
song and dance,  
news and  
public affairs.”**

**“Watch CBS<sup>®</sup>”**

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## TELEVISION QUARTERLY

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# TIME LIFE BROADCAST

major voices and integral parts of



7

**Denver**

KLZ-TV-AM/FM



10

**San Diego**

KOGO-TV-AM/FM



23

**Bakersfield**

KERO-TV



6

**Indianapolis**

WFBS-TV-AM/FM



8

**Grand Rapids**

WOOD-TV-AM/FM

# ANOTHER TYPE OF AIR POLLUTION?

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DEAN BURCH

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President Nixon spoke recently of the urgent need to clean up the atmosphere. He promised "the most comprehensive and costly program in America's history" to combat impure air and water. I would like to talk to you today about combatting another type of pollution before it also becomes a major concern in our society. I refer to another type of dirty air—obscene or indecent programming.

Frankly, this is not by any stretch of the imagination an overwhelming problem today in the broadcast industry. But I think there is a lesson to be learned from our present environmental problems—an early preventive program is the best cure. And while obscene and indecent programming is not a burning issue now, there are more than enough whiffs in the wind to warrant our attention.

It seems to me that there is a disturbing trend afoot—a laxity creeping into our society that must be addressed. My colleagues in the Post Office find a flood of mailed—and unsolicited—material that is obscene. We see the same trend in records and motion pictures. Many sex scenes are introduced in movies solely for shock or commercial purposes. Some producers make no bones about the

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*DEAN BURCH*, recently appointed chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, was formerly the chairman of the Republican National Committee and administrative assistant to Senator Barry Goldwater.

This article is based on a speech he delivered before a San Francisco community group on January 30.

“X” rating; they look forward to publicizing it. They would probably be delighted with a double “X” rating. One recent local movie advertisement gratuitously and proudly referred to its offering as “XXX.”

Should a similar trend develop in broadcasting, it would be, in my opinion, a public cancer. The time for effective and swift action to prevent any such occurrence is now.

Before I go on, I must make certain disclaimers. Not because it is customary, but because I find no charm in trying to eliminate evils only to generate new ones.

First, I do not intend to intrude the Federal Communications Commission in matters of taste. I abhor censorship. It strikes at the bedrock of our free society. The Constitution and the Communications Act are wholly wise in barring governmental censorship. No one wants to have seven men in Washington dictating what is “good” programming that you could receive—or “bad” programming that you would be denied.

Second, I do not intend in any way to suggest that we inhibit the presentation of provocative, controversial programming. Certainly, the airwaves shouldn’t be given over to a steady diet of bland, inoffensive material. We do not live in easy times. And what we don’t know, *can* kill us. President Nixon has proclaimed this decade as calling for the most intensive study of ecological and environmental reforms. More debate, more controversy are in order, and provocative programming must be encouraged if the American people are to be informed on the various programs or alternatives coming before them.

Controversial programming is bound to offend some. A hard-hitting program, even one that presents the proponents one week and the opponents the next, will cause ruffled feelings and complaints to the Commission. *We will give such complaints short shrift, so long as broadcasting is fair—as long as it does give both sides a fair opportunity to inform the electorate.*

So much for the disclaimers. So much for what I do not intend.

Let me now make clear that *I do intend to oppose any trend toward obscene or indecent programming in broadcasting.* The law, which I have sworn to uphold, is basis enough for my position. It is a crime to broadcast obscene or indecent matter, and the FCC is called upon to proceed against violators. But the matter does not rest simply upon the fact that the law is the law, and that broadcast licensees must be law-abiding. Because of the unique



nature of broadcasting, there are important policy considerations applicable here.

I do not mean to softpedal the problem of obscenity in the print, motion picture, or record fields. However (with the exception of unsolicited mail), in all these areas it takes a deliberate, conscious action to subject oneself to the material. You must buy a ticket to gain admittance to the movies. And the picture has usually been extensively rated and reviewed. The same is true of books or magazines. Scanning printed material before deciding to buy is accepted practice. Also, obviously, being able to read is a prerequisite to being offended by printed material.

But the reception of broadcast material requires no such preparatory activity or education. By definition, broadcasting is disseminated generally to the public. Usually without any advance warning of its content, it comes directly into the home or car, into the teenager's ear as he carries that portable transistor, and into the mind and consciousness of the very young. Millions turn the dial from frequency to frequency to sample the fare.

Further, unlike movie theatres or bookstores where children can appropriately be excluded, the broadcast audience is made up of very substantial numbers of children. Over 28 per cent of the average TV audience in prime time is composed of children. Over 17 per cent of the total is in the 2-11 year old age group. The average child views about three hours and 40 minutes of television a day. By the time the average child graduates from high school he has spent more hours watching television than he has spent in the classroom.

In radio, 14 per cent of all teenagers in the Washington, D. C. metropolitan area are listening between 8 and 11 p.m., and between 11 and midnight the figure is 11 per cent.

Obviously, a trend toward obscene and indecent programming would impel far more pernicious consequences in broadcasting than in any other medium. We would have a classic case of Gresham's Law in operation, the "bad"—the obscene or indecent material—undermining the availability and use of radio or TV for all those seeking the "good and the worthwhile." With such a trend, no one could ever know, in home or car listening, when he or his children would encounter obscene material or the most vile expressions serving no purpose but to shock, to pander to sensationalism.

The utility of our communications marvels would be curtailed—a consequence at odds with our statutory mission.

I would stress here that there are no countering benefits. For under the guiding criteria, obscene or indecent programming is defined as not only patently offensive by contemporary community standards but also without redeeming social value. So, far from making everything bland or reducing programming solely to a child's level—something which I stated is not involved—it is rather a case of driving away the responsible listener or viewer or his children for no benefit or gain whatever. Such a program matter, in itself, disserves the public interest, and that is why it is proscribed by law.

A responsible parent, through his own efforts and those of school or church institutions, seeks to instruct his child concerning the values and beauty of sex—the importance of the emotional factors that make the purely physiological event so meaningful. He does not want that effort frustrated by the child's inadvertent reception of broadcast material that panders sex in a salacious, smutty fashion. All parents must at some time instruct their children concerning indecent language—that it really indicates a poverty of vocabulary, an oral illiteracy. But such efforts would be greatly thwarted if the child finds that such language is accepted and used very frequently on radio and television.

I simply do not feel that this medium with its great potential for educating, informing, and entertaining need be a vehicle for smut.

The law proscribes both obscene *and* indecent programming, and there is a difference. Obscene programming is material which, taken as a whole, appeals to a prurient interest in sex. For example, while *LADY CHATTERLEY'S LOVER* has been adjudged “not obscene” as a book, graphic depiction of the sex scenes described in the book on a television program would raise an entirely different and much more serious question.

Significantly, the Supreme Court has made clear that “each method tends to present its own peculiar problems” and that different rules are appropriate for different media of expression. Quite obviously, nothing can appeal to the prurient interest of a pre-puberty child so we must apply the term “indecent.”

Suppose that a disc jockey or a person being interviewed, for sensational or shock purposes, began using so-called four-letter expressions. “Listen to this (blank) record” or “It's no (blank)

good." You can fill in the blanks with the appropriate Anglo-Saxon adjective, verb, or noun. These expressions are "utterly without redeeming social value" and patently offensive, taking into account the nature of broadcasters.

There is also the issue of what the Commission should do with a *pattern* of smut operation, as against isolated occurrences. We are dealing with a field impressed with the public interest. This is a highly sensitive area, in light of the First Amendment and the salutary ban on censorship by the Commission.

There is, however, precedent which supports denial of renewal of a broadcast license for presenting smut during a substantial period of the day on the grounds that the programming is patently offensive by contemporary community standards and does not "... serve the needs and interests of the area." Future cases involving a like pattern of operation can be dealt with under the same criteria.

I have dwelt at length on the agency's role because that is *my* responsibility. There is also the industry's role and that of responsible community groups. While the community's role and that of the industry's may be briefly stated, they are every bit as important—probably more so. The broadcast industry must be on guard against obscene or indecent programming. It must resist the temptation to make a buck out of the sensational and the dirty. Remember that broadcasting is a high calling. And from those I've met in the industry, I'm hopeful that they will recognize the wisdom of turning their backs on the sordid. That's the way I'd prefer it, by the way. In the final analysis, and by the standards of my own philosophy, effective, meaningful *self*-regulation is still the best regulation.

The decisions by station owners in this field could well have reverberations throughout the entertainment world. Broadcast revenue is an important source of income for moviemakers. If broadcast licensees refuse to accept offensive motion pictures, I am convinced that there will be no dearth of acceptable, entertaining, interesting, and stimulating program material. There's a lot of non-prurient material available to the industry, material which is enjoyable and stimulating without exploiting sex and perversion. And I don't buy that business about there being only a limited amount of creative talent which is hard-pressed to keep up with demand. Some of the newer films—no, not *Curious Yellow*, but other big financial successes on small budgets—tell me that talent will emerge to supply whatever the theaters and TV stations say

they require. I'm convinced that much potential talent exists awaiting such opportunity.

You can help by letting the broadcasters know that you care—by letting them know that you care enough to complain to the Federal Communications Commission if a station abuses its programming responsibilities. In no small measure the fate of our system rests with you.

The President of the Motion Picture Association recently complained that the proliferation of "sexploitation" movies was in large part due to the fact that they were making money, that there was a substantial audience for such pictures. Along the same lines, a recent newspaper article facetiously referred to "tweeny" writers, whose job it is to think up high-flown, dull, philosophical dialogue to go *between* the explicit sex scenes and thus assuage the guilt of those attending this type of film.

The Commission cannot do the whole job. And I know that it is tempting to try to live above problems of this nature. But without the support and active participation of the broadcast audience, we may lose the battle to keep our broadcast house in order.

# AN ANATOMY OF TELEVISION NEWS

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REUVEN FRANK

---

Mr. Agnew's Des Moines speech on November 13, 1969 has made him better known than any other Vice President in living memory. It also has made me better known than I care to be.

Ever since November 13, we relatively anonymous men who administer broadcasting news organizations have been identified and sought out by reporters and academics. Our opinions are solicited on the acts of government, our justifications explored for things we do, and access to our files requested for content analysis.

Meanwhile, the people we employ to gather news for television spend too much of their time speaking about television news to ladies' meetings, not what they were hired for at all. I have never quarreled with the proposition that what we do in television news is a matter of legitimate public interest and concern, but it is hard to get your day's work done if so much of it is spent on the telephone.

By describing us administrators as a dark conspiracy, the Vice President has turned us into the new glamor boys. This has its attractions. *TV Guide* has even suggested that Mr. Agnew reversed the gradual downward trend in the Nielsen rating of the *Huntley-Brinkley Report*. If that be true, I stand forever in his debt.

---

**REUVEN FRANK**, president of NBC News, has won numerous Television Academy Awards (the *EMMY*), for best news programming. For many years he was executive producer of the Huntley-Brinkley program and of the national political conventions coverage.

This article is based on a February 17 speech to the Yale University Political Union that Mr. Frank addressed as a Poynter Fellow.

Mr. Agnew's Des Moines speech provoked many questions. Should television bring journalistic methods of selection and analysis to an important presidential statement as soon as it is made? Was the Vice President implying a threat to broadcasting? Has broadcasting been frightened off? Is there enough diversity of tone in the basic broadcasting news reports?

These are all good questions, but they have been gone over and over in the intervening weeks and I see very little purpose in adding one more voice, one more set of opinions, one more exposition. Let me instead try to find something new to discuss, even if I fail to say anything very new about it.

Quite apart from the issues he raised, and to me more important, the Vice President by his speech focused attention on television network news as an institution in modern American life. He did not implant criticism so much as crystallize it. He was in my mind less a creator than an example and a stimulator of something that had already existed between the television news craft and its audience since the Democratic National Convention at Chicago in August, 1968.

#### POWER TO COMMAND?

From what I have heard and seen during the last 20 years, criticism of television news increased after the last Democratic convention, and again after the Agnew Des Moines speech. It also seemed to me to change in tone and even in origin.

Most of the criticism I myself experienced in the early years came from snobs of various kinds, non-watchers, people who enjoyed tastes they considered uncommon. Since 1968, with a new but similar wave since last November, most of the critics identify themselves with common tastes and preferences and life patterns.

They quite aggressively proclaim themselves members of what the President has seen fit to call the "silent majority." Both kinds of criticism existed from the beginning, of course, but the weight has shifted.

The earlier criticism usually revolved around one of three themes. First, television commands a very large audience and therefore has a duty to bring to its attention something they do not know that the criticizer finds very interesting or important or close to some cause he is promoting.

The answer is that television does not command an audience of any size. It *achieves* its audiences—one viewer at a time. Whatever

your private predisposition leads you to believe about the methods of achievement, these methods do not always work. Each American has some other choice.

Anyone who believes that television *commands* audiences the way canned music does in elevators should re-examine his own commitment to the right of people, including TV watchers, to elect their own governments.

Almost invariably, whenever some special point of view has been placed before a large audience, the audience has immediately become small. And while I apologize for using an Agnew word like "snob," it seems to fit.

The second general critical approach of this older group is that television has more *power* than any previous medium in history. This is an accurate statement, but unwarranted as criticism. Every new medium has been the most powerful of all time—*up to that time*. Each has widened the reach of the previous media, or the impact of the information presented, or both—movable type, news magazine, picture magazine, radio, newsreel. What will follow television in the evolution of media of communication I have no idea, but it will by definition be the most powerful in history.

The argument about the power of television is usually adduced to support a position that television news should somehow diverge from the basic news disciplines developed primarily for and by newspapers. Such criticism usually suggests in conclusion that some report be withheld or should have been.

Although I believe that most of the development of American television has been inevitable, the adoption of newspaper rules by television news people was in large part a conscious act by a small group of men, principal among them my predecessor and teacher, the late William McAndrew. He and some others believed, when it was still conceivably a matter of choice, that the only alternatives to carrying over into television the traditions of American news would be bad alternatives, which imply a superior wisdom to filter news, and objectives inimical to journalism's traditions.

#### NEWS: A HAPPENING

In a similar discussion recently, I felt I ought to define what I understood news to be, and to outline what I thought was its position in the American process. I do not propose it as any kind of ultimate wisdom, but it is the best I have been able to do in 20 years, and I should like to repeat it.

*News records change.* News, to be news, must *happen*; it may not merely exist. From time to time a continuing situation becomes news because it had escaped attention until that time. In this case, the news is the discovery. What happened is that somebody found out.

*News is change as seen by an outsider.* He may like it or dislike it, but he may not consider himself a part of it. He tries to see, and talk about what he has seen, without reference to whether he likes it or dislikes it.

That is the key to professional journalism, to journalism as a profession. In this the reporter is never entirely successful. He is a person and not a thing. All news involves only human beings and their fallibilities, the participants, the reporters, the audience.

*News is change as seen by an outsider in behalf of other outsiders.* These are the people the reporter reports for, the viewers, the hearers, the readers. When they are participants they often tend to dislike the report, usually complaining it is incomplete. They do not mean it did not tell them everything they wanted to know, because they already know everything they want to about what happened. They took part in it. *They mean it did not tell other people, the outsiders, what the insiders wanted known.* But an insider in one situation will be an outsider in all others, and in those outside situations the news he gets is about as much as he wants or is interested in.

*News is change which is interesting.* If it is uninteresting it cannot be news. It cannot be news to anyone who is uninterested because he will not watch or listen or read. Importance does not make news, although if enough of the audience thinks something is important, *that* makes it interesting, and therefore news. No newsman ever achieved success by grabbing people by the throat, saying: "Pay attention, dummy. This is important."

Roughly as I have defined it, news is a vital part of the American process.

### NEWS: A CATALYST

Now let us consider news in relation to the Constitution. It is clearer in its aims than in its instructions. That is why the Constitution has changed so little while the United States has changed so much. It might be worth considering that perhaps all those changes would have taken place under a different Constitution.



But that would have meant changing the Constitution itself each time, and some of those times might have caused violence.

As it is, this simple document has allowed for 200 years of rapid, revolutionary, and often unexpected changes within American society. As it stands, the document does for Americans of the late twentieth century world what it did for Americans of the late eighteenth century world, by allowing change, but not changing.

By accident, by inadvertence, by social need, news in its American form became immediately a part of this process. Not because people in news are endowed with special capacity, but because they fulfilled the function the conditions demanded.

News has taken part in the process as a catalyst. Each change happened because news as it is understood in the United States was part of it. But as always with catalysts, news was unchanged by the change; it was the same after the change as it was before. The changes in news, and there have been many, have been made by forces acting on news itself, forces like competition, expansion, technological change, and the public preferences for speed.

To boil it all down, the essence of traditional American journalism at its best—and, in my opinion, at its most useful to our society—is *an artificial innocence*. As individuals, of course, we have ideas of what we prefer. More important but less often discussed, we have ideas about the effect of what we report. We think about *impact*—but we must pretend as well as we can that we do not. We force ourselves to believe that we would prefer to report the world as we would like to see it, even at the cost of impact.

This leads to some discussion of media “use.” By the choice of this word, “use,” rather than others available, and by its context in repeated references, the word has become an accusation. Anyone who has news he wants to disseminate tries to “use” the media. Let us take a Dick and Jane primer example. A lady reporting a lecture scheduled for a future meeting of a small suburban women’s group “uses” the media when she sends a notice to her local weekly.

Some of you may find this approach simple-minded. Each of you may have a general view of the ills of our world or a specific condition that outrages you, and you wonder how television news will combat that. But it is by following these patterns that American television news avoids being the conspiracy the Vice President says it is. Television can indeed be a powerful medium and the purposeful use of this power for power would be a frightening idea even if the ends were noble.

That is why so many of us tend to avoid associating with people who measure people. As part of our new glamor, we are invited especially often these days to sit with society's measurers in exotic places so they can tell us about the impact of what we do.

My colleague, Richard Salant of CBS News, turned down one such invitation because of what he calls a wall of separation that must stand between journalists and those who claim to be expert in the impact of journalism upon the public.

I sympathize with many honest and concerned people who look on this approach as irresponsible. I have reviewed it to myself many times. But always I return to the unacceptability of the only possible alternative—news as a conscious instrumentality of social control.

By following its own rules of craft at its own pace, television news reporting has expanded the awareness of America to the world around it immeasurably. The Hungarian rebellion and the Suez war, two concurrent events in late 1956, may have provided the first really massive example. The Vietnam war is the most obvious. In between were the opening of Africa, the independence of Algeria, the invasion of Czechoslovakia, the famine in Biafra. . . . What would these and countless other events have signified, not only to the American mind but to the American conscience, without the special ability of television to make each viewer participate in the event he sees? I refer to news subjects abroad because such domestic matters as hunger, disorder, injustice, pollution, document my argument too easily and too well.

But those who criticize television yet do not watch are unaware. Not watching, they give no credit. Time after time groups get together to tell television how much more it ought to expound on subjects that television has brought into the American home, sometimes as an exclusive. Most recently it was a committee that included Arthur Goldberg, John Charles Daly and Gregory Peck.

Part of the panel's statement was reported in the February 1 issue of the *New York Times*. "The panel criticized the communications media for increasing 'the flow of information without providing the background within which this increased flow might be interpreted.' "

Quite a change to those of us who remember back a few decades, when those concerned with foreign affairs accused American journalism of encouraging a generation of yahoos and fostering isolationism through ignorance. The cry then was: There must be

more room in daily news reporting for the world around us; we must know and be ready.

Not because of that criticism but because people became interested, coverage of foreign affairs increased. News, whether as a business or as a social subgroup, gauges audience interest through trial and error, and very fast. When true to its own traditions of craft, it is always pushing the limits of this interest, then drawing back when rebuffed.

The interest of Americans in the world around them was broadened by World War II and subsequently by almost every recorded event. It was in this atmosphere of increased interest in foreign news that television pushed interest from the cold war and its geography to Asia and Africa—and into the Antarctic, if that's your idea of foreign news.

Now the complaint is that people do not understand the news they get. It seems to me they understand as well as they want to, perhaps too well if the conclusions of the large public are not one's own, are indeed counter to one's own, and work against one's dearly held plans and wishes for what ought to be.

Back to the *Times* quoting Justice Goldberg's panel:

"In-depth coverage of foreign affairs should appear on a regular basis and not have to compete with spot news." (We thought and continue to think it is a big deal that we present spot news from abroad so completely and so fast at so much cost and so much effort.)

I quote again: "An increase is needed in the special correspondence devoted to foreign affairs by the large metropolitan newspapers and the wire services and on the networks."

The panel report's specific point of departure is that what happened in Vietnam, the making of foreign policy without public participation, could not have happened had there been more of the sort of information it espouses. This is an unproved proposition.

To the degree popular feeling exists on either side of the issue of our presence in South Vietnam, and that has been quite an intense degree from time to time recently, it is directly attributable to the amount of information given to—shoved at—the public. Especially information transmitted by television.

Critics on each side of that issue have been at us for showing too much, as well as too little. Too much fact, and too little background. And by background is usually meant the kind of debating

points that would bring people who receive the facts around to the point of view of the criticizers.

So we are led to the paradox of people, sensitized by television to specific issues in our world, criticizing television for not enough exposure of these issues—issues they would not have known about, or at least would have known less about without the medium. Please understand that when I say television, I do not mean what is done by people who work in television. Their limits are set within the narrowest of ranges, much narrower than any other medium I know of. Limits of physical capacity, audience imperative, and the internal sociology of American commercial television as an institution.

Rather, I am talking about the box itself. The principal impact of television, by far its greatest contribution to and participation in recent changes in American life, results from its existence. Once it was invented, developed, engineered and put in the kind of production to bring it within reach of the whole public, what happened to it and on it seems to me inevitable and probably should have been predictable, step by step. Predictable for better or worse.

When I try to review two decades of direct employment inside American television network news, I find it hard to recall a major decision that could have been made otherwise. I remember many major decisions that were made, tried, and failed, and no one remembers them. Others were made and succeeded, and contribute to the present shape of what we see. What seemed at the moment a flash of insight by a genius with a name and face appears in retrospect the irreversible development of an institution evolving. And it is worth noting that my own experience of criticism during those two decades is that *most critics are really saying they wish television had not been invented in the first place*. I often consider this a sound and valid criticism and an understandable wish, but it is not much help to me in planning or reviewing my daily work.

#### NEWSPRINT VS. TELEVISION

The third stream of what I think of as the older criticism, the kind I was used to until recently, had to do with comparison to news in print, less comparison usually than analogy. This needs less attention than it used to because at least in my experience it is diminishing, as those who remember the days before there

was television pass on to be succeeded by generations to whom television always existed.

There are serious differences between print and television, and analogy often breaks down on them. It is possible for each man to read at his own pace; he must watch at the pace the television material appears. It is possible to skip reading a report which is uninteresting or even repugnant, or to reread what is hard to understand, or to put aside for another time what one wants to read another time. None of this is possible on television. These differences should be obvious. They may be so obvious they are usually left out of account.

A newspaper, for example, can easily afford to print an item of conceivable interest to only a small percentage of its readers. *A television news program must be put together with the assumption that each item will be of some interest to everyone who watches.* Every time a newspaper includes a feature that will attract a specialized group, it can assume a little bit more circulation. To the degree a television news program includes an item of this sort—like a feature on playing bridge or a column on collecting stamps—*it must assume its audience will diminish.* The implications of this can be left for each of you to figure out for himself.

Perhaps it is worth looking at this way: *Print exists in space, broadcasting in time.*

Very little time. An hour is roughly five thousand words, more than most people read out of most newspapers, less than most critics would consider enough to inform them. Although I may sound apologetic, it is farthest from my mind. What television reporting does best it does incomparably. Its capacity to transmit experience has changed our time and made it unique. Almost all our problems are old in history, but never before have they been so poignantly appreciated—or acutely resented.

#### MESSINGER OR MESSAGE?

This brings us to the more recent criticism, the kind that followed the Chicago convention and the Agnew speeches. It had been building up for years before that, among people who felt all the ills of the country and the world *happen* to them because they turned on their sets. They *experienced* the problems, to repeat, they did not learn about them. And, to repeat again, this was not because of what television reporters do and did, but *because television*

*exists*. This more recent criticism blames the messenger for the message.

In some circles, especially the Washington outs, it is "in" these days to describe the Administration's constituency as middle-income, middle-class, middle-aged and middle-west. Is this the golden mean so avidly sought by our good Greek friends, as Hubert Humphrey would call them?

As caricatures they look golden, and they can be mean. But close up, one at a time, as individuals, they look threatened and frightened. And what makes them feel frightened, what they have concluded threatens them, is the box itself, television.

With the current collapse of the politics of coalition they have risen to the top. People who measure people may not find they are a majority but they seem to be a plurality. And although they like to think of themselves as silent, the evidence is not convincing.

A ghetto riot in Newark now happens to substantial white burghers in middle American cities whose non-white populations are less than five per cent, and that's how public officials are elected. This offers only one of the striking examples of television reporting that is received as personal experience, too often bad experience. All the real and presumed ills of modern America are inextricably associated in the minds of millions with *how* they learned about them. The minds have finally been bogged.

Sometimes there is a total refusal to believe what is shown. It violates cherished values, therefore it must be wrong. It is fixed; it is staged; because it must not be. These are not the snobs reacting, but the overwhelmed, their letters sometimes lashing out in what seems to be a blind fury. But one must see that the fury is an expression of anguish. What's happening to the country? Why don't you give us some good news?

The logical answer must sound glib to them, because it deals with facts and the needs are emotional. There is folk wisdom about good news: No news is good news. And, therefore, I suggest, good news is no news. Too glib and too true. The *Times* is owned by a conglomerate these days, but it sometimes is still the great thunderer of Fleet Street, especially on subjects like this. A few weeks ago, the *Times* said good news is no news, and this is how it said it:

It did not require the prophetic writings of Marshall McLuhan to uncover the fact that press and television are not passive recording instruments, with or without distortion, of the events they observe. Their presence, and still more the prospect of what they

will make of their presence, may effect objective alterations in the events themselves...The reason is that these observers are on the lookout for 'news,' a specialized and competitive commodity, which it is to some extent within the power of the actors in the event to supply or withhold according to their judgment of their interests. 'News' includes all things counter, original, spare, strange; things striking and shocking; things people are avid to learn about. The exception is news; the normal is not news; yet we live in a world in which the normal must by definition occur more often than the exceptional...

Many would say that press and television should improve their criteria of selection. So no doubt they should, being like everything else imperfect. But even if they do not, the presentation of news has a certain in-built corrective...Fleet Street deals in as perishable a commodity as Covent Garden market. When stale it is rejected; violence itself will only be reported when it is unexpected.

Compare all this with some recent statements before the National Press Club by Dr. W. Walter Menninger, an eminent member of an eminent family of American psychiatrists and an eminent member, also, of the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, the Milton Eisenhower commission.

The news media...should have some awareness of how news will be perceived and how the play of certain highly-charged emotional issues can raise or lower the level of tension and the likelihood of violence...

If we are to find unity, to bring people together, we must help everyone realize that all human beings on this earth have many things in common—our anatomy, our physiology, our psychology, and motivating desires to achieve pleasure and avoid pain as much as possible in this frustrating and painful world...

#### NEWS FOR A PURPOSE?

Early in his address, Dr. Menninger said, "The primary task of the news media is communication."

I don't think it is. Communication is not the task of the news media, but their method. He builds on this the duty to let those who would otherwise be violent—those groups who have otherwise been violent—have some access to the media, especially television. This is his form of assuming the large audience on command, and telling the media what should be done with this audience, an audience whose size is presumed to be a given constant whereas it is in fact a wild variable.

Because news on television is interesting, it should be made to do social good—which I take two steps more and say the social good would make it uninteresting and therefore defeat the stated purpose. It seems to me axiomatic that you cannot take advantage of an audience by driving it away.

But that is unimportant compared to changing the purpose of news. Now we come back to the artificial innocence that is the essential assumption of American journalism, to news being reported, by outsiders to an event, for other outsiders.

Insiders don't want news; they want propaganda. They want to convince, not to inform. They will give as much information as convinces, and withhold all information that contradicts. Being interesting seems to them an invalid criterion, and the free choice of each individual among millions to watch or not to watch seems to them an irrelevancy.

I single out Dr. Menninger's criticism not because he is the least and easiest of the criticizers; but because he is substantial, concerned, and worth attention. The only easy part of his criticism was the proposal that newsmen be licensed, like doctors and lawyers. (One is tempted to go along provided he includes referral, fee-splitting, and golf on Wednesday afternoons.)

Even in his call for licensing he draws false reasons. The comparison between the journalist, who never acts alone, and the doctor or lawyer, who always does, cannot hold up. The reasons for licensing doctors and lawyers are not comparable to his reasons for wanting journalists licensed.

His most serious criticism of news, especially news on television, is that not all elements in our society have equal access. Medicine and law, which are licensed, are not without the same criticism. Next, he'll be licensing Congressmen. . .

I could spend the rest of the evening beating a dead horse for some jokes, but I am too busy planning the organization of the American Journalistic Association, with a political fund of several millions to combat socialized journalism.

Finally, all criticism of television news—and I do not consider Dr. Menninger as a member of either group I have mentioned—postulates television news would be better if it were duller. Because television news is so important it must also be a bore. But television news had to be interesting before it became important.

I often think it tends not to be interesting enough. There is a implication, expressed with special force in all kinds of overt crit-



icism, that television news be solemn, and every attempt to break that convention is greeted with suspicion and hostility.

But we live in a world where the true theater of the absurd is the newsreel theater. Do you know a liberal or a conservative who would be willing to hold still for this approach? We in television news may have painted ourselves into this corner, perhaps because we descend so directly from radio news broadcasting of World War II and the surrounding years.

There may seem to have been too much attention to answering criticism and not enough to how the very visible activity of television journalism is determined and what are its purposes. But criticism of television news is even more visible than the activity itself these days, and talking about it is as good a way as any for talking about what we in the field think we are doing and how and why we do it.

Most criticisms of *what* we do and *how* we do it in my experience have been either direct or implied criticisms of *why* we do it, or why we appear to do it, or why someone thinks we do it. I may have appeared to reject all criticism, but in fact the only class of criticism I reject is the one dealing with why.

Despite the sometimes massive national problems of any moment, this country is best served if the power over television news, if that is what it is, is in the hands of people who have no idea what to do with it.

# CULTURED BEGGARS AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

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JAMES DAY

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Public television is not above criticism. It needs it fully as much as it warrants it. But to be effective the criticism must take note of the peculiarities of this sixteen-year-old institution.

One of our most perceptive, not to say acidulous, critics recently turned her sharp eye upon public television, with devastating results. Marya Mannes, addressing an assemblage of public televisionaries—and referring to the institution as “the seedy beggar with the cultured voice”—scored it particularly for its failure to “raise the sights and the minds and the spirits of millions of Americans.” Moreover, she added, it wasn’t fun.

I would agree. Public television, on the whole, is indeed failing to raise the sights and the minds and the spirits of millions of Americans. It is also failing to raise their eyebrows, their tempers, or their temperatures. And for the reasons she gave: it lacks imagination, and it lacks guts. On the whole.

But there are exceptions and the exceptions must be noted and nurtured. We must not, as I fear Miss Mannes had done, judge all of public television by a single station, lest we fall into the conventional trap of judging all of America by a single city, particularly when that city is New York. New York is not Jacksonville. And Jacksonville is not Des Moines. And Des Moines is not Seattle. And public television, as any of its practitioners will remind you, begins and ends with the local station.

These stations have but one thing in common—the rattle of the tin cup excepted: a national program service that is one-half NET produced and one-half station produced (though it must be noted

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*JAMES DAY*, president of National Educational Television, based this article on his recent speech to the National Association of Educational Broadcasters.

that even in the NET half there are programs produced in stations, but produced under the supervision of NET).

A quick look at the national service would show that this season opened with *The Forsythe Saga*, a documentary on Rembrandt, a special on Peggy Lee, an original television production of the play *Glory! Hallelujah!*, a highly experimental and original work by playwright Paul Foster, and a live program called *Speak Out on Drugs*. Not too much fun, perhaps. But some.

And then there's *Sesame Street*. It's easy to overestimate the importance of this highly imaginative program. One of our distinguished leaders in public television told me on the night of its debut that he believed the social impact of *Sesame Street* upon America would be greater than the discovery of nuclear energy. Although he may be right, his appraisal seems extravagant. Yet what Joan Cooney and her staff have wrought seems to fit remarkably well what many believe public television ought to be. It's exciting. It's constructive. It's *fun*. *Sesame Street* may well prove to be the show that sweeps away the public indifference toward public television and shakes Congress by the lapels and says: "Look at us!"

If we have failed to produce the same spectacular results in our programs for the adult viewer, we seem at least to be moving generally in the direction of the critic's pointed finger. Very few would deny the value—and fun—of the Forsythe family. Even this season's prime talk show, *The Advocates*, is a cut above the five-men-behind-the-desk-talking-crises show, with an occasional bit of humor to boot.

So I find very little to apologize for in this season's rundown of *national* public television programs. If it doesn't cover the full range of what I would wish for a national service, neither does it fit the astringent description of public television offered by our severest critics.

Yet, why not more and funnier programs? There are reasons. If by more is meant a larger number of hours in the national network service, the answer is that, on the whole, the stations do not want more. And they control the network. Moreover, the general support grant to NET specifically limits its output to five hours of original programming a week.

But it is not simply a question of the quantity of nationally distributed programs. The national program service has no audience except as each individual station grants it an audience. That 180 individual (and individualistic) managers or program managers

should act with the same degree of courage is impossible. Moreover, one manager's courage is another's imprudence. Each has the power to judge what his audience will see or not see. That's the essence of the American system of public television—and like so many of our other democratic institutions, *it's imperfect*.

It can and does result in situations, I fear, that would dismay those who cry out for boldness in public broadcasting. For illustration, one need go no further back into history than a recent Sunday evening and that episode of *The Forsythe Saga* in which the rejected Soames commits rape upon his own wife in a brief scene that is absolutely crucial to an understanding of the characters Galsworthy created.

The scene in question has been seen by audiences all over the world, including Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, and it will soon be seen in the Soviet Union. But it would not have been seen in one community served by a public television station if the local manager had had his way. He felt the program was unsuitable for his audience and attempted to remove it. Imprudence? Or courage? I'm sure the manager who made that decision had little doubt that it was courage. Similar illustrations abound.

It may be dismaying to note that a documentary on Fidel Castro was seen on less than half of the public television stations in the country because most stations preferred to keep their audiences in ignorance rather than take the risk of misinforming them. It is at least as dismaying to realize that even our *blandest* programs stand only a fair chance of even getting to the stations on the interconnected national network that came into being at the beginning of 1969.

On 30 per cent of the nights public television has suffered a loss of service, mostly through preemption by A.T.&T. for better paying customers, oftentimes with insufficient notice to the local station to permit it any kind of planning for a suitable substitute program.

If these early months were designed as an experiment, the experiment has failed. The service provided by the telephone company to the public television system in this country is a national disgrace, exceeded in the broadcasting field only by the assignment of UHF channels to public television in two-thirds of our cities.

In those cities where public television programs have been preempted, it might very well be asked: How can public television raise sights and minds and spirits when there isn't any? Public television, I mean.

Perhaps it's proof that the larger part of the public is indifferent toward us when no howl of protest is heard to demand that the nation's largest public utility adequately serve the interests of the public's television system. I look forward to the day when *Sesame Street* is forced off the network lines to make way for a professional basketball game. If this show builds the kind of audience loyalty we anticipate for it, its preemption could result in a Mother's March—on A.T.&T., the FCC, or Congress.

So much for public television's national service. What of the local stations? There are 180 of them, some large (but not too large), some small, some barely able to reach an audience with a local program service—in short, some good, some not so good, some awful. That is to be expected. Most suffer from a paucity of funds. And while it is true that money is *not* a substitute for boldness and imagination, neither are highmindedness and good intentions sufficient to feed a transmission antenna. Some local stations have shown both boldness and imagination in their programming—and as a consequence, enjoy consequential audiences. They are the ones we point to when we tell each other public television begins and ends in the local stations.

But, despite the notable exceptions, the record of local programming is not a good one. For every bold news show—*Store Front Studio*, *Speak Out on Local Issues*—there are dozens of “know your public schools” discussions and “who's in town today” interviews vying for attention with network, not local, programs on the commercial channels in that community—and failing.

One might ask in passing, how is it possible to compete locally with the slickness of network television? I suspect the answer lies in the word *realness*, in portraying the world as it is, showing real people. That, I think, is how you compete with slickness and superficiality.

We talk much of the pre-eminence of the local station in the American system of public broadcasting. It is one of the major tenets of our Holy Writ, the Carnegie Commission Report. It is well, I think, to remind ourselves from time to time why it is important.

It is designed primarily to permit the exercise of local control upon national programs—to place a steady and stalwart hand upon the local spigot of the national network plumbing, not to say a cautionary eye upon the input valve. We do not deny every station's right, if not obligation, to exercise its discretionary judgment, when we speak of the importance of the local station. What is

intended is not cautionary but creative—the creation of local programming that in its very *localness* has particular relevance and meaning to the local station's constituency.

Here, it seems to me, is where the record of public television, both in boldness and imagination, leaves much to be desired.

Here is where the greatest opportunities exist for the exercise of social responsibility, the challenge of public broadcasting that excites the imagination and stirs the creative juices. Here is where our own sights must be raised before we can raise the sights of others.

We who serve in public broadcasting must be mindful of the limits of our role as well as the opportunities. We are not the surrogate consciences of our public, determining what they shall have because we feel it best for them. But neither are we the surrogate voices of our public, telling others what that public wants and will have. That public—cantankerous, radical, thoughtful, timid, conservative, diverse, generous—will speak for itself in a million voices.

We must interpret those million voices. But we must not permit the loudest to be taken for the whole. Above all, we must not protect that public as though its taste were not as good as ours, its intelligence not as keen, its judgment not as wise.

More harm is done in the name of protecting the weak and the innocent than has ever been done by the malefactions of all the writers and speakers in the course of human history. Let us not add to that sorry litany of arrogant acts, too many of which are excused by the desire not to offend. If that is to be our criteria, then I fear we shall fail miserably in raising the sights and the minds and the spirits of millions of Americans.

Let us be less concerned with the offense given to others and more to the offense to ourselves. As public broadcasters we should be easily offended. Not by strong language, but by weak reasoning. Not by our inevitable mistakes but by the timorous among us who dare nothing for the fear of making mistakes. Not by the sight of the human body, but by man's desecration of that body through violence. Not by the expression of those thoughts we find offensive, but by the inoffensive (so-called) who have no thoughts and who substitute slogans for convictions.

If we aren't going to be concerned as broadcasters, then who is? Perhaps in the answer to that question lies the key to the social responsibility of public broadcasting.

# THE EDWARD M. KENNEDY SPEECH: THE IMPACT OF A PRIME TIME TELEVISION APPEAL

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MICHAEL J. ROBINSON  
and PHILIP M. BURGESS

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When Senator Kennedy drove his Oldsmobile sedan off a bridge near Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, the morning of July 19, 1969, he was front runner in the public opinion polls for the Democratic Presidential nomination in 1972.<sup>1</sup> Seven days later, all that was changed. The drowned female companion, the ten lost

The following article, and the events on which it is based, obviously constitute "unfinished business." It is not the intent of the editors to isolate by premature focus a highly charged political topic that remains unresolved. It was felt that the Ohio study of television's impact definitely warranted attention, and the *QUARTERLY* intends to seek follow-up articles as this important story continues to unfold.

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hours before reporting the accident, and the enigmatic circumstances surrounding his midnight ride had cost the Senator dearly.

A nationwide poll, conducted by CBS News and released just thirteen days following the accident, indicated that Kennedy's "unfavorable" image had increased 20 points from 18 per cent to 38 per cent; 84 per cent of those responding indicated that the incident had damaged Kennedy's prospects for Presidential victory in 1972.<sup>2</sup> Polls conducted by Gallup and *Newsweek* showed similar decline in public esteem for the Senator.<sup>3</sup>

Before the polls were reported, Senator Kennedy requested from Massachusetts television stations—and received, the same day—time to address “the people of Massachusetts.” But it's a public fiction that his prime time address (7:30 EDT) reached so limited a constituency. The statewide address was carried nationally at the networks' request, and, despite the Senator's multiple references to the “people of Massachusetts,” was quite appropriately geared for the national electorate.

The speech, of course, attempted to reestablish contact with an inquisitive and disaffected public. *To reexamine the degree of disaffection among the general public as a result of the accident and to measure the efficacy and outcome of the Senator's television appeal was the purpose of this study.*

Nearly two weeks before the Kennedy accident, we had drawn a simple random sample ( $N = 229$ ) from the Columbus, Ohio telephone directory. After learning on the July 25 evening news that Kennedy would make a TV address at 7:30, we quickly constructed and pretested a questionnaire and then called on several of our colleagues to assist in conducting a post-address telephone survey of our previously selected respondents. We instructed our interview team of four, and the first telephone call was made seven minutes after the Senator completed his speech.

We successfully interviewed 76 per cent of our sample, losing 24 per cent through telephone hang-ups, no answers, and disconnects. Although more than three-fourths of our sample was interviewed the night of the speech, the final interview was completed on Tuesday, July 29, four days after the speech. However, an examination of the distribution of responses did not reveal any differences between early and later interviews.

Ninety-nine per cent knew about the accident—in itself, an interesting finding. When compared with studies of information diffusion, the impact of this event becomes all the more vivid. Senator



Kennedy's accident reached a larger proportion of our population than did the death of Senator Robert Taft (1953),<sup>4</sup> the first stroke suffered by President Eisenhower (1957),<sup>5</sup> the admission of Alaska into the Union (1958),<sup>6</sup> or even the launching of Sputnik I (1957).<sup>7</sup> Only the news of the deaths of Franklin Roosevelt and John Kennedy was more thoroughly and rapidly disseminated.<sup>8</sup>

The diffusion in part was so heavy because the Kennedy accident broke during the Apollo 11 moon venture. It was broadcast by all networks for three solid days when the media were receiving much attention.

We found that the accident substantially undermined Kennedy's electoral support, at least for the present. Each respondent was asked about his willingness to support ("vote for") Edward Kennedy at any future time for President.

TABLE I  
The Accident and Kennedy's Potential Voting Support

	<i>Before</i>	<i>After</i>
Could Support Him .....	49%	36%
Could Not Support Him .....	45%	55%
Didn't Know .....	6%	9%
	100% (N=167)	100% (N=167)

These figures, consistent with those obtained in earlier polls, were further refined. We recoded those persons who went from a position of strong support to reluctant support, or from reluctant support to reluctant non-support, or, finally, from reluctant non-support to strong non-support. The resulting index of decreasing voter support shows that Senator Kennedy's loss of 13 per cent, as in Table 1, is transformed into a loss of 21 per cent when examined more thoroughly through the more sensitive index of decreasing voter support. Most startling of all, perhaps, is the finding that out of every four who supported Kennedy prior to the accident, one had left the fold, at least up until television show time!

Another bit of datum indicates the severity of the public's judgment. During his speech, the Senator suggested that "if the people of Massachusetts wanted" him to do so,<sup>9</sup> he might resign from the Senate. Among our respondents we found that 15 per cent felt

resignation was in order and would ask him to take leave were they citizens of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.<sup>10</sup>

We note, however, that those who wanted his resignation were either longtime Republicans or non-Kennedy family supporters. Only one Democrat who also considered himself a Kennedy family supporter felt compelled to call for the Senator's resignation.

### PERCEPTIONS OF THE SENATOR'S ROLE IN THE ACCIDENT

The *predispositional bias* noted above repeats itself throughout much of the study. Those favorably predisposed toward Kennedy, or the Kennedy family, or the Democratic Party usually behaved differently from those who were not. As Table 2 shows, *perceptions of the accident itself were significantly associated with the respondent's party identification.*

TABLE 2  
Party Identification Influences the Respondent's Perception  
of Kennedy's Role in the Accident

	<i>Democrats</i>	<i>Independents</i>	<i>Republicans</i>
Senator was an innocent victim . . . . .	66%	45%	26%
Senator was guilty, but just unlucky . . . . .	17%	23%	26%
Senator was seriously guilty . . . . .	17%	32%	44%
	100% (N=29)	100% (N=31)	100% (N=23)

However, on the basis of those responding, Senator Kennedy was deemed seriously guilty by more than one in three. And even among Kennedy's early supporters there were those willing to see the Senator as very guilty indeed. It was from this group that the greatest defection from Senator Kennedy occurred. And later on, it was among individuals in this group that the Kennedy speech would enjoy the least persuasiveness.

We found that a majority of our respondents had heard the speech on TV—48 per cent had seen it live, another five per cent saw the replays on the news shows. (Two persons reported hearing the speech on radio.) A large proportion who had not tuned in the

speech expressed regret they had missed it. We estimate that the speech reached at least 50 million viewers. At this writing we have no Neilsen data on which to base a more accurate estimate of the national audience size.

Apart from size, the most significant aspect of the television audience was the *absence of any observable bias in exposure*. While the communication literature abounds in studies of viewing selectivity, we found that Kennedy supporters were no more likely to watch the speech than Kennedy non-enthusiasts. Moreover, we found that those who defected after the accident were no more likely to watch than those who opposed him from the start. There was no selectivity in viewing between those changing their voting intentions and those standing pat. Controls for sex also proved insignificant. In short, almost everyone seemed just about as willing as the next to watch the Kennedy presentation.

Despite theories that television does little to convert the opinions or behaviors of the viewers,<sup>11</sup> 20 per cent of those seeing the Senator reported that the speech had altered their attitudes about the accident or the Senator's role in some way. Of this 20 per cent, more than three-fourths were more favorably reoriented toward the Senator, becoming *less* disaffected about the accident. In fact, when we changed from a specific question about "the accident" to general questions about "the Senator," the viewers conceded that the speech had made them feel "better" about "the Senator."

TABLE 3

The TV Speech Has a Favorable Impact on Viewers Whose Feelings About the Senator Had Been Altered by Exposure

Felt Better .....	39%
Felt Worse .....	16%
Same .....	45%
	100%
	53 (N)

Although Senator Kennedy improved his "image" among his viewers, there is perhaps an even more important finding here. Of those respondents who saw the television speech and were asked whether they felt better or worse about "the Senator," 55 per cent reported that they had changed their attitude. This finding suggests that the speech, although it included no new content, was indeed

effective in eliciting changes in opinion. In fact, it was merely the Senator's appearance on screen that won him this increased support and sympathy. Nearly nine out of ten respondents who felt "better" about the Senator said that they felt better because "he admitted a mistake in front of the public." On the other hand, the Senator's mere appearance also cost him some support. Three out of four respondents who felt worse about the Senator did so because "he had gone on TV to save himself."

At this point, however, it appears that the changes can be explained more in terms of *perceptual bias*—in other words, *selective perception*. Kennedy did indeed regain some favor, but it was just that—*regained*. When we controlled for those who were longtime Kennedy supporters, we discovered that those "feeling better" about the Senator after the speech were those who felt "good" about him before the accident ever occurred. Table 4 shows that the propensity to feel "better" after the speech was significantly associated with previously established Kennedy loyalties.

TABLE 4  
The Favorable Impact of the Speech Is Greater for  
Kennedy Supporters

	<i>Kennedy Supporters</i>	<i>Kennedy Non-supporters</i>
Those feeling better after speech .....	72%	34%
Those feeling the same or worse .....	28%	66%
	100%	100%
	18 (N)	35 (N)

Later, we will find that this form of selective perception accounts for the overall increase in the Senator's potential Presidential support.

#### THE SPEECH AND VOTING INTENTIONS

We assumed from the start that the voting intentions would be more stable than would attitudes about the Senator. However, the speech itself did alter the voting intentions of 17 per cent of those who viewed it. Alteration or conversion, however, was not uni-directional.

Among the early opponents of the Senator, the speech made little difference. Two people were further repelled, one was somewhat impressed. Among the initial Kennedy supporters, the reactions were more marked. Senator Kennedy lost one of every four of his supporters following the accident but before the speech. Of those "loyal supporters" who defected after the accident and the events surrounding it (N=19), we found that nearly 50 per cent watched the speech (N = 9) and that Kennedy's speech was sufficiently persuasive or appealing to bring back five defectors.

However, Kennedy lost some support among his stalwarts following the speech. Of those who remained loyal even after the accident, two were so incensed by the speech that they defected, commenting that the Senator's speech was so contradictory—a *content consideration*—they could no longer go along with him. In other words, among supporters who heard the speech, Kennedy regained more than half of those who defected from him, but he had to sacrifice some loyal support to do it. Because the reason for post-speech defection was a matter of content, *i.e.*, contradictions between speech and formal statement, it appears a more effective speech could have been written.

TABLE 5  
The Negative Impact of the Accident Is Reduced by the  
Speech on All Respondents Who Heard the Speech

	<i>Before Accident</i>	<i>After Accident</i>	<i>After Speech</i>
Could support Kennedy at some future time for President . . . . .	55% N=87	43% N=87	49% N=87

Table 5 shows that among all viewers, regardless of their pre-dispositions toward Kennedy, the initial net loss due to the accident was cut exactly in half after the speech, while among non-viewers the level of support remained stable.

Of course, our expectations that the speech would not increase Senator Kennedy's pre-accident popularity were justified. But the speech did help him to cut his losses significantly. Although our voting intention index was still down 12 per cent after the speech, it was up nine per cent from a low of minus 21 per cent that it reached immediately following the accident. This upswing stemmed

primarily from longtime Kennedy supporters who, following their initial defection, returned in majority proportions.

What we have here is a "Brylcreem effect." Those who watched Kennedy and liked him originally were willing to "come back."

This reinforcement phenomenon is similar to the effect noted in John Kennedy's victory in the Great Debates of 1960. John Kennedy proved himself in the debates to longtime Democrats skeptical about his Catholicism and his maturity. *Television allowed both Kennedys to recapture those predisposed to them by party or tradition.* This occurred even though, by any measure of content, neither Kennedy performance was highly regarded as effective.<sup>12</sup>

The net impact of the accident was harmful to Edward M. Kennedy. His image was tarnished and his electoral power base reduced. But what of his speech? We cannot but believe that the Senator's only recourse was television.<sup>13</sup> Only television could reach most of the electorate with little advance notice. Everyone in front of a TV set that evening had two choices: watch the Senator or turn off the television. Television is the only medium which requires such overt action to avoid exposure.<sup>14</sup> This may explain why the audience was so heterogeneous and so evenly distributed in its predispositions.

Beyond audience composition, there is the question of the medium itself. We noted that the reasons offered by those who felt "better" after the Senator spoke were not reasons of content. In fact, "content" worked against the Senator. His willingness to appear on TV, to face the people he represented and to admit his mistake, seemed the quintessential motivation for improved sentiment. We suggest that less contradiction and more visible sentimentality might have done him even more good, because available research suggests that visual presentation is not only more credible but also more effective than aural or written modes.<sup>15</sup>

Also, our analysis of this speech suggest that much of the literature about the impact of TV and politics has failed to control for one important variable. Previous findings that television has little effect on political behavior or opinion, have tended to focus on political contests in which two-sided or competing sources of information are disseminated. The net result of these political speeches, not surprisingly, is low.<sup>16</sup>

But Kennedy's was a political speech of a different order. Nobody followed Kennedy's TV appearance to contradict his facts or to criticize his performance. The electorate was moved by a ten-minute

speech of little substantive merit or revelation. Yet one in four reported that the speech changed their minds about something. This is significant modification of opinion.

All of this brings to mind an earlier, but similar, political appeal on television. In 1952, Senator Richard Nixon found himself in scandal and eventually turned to TV to keep his vice-presidential nomination safe from recall. The "Checkers Speech" was directed information; nobody followed Dick Nixon either. And Nixon's presentation, a conglomeration of sentiment and patriotism in which content was conspicuous by its absence, most certainly could have been followed by successful hatchetwork. However, estimates of the impact of the "Checkers Speech" indicate that through it Nixon succeeded in salvaging his career.<sup>17</sup>

Both the Kennedy and Nixon telecasts went unchallenged by the "other side." In the Kennedy incident, the Republicans remained unusually reticent. Attacks on Kennedy's speech were to be found only in the print media (*Newsweek*, the *Washington Post*, etc.). But for political information, the electorate gives its best ear—if not both ears—to television.<sup>18</sup>

Kennedy's appeal reached the vast majority of non-attentives as onesided, "directed" information. It is not very surprising that Kennedy's appeal did make an impact, for it is well-established that general publics are most easily influenced by such types of directed communication.<sup>19</sup>

A final case of onesided communication suggests what TV might do, were "equal time" and commercial caution not such an integral part of the American television industry. In March 1954, Edward R. Murrow decided that television could help rid America of its then greatest villain, Senator Joe McCarthy. As a director of CBS and as the co-director and -producer of *See It Now*, Murrow solicited the help of the large CBS News staff in editing 20,000 feet of film of the Senator's previous three years in the Senate. The program, an admitted attack, was a most professional and provocative piece of onesided journalism.

McCarthy demanded satisfaction and CBS immediately lived up to its promise to give equal time. However, as Gilbert Seldes of *Saturday Review* admitted, equal time was too little too late. McCarthy had no film library, little professional staff. His entire production cost around \$6,000; Murrow spent considerably more. Besides, it was three weeks before McCarthy could assemble his

presentation. Communication was undeniably lopsided, if not totally one-sided.

We don't know whether Murrow's program actually signalled the end for McCarthy. Once again, as with the Nixon speech, social scientists were caught unprepared. No studies were undertaken to measure the impact of Murrow's one-night crusade with public opinion. However, several authorities regard the Murrow presentation as the seminal cause of McCarthy's fall from glory.<sup>20</sup> One appraisal appears safe. The program had substantially greater impact than one would imagine possible after reading much of the literature regarding television and politics.

It seems that all three—Nixon, Murrow, and Kennedy—made a wise choice in going on television to mobilize public support for their position. Each of them appeared on screen a humble, soft-spoken, and abject soul (we hesitate only a little to say "cool"). In fact, considering the three personalities in question, the humility displayed was in all cases somewhat out of character. Television helped to save Nixon in 1952; it helped to dislodge McCarthy in 1954; it helped Kennedy in 1969 despite the severity of his transgression. We can conclude that any man with some public notoriety who puts his case humbly before the television audience, *and puts it there knowing that nobody is going to pan him after the performance*, can only come out ahead, *regardless of what he has to say*.

#### NOTES

1. Cited in the *Cleveland Press*, July 31, 1969, p. 1.
2. *CBS Evening News*, Thursday, July 31, 1969.
3. *Cleveland Press*, *ibid*.
4. Otto Larson and Richard Hill, "Mass Media and Interpersonal Communications in the Diffusion of a News Event," *American Sociological Review*, 19, August 1954, 426-433.
5. Paul Deutschmann and Wayne Danielson, "Diffusion of Knowledge of the Major News Story," *Journalism Quarterly*, 37, Summer 1960, 345-355.
6. *Ibid*.
7. "Satellites, Science, and the Public," Ann Arbor Michigan: Survey Research Center, University of Michigan, 1959, 57 pp.
8. On the JFK assassination, see Bradley S. Greenberg, "Diffusion of News of the Kennedy Assassination," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 28, Summer 1964, 225-232. On the FDR death, see Delbert C. Miller, "A Research Note on Mass Communication," *American Sociological Review*, 10, October 1945, 691-694.
9. Unfortunately, the distribution of opinion on this issue was not probed in the calls the first night. Because of the time pressures of questionnaire construction, pre-testing, and interviewer training, neither researcher had reflected on this part of the speech until a later rebroadcasting. Consequently, the resignation issue was not added to the questionnaire until the next day's interviews.



10. This is a surprisingly high percentage. Following the Nixon "Checkers Speech" in 1952, Earl Mazo reports that less than one-half of one per cent of the telegrams to Nixon called for his removal from the Republican ticket.
11. The most thorough examination and review of the inabilities of mass media to convert is Joseph Klapper's *THE EFFECTS OF MASS COMMUNICATION* (New York: Free Press), 1965. However, the literature reviewed is dated, with studies indicating the insignificance of television's conversion or reforming potential in politics.
12. Elihu Katz and Jacob Feldman, "The Debates in the Light of Research: A Survey of Surveys," in *THE GREAT DEBATES* by Sidney Kraus (ed.), Indiana University Press, 1962, p. 218; and *Newsweek*, August 4, 1969, p. 23.
13. Roger Mudd, Capitol Hill correspondent for CBS News, advanced this "only hope" hypothesis immediately following the speech.
14. Gary Steiner, *THE PEOPLE LOOK AT TELEVISION* (New York: Knopf), 1963; Barbara Wand, "Television Viewing and Family Choice Differentials," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 32, 1968, 84-94. John P. Robinson, "Television and Leisure Time," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 33, Summer, 1969, 210-222.
15. D. C. Williams, J. Paul and J. C. Ogilvie, "Mass Media, Learning, and Retention," *Canadian Journal of Psychology*, Vol. II, no. 3, 1957.
16. Thistlewaite and Kamenetzky found, for example, that when presented with two-sided, "non-directed" communication, Air Force Cadets and high school students did not change their attitudes toward United States intervention in Korea. But when communication was one-sided, or "directive," attitudes were changed in the intended direction. Donald Thistlewaite and Joseph Kamenetzky, "Attitude Change Through Refutation and Elaboration of Audience Counterarguments," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, LI, 1955, 3-12.
17. See for discussion of the impact of the "Checkers Speech," Optowsky's *TV: THE BIG PICTURE* (New York: Dutton and Co.), 1961, p. 186. Optowsky also cites Emmett Hughes on the "saving" impact of the speech.
18. The most recent Roper poll about TV and sources of political communication indicates that at the national level, TV is unquestionably the first source of political information. When asking about first source of national political news, Roper obtained the following results:
 

TV	65 %	Magazines	5 %
Papers	24 %	People	4 %
Radio	4 %	Other	2 %
19. A classic series of studies dealing with this specific area of onesided presentation and general audiences appears in Carl Hovland, *et al.*, "Studies in Social Psychology in World War II," *Experiments in Mass Communication*, Vol. III, Princeton University Press, 1949.
20. Kurt and Gladys Lang discuss the Murrow program in their book, *POLITICS AND TELEVISION* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books), 1968, leaving the impression that the first blow struck in the struggle against McCarthy was this broadcast (chapter IV). Fred Friendly, the man who co-produced the program, also sees the speech as the initial and perhaps critical assault on McCarthy's political strength (*DUE TO CIRCUMSTANCES BEYOND OUR CONTROL*, New York: Random House, 1967, chapter 2).

# UHF: THE SLEEPING GIANT

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KENNETH D. TIVEN

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"There is nothing more illustrative of democracy than television because the people vote by watching the programs," George Cyr said one spring afternoon in Hartford, Conn., where he manages WHCT-TV, Channel 18. He later said that unfortunately people were voting against his station.

In Philadelphia Carl Anneke is more cheerful. "We aren't driving for mediocre profitability. We are driving for tomorrow on a solid foundation," said Anneke, who manages Kaiser Broadcasting's WKBS-TV, Channel 48. He expects his station to become profitable soon, since he is getting more votes than ever before.

"We will put this sleeping giant to use and in the years ahead we may have twice as many channels operating in cities where there are only two or three," was Newton Minow's assessment in 1961. In the same speech, the new Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission told the National Association of Broadcasters that television was a "vast wasteland."

Minow had just taken office and was optimistic about television's potential, especially the independent station. But if Cyr and Anneke are representative of today's independent Ultra High Frequency

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managers, Minow's optimism is no closer to reality than it was eight years ago.

As chairman, Minow pushed hard for UHF, and got the all-channel receiver legislation through Congress in 1962. But he failed with his deintermixture proposal, potentially a greater benefit to UHF owners.

While television has grown and prospered in its 20 commercial years, UHF has always lagged behind, although it is only four years younger and came into existence when there were only 108 Very High Frequency stations operating. By almost any indicator, quantitative or qualitative, UHF is television's stepchild.

The condition of UHF today, while improving, reflects its fragile childhood. Unloved and unwanted by many within the industry, it never learned to compete and so had to settle for second-class citizenship. Cyr and Anneke knew this when they got into UHF, just as did almost everyone else. They aren't satisfied, of course, and are attempting to change the situation. When they talk about where they are going, they begin with where they were. They are not trying to sidestep the difficulties ahead, but pointing out just how far they have come.

#### A GLANCE BACK

When World War II ended the freeze, the Federal Communications Commission had 150 applications for the new electronic miracle, which had been shunted aside by the war. By 1948, 108 stations were operating. But there had developed serious technical problems and an awareness that the geographical spread of 1,500 allocations in VHF might be too limited. This caused the FCC to freeze license allocations on Sept. 30, 1948.

While the Commission groped for a solution, eager audiences and advertisers enabled the 108 stations to prosper. Sufficient coaxial cable connections gave the radio giants a start toward networking. For the viewer, however, according to historian Erick Barnouw, it was a twilight period. Coverage was spotty: only 24 cities had two or more stations and most had one or none.

Under enormous pressure, in April 1952, the FCC ended its freeze with new regulations and technical changes to eliminate the interference of adjacent and co-channel assignments. To solve the allocation problem, the Sixth Report and Order created 70 new channels in the UHF spectrum. In retrospect, it appears the report had more appearance than utility. Said Congressman Emanuel Celler a decade

later: "By forcing UHF stations to compete with VHF stations that had become solidly entrenched during the prior four-year freeze... the Commission virtually doomed this new method of broadcasting at its inception."

The UHF owner was caught in an incredible double squeeze. He was expected to compete head-on with Vs in old and new markets, yet all the sets then in use were VHF. Nothing in the Report required dual-capability receivers. The UHF manager could but wonder at being in an industry where audience could watch only the competition.

VHF was permitted to use higher towers and more power as a result of the Report which negated the natural advantage of a comparable UHF station against man-made interference. Us were not given sufficient power to compete in coverage area—not that it really made any difference because suitable transmitting equipment was unavailable.

The networks provided mass entertainment for a national audience, which quickly developed a taste for *I Love Lucy* and *Arthur Godfrey*. The networks wanted the strongest affiliates—which meant Vs. Their logic was simple: the audience did not have UHF sets. The audience used similar logic: if the shows worth watching were on Vs, why buy a UHF set? Manufacturers saw that UHF sets weren't selling, so they didn't push them very hard: it was easier to sell the less expensive VHF-only set.

Furthermore, most manufacturers had invested heavily in station ownership and network ownership that was predominantly VHF, and saw no reason, therefore to encourage Us.

Such congenital defects, obvious to some from the beginning, were apparent to all by 1954 when 69 UHF licensees returned their construction permits. Within two years more than 90 UHF stations opened and closed, while VHF stations were booming. UHF did well only where there was no V competition—which meant their behavior was exactly the same as any affiliated VHF station.

Until Minow's term the FCC did not face the problem. Then the proposed solution was twofold: an all-channel bill to force manufacture of dual-receiver sets, and a deintermixture bill to remove unfair competitive situations by making a market all V or U. Before seeking the legislation, in 1961 the FCC undertook to demix eight markets—and promptly found itself in court.

In 1962, Gene Posner, president of then WXIX-TV, Channel 18

in Milwaukee, testified on the two bills. He told a Congressional committee that he had bought his station from CBS, which preferred a V as its affiliate. A 92 per cent conversion factor, however, had made it competitive as a network station. Posner summed up his plight:

Channel 18 is the only UHF independent non-network station operating against three VHF network stations in the country. . . . Although we have tried desperately to stem the tide of erosion of UHF, we have found that we are losing ground slowly but steadily. . . . because of two important factors: insidious rumors and gossip implied by our competitors to the effect Channel 18 is going black and doesn't have an audience. . . . Willful and misleading advertising, promotion and sale of VHF-only sets by large companies, such as Sears, Roebuck & Co., where price is the only factor and the public be damned.

Programming was also a problem, Posner said.

For some time now we have been trying to get NBC to feed us 40 minutes of the Jack Paar Show (not shown in Milwaukee). . . . We have offered to pay for the show and we have been told it is not in the interests of NBC to give us this show.

The lobby for the all-channel bill was reasonably well organized. Less certain was the fate of the deintermixture bill, although it would be more valuable because by implication it solved the all-channel problem. VHF stations protested, primarily on economic and technical grounds, although social and political rationales were employed just as readily and the anti-demix witnesses made an interesting group as they trooped to Capitol Hill. The engineering debate was acrimonious.

Many industry people were wary of Minow. After all, he had called TV a wasteland. They felt demixing was the first step to an all-UHF system. Minow assured Congress it was only "to insure that particular communities would not be limited to one-VHF station monopolies. . . ."

Congress asked Minow if he would forget demixing if the all-channel bill passed. Quick to realize that half was better than none, Minow answered: "It is the judgment of the Commission that it would be inappropriate in light of this important new development (all-channel) to proceed with the eight deintermixture proceedings . . . . On the contrary, a sufficient period of time should be allowed to indicate whether the all-channel receiver authority would in fact achieve the Commission's overall allocations goal."

Earlier in the same set of hearings, fellow Commissioner Robert E. Lee had said:

The failure to provide deintermixture in the markets under consideration and particularly if the Congress legislates against it, will indicate to the UHF operators the fact that they are fighting a losing battle and it would be wise of them to close their operation. . . .

The all-channel bill was passed and demixing faded away, probably forever. It was a replay of the Sixth Report and Order—halfway regulation and too late at that.

Nowhere did the all-channel legislation state what type of dial was to be used. Manufacturers chose for UHF a vernier dial rather than a click-type dial. It was cheaper to make, more difficult to use. It did not pretune a picture the way a VHF dial does. Instead, channel selection and fine tuning necessitated the tricky manipulation of one dial, often poorly calibrated.

Notwithstanding, things have improved for UHF; yet many people think it would be even better with tuner equality. Only last year, expensive sets started to come through with a better UHF dial. William Finklestein, a Washington lawyer for the All-Channel Television Society (ACTS), the UHF lobby, said, "Given equal programming, we are at a disadvantage. Of course, nothing is going to overcome inferior programming." He speaks for most UHF people when he says he would like to see a single dial for all channels.

#### THE MANAGERS' PERSPECTIVE

"I never thought I'd be managing a UHF station. I thought it was esoteric—not mass media, but I found out I was wrong," Carl Anneke said, describing his introduction to WKBS last year. With five UHF stations in major markets, Kaiser policy, according to Anneke, is "to compete with UHF vehicles on a VHF basis." The approach, he says, is scientific, an adaptation of the systems approach used in a variety of industrial operations owned by Kaiser.

"We spend a lot of time in the research of acquisitions and where they'll be programmed. We are on planned growth," says Anneke. Moments later he described his previous job as manager of a Los Angeles VHF, where "I ran it by the seat of my pants and it made lots of money."

Channel 48 in Philadelphia competes with three network Vs (one owned and operated by CBS), two independent Us, and a UHF educational station. The program schedule is a potpourri of what has worked in the past. The only serious local effort is a 30-minute

news show aired daily at 10 p.m., on independent stations a common practice. Local programming is hampered by a lack of studio space, a common ailment.

This programming philosophy says: "We are trying to get the greatest amount of appeal for the greatest number of people. We are trying to reach all strata of people at all income levels and groups." Translation: basically bland. The station puts a premium on youth, with a heavy children's schedule in the late afternoon, and in the evening shifts to what Anneke calls "transitional" and then adult programs.

Like many independent stations, WKBS suffers from a lack of good and varied program sources; it makes liberal use of what it has, syndicated off-network programs. Because there are so many episodes in a series it is no problem to run it five times a week in the same time slot, to build repetitive viewing. Some independents have been known to run half hour segments of the same show back-to-back, thus taking strip programming to within one step of the absurd which would be to run the same show continuously until all episodes were exhausted.

WPHL-TV, Channel 17, is the prime UHF competition for Kaiser and, not surprisingly, behaves similarly in terms of what it runs. It is the flagship station for U. S. Communications, a group with stations in Pittsburgh, Atlanta and Cincinnati. Leaning across his desk, a rating book in hand, station manager Robert Doty explains his audience theory.

"Getting an audience is like mining gold. You have to go where it is." But in the same breath he added perspective: "I don't think that any UHF station is deluded. You can't always slug it out with them (Vs)." To maximize his audience, Doty counter-programs, as does Anneke and most independents. In a sense this means don't waste a show. If the competition has a leading show, program the cheapest item opposite it. When the weakest show is on, put up the best you have, hoping to maximize the chance for an audience.

Although similar to WKBS, the Channel 17 operation is less scientific, as Doty explains it. His major goal is a sufficient audience to make the advertising end break even. He says he would provide more specialized programming if there was an audience for it, but his definition of specialized is so broad as to include almost anything.

The station's prime offering each evening has been a movie. "It is the best movie we can afford," he said. Recently the station bought a block of movies including some foreign films by such directors as

Ingmar Bergman. It labeled them "Adults Only," because of the frank portrayal of sex. But Doty indicated the station did not intend to break any new ground in programming; it had shown the block of films only because the price was right.

The stations differ radically on the approach to news. Channel 48 spent \$500,000 in the past two years for equipment and people to set up a news organization, which it counter-programs at 10 p.m., an hour before the Vs do news. Channel 17's total offering in March was a five-minute show picked up from NBC at noon. It also planned to insert 90 seconds of news headlines in prime time. Anneke feels the local news builds credibility and loyalty. Doty admits his efforts are feeble and would like to do more.

The WKBS experiment is interesting because its success will be based entirely on its own resources. Lacking a national news show to pair with the local, or any input for national newscast, it has to be locally oriented. With the lack of competition at 10 p.m., and the good local emphasis, Anneke feels it will work. "Philadelphia is an early-to-bed town," he added.

One area into which WKBS has not ventured extensively is sports programming. The station does carry the local NHL hockey team. Professional basketball as well as college basketball is on Channel 17. Anneke thinks that sports build strictly a seasonal audience and not a good one if the team does not do well at the gate. Doty agrees to the seasonal problem, but feels the risk is worth it because the sports boost the station's image. So far, he feels his operation has benefitted from sports.

Doty and Anneke are unsure of the future impact of CATV on their stations. Anneke said Kaiser is working on some group policy, but his immediate reaction was that program fare somewhat different from the affiliated station's might pick up viewers on a CATV system that puts his signal into new area. Doty's reaction was different: "Anything that offers a viewer more choice means less chance he will watch WPHL."

A comparison of independent U and V stations would probably show they had a great deal in common. By the same token, an affiliated UHF station is much more closely related to its affiliated VHF counterpart than to any of the independents. Channel 30, WHNB-TV in Hartford is such a station.

"Our being a network affiliate means we are doing very well. If we were an independent it would be another story," according to



John Palmer, the program director. His station is the "only place around here you can watch NBC." The competition is WTIC-TV, Channel 3, the CBS affiliate. Channel 30 does well because it is affiliated, but also because Hartford was a UHF market before it was opened to Vs, and as a result, has a conversion factor in excess of 95 per cent. On a number of occasions the FCC tried to demix the market.

Attempting to gain a foothold in the market is WHCT-TV, Channel 18. Although it is 10 years old, it is virtually starting fresh. It is John Palmer's other "story." It suffers because until the beginning of 1969 it was pay TV in prime time and used a scrambled picture as part of the experiment between RKO General, station owner, and the Zenith Corp. For years Hartford residents avoided the station because of the pay TV. An advertising campaign is underway to change that habit, but it is a slow fight.

Because of pay TV the station lacks a place in the rating book and a "national buyer will not buy on the basis of blue-sky promises," according to George Cyr, the manager. To build an audience "we are buying the best things we can get as cheap as we can. The main thing we try to do is program to the other station's weakness," he said. His counter-programming sources are the same as available in Philadelphia.

Cyr, with an opportunity to break fresh ground, rejects anything different. "We are a mass media entertainment station. We fight on the same level as the network affiliates but with different programming." A lack of sufficient power limits his coverage, but the station has an application "in somebody's drawer" at the FCC.

The station has two local news shows, each a half-hour, one at noon and the second, not unexpectedly, at 10 p.m. "We are trying to build a 10 p.m. habit and get people to bed when they are supposed to and not keep them up," Cyr said. The show has the same heavy local emphasis as the Philadelphia station. It is interesting to note that in both instances there is a desire to do national/international news. Both stations do what is essentially a good thing—local shows, but for the wrong reasons—because they have to, not because they want to do it.

Independent TV will survive only with a mass entertainment flavor, according to Cyr. "I believe there is a market for minority programming, but you've got to be willing to accept minority figures. That means you have to have other forms of financing because the

commercial advertiser is not going to be willing to buy minority audiences."

One of the minority approaches to independent television began in late 1968 in the midst of the nation's most congested television area—Los Angeles. Julian Myers, a former movie publicist, went on the air with KKOG-TV, Channel 17, in Ventura, Calif.

Lacking adequate capital, it is a shoestring operation in the truest sense of the word. Its survival is going to be in doubt through the first lean years. What distinguishes it from other stations, however, is that it is primarily live and local. "If people want canned and planned entertainment they can get it there (the other stations)," Myers said. Live and local is based on the simple premise that everything else is already being done—overdone—in the area. He says he is building a community station. Of course, it also happens that live and local is the cheapest type of programming. Outside material must be free material, because Myers can't afford to buy anything.

His advertisers are also heavily local, and on long-term contracts they are paying only pennies more than for time on the better local radio stations. Many of them are first-time TV advertisers, unable to afford any of the other outlets. The big problem is getting "an audience that wants to see what sponsors want to sponsor," said Myers. Live and local also offers some unique programs, liable to scare more advertisers than they impress.

According to William Putnam, the secret is to offer "what people want to see," which isn't really any secret. Putnam, president of the All-Channel Television Society, must know what he is talking about: he owns two UHF stations—in Springfield, Mass. and Dayton, Ohio—and has owned part or all of a number of other stations since 1953. He is an original in UHF broadcasting.

He dwells only briefly on UHF problems that result from the disparity with VHF. After all, he has told the story so many times he is tired of it. In 1962 he described the UHF position versus the VHF interests on the all-channel bill. What he said then is still accurate: "We are a poor man's organization (ACTS). We've only got a couple of dozen station operators. . . so we cannot compete in the same ballpark with those nationwide concerns who operate facilities that can only be compared to piracy."

He says that the present inequities of UHF are largely the result of network practices. In Dayton his station takes a great deal of one network's programming since the network doesn't have a local affil-

iate any more. But without actual affiliation, he says he has to pay the line transmission costs, although the network pays this for affiliates. The network pays him only \$4 per thousand viewers rather than \$18 per thousand for comparable affiliates. There is nothing to indicate that his viewers are any less valuable or less capable of getting to the drugstore to buy a product than those viewing an affiliated station.

"If we were compensated on the same scale we would be profitable and we would have the income to program better material," Putnam claimed. "This artificial discrimination exists wherever there are multiple station owners who can exercise power with the networks."

### A LOOK FORWARD

Newton Minow's sleeping giant is alive at 17, but while many of its birth defects have been overcome, a UHF license still constitutes an invitation to second-class citizenship in the broadcasting world. There remains no logical justification for maintaining two separate spectrums, but it has always been that way and nothing is going to change it in the near future. Had television started with 15 or 20 channels the problem probably would not have arisen.

The blame has been placed largely on the Sixth Report for its lack of foresight and thought. It really solved very little, other than restoring license allocations for VHF. In establishing UHF, it proposed a solution to allocation problems but did nothing to make the solution applicable to reality. Other steps along the way, such as the all-channel law, have helped, but only in a very superficial manner. Short of a complete reworking of the broadcasting spectrum, UHF seems destined to stay where it is now.

The Rostow Report done for President Johnson stated that a democratic society needed a communications mechanism that would increase the volume and quality of local communication of an informational type, and posed UHF as the answer. The premise rests on the assumption that democracy wants and needs such a mechanism. It hardly seems that UHF will get the opportunity. If anything fills this void it will be CATV, which can do it at a more reasonable cost.

For the moment, UHF has neither the profitability, programming or potential of VHF. That people invest in it is something of a miracle. People are buying a share in a sleeping giant's future. If it ever should walk on both feet in the market place, it will be a good investment—valuable to broadcasting and to the viewers.

# THE 50-50 RULE: OR, HOW TO PARLAY A GAME SHOW INTO PROGRAM DIVERSITY

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HYMAN H. GOLDIN

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For almost five years the Federal Communications Commission and the television industry have run their own closed circuit show called "50-50."

The purpose of the game is to loosen the monopolistic control of the television networks over prime-time programming, and to create the opportunity for an increase in the number of separate decision-makers.

The FCC's proposal would bar a network from holding economic interests in more than 50 per cent of the program time between 7 and 11 p.m., exclusive of news.

The networks could not distribute or share in the revenues from any programs for non-network exhibition in the United States (syndication). They could, however, sell to others the right to distribute programs wholly network-produced, and they themselves could distribute such programs to foreign markets.

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Hopefully, and this is the Commission's basic article of faith, by increasing the opportunities for independent program suppliers to sell to advertisers and to stations, these changes would tend to promote diversity in program fare.

The 50-50 game show is not regularly scheduled, but appears periodically as a "special," with all would-be players solemnly invited to write in or to appear live in the FCC studios. The most recent live performance was as far back as July 1969 because, like regular TV fare, the 50-50 game suffers from a mounting cost index. The talent is recruited not from AFTRA or SAG but from the Federal Communications Bar Association, and the FCBA scorns minimum scales.

At the last 50-50 a jurisdictional dispute threatened when Mason Williams, of the late *Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour*, appeared as a party. In *Broadcasting's* succinct description, he showed,

bearded and beaded and wearing black bell-bottoms. And where the lawyers had relied on charts, statistics, and legal arguments, he came equipped with his guitar, music, and a thick document he called 'The Mason Williams FCC Rapport,' a collection of random thoughts and jottings, most of which put down television as a waste of time.

Although Mr. Williams ran through the lunch hour, his appearance ended on a happy note. One of the Commissioners, concerned about a missed luncheon date, asked: "Will the Chairman make it right with those we had appointments with?"

The Chairman replied, "I'll give you each a note." This delighted his audience, including Mr. Williams, who quipped, "We should do a show together."<sup>1</sup>

Like other aging game shows, 50-50 has seen its better days. Many of the players who have most to gain do not show. The natural competitors of the networks, the independent program producers, decline politely but firmly being drawn into the game.

At one time, in the late '50's, they "ratted" to the Antitrust Division, but when the FCC requested them to repeat on a public record their horrendous tales that the network had twisted their arms and forced them to relinquish a "piece of the action"—a part interest in the program rights—as a prior condition for network purchase of a program series, they chose discretion.

Networks protest their innocence vehemently. They produce chunks of computerized statistics to prove that their own economic interest lies in selecting the shows most likely to succeed—*i.e.*, that

attract the largest audiences and command the highest advertising rates—while the syndication and merchandising rights they incidentally acquire from the program producers are of purely secondary concern.

It is only reasonable, their lawyers insist, that the networks should share in the program rights, because they help finance the costs of some of the program series they select for network distribution and in all such programs take the risks of selling participations.

Wherever the absolute truth lies, a few pragmatic lessons are clear. The network schedule provides a program producer his best market, and whatever the moral or ethical imperatives, economic imperatives dictate that he avoid the networks' FBI list.

At the same time, the networks' position is endemically ambiguous. Whatever the vigorous moral niceties and subtle esthetic nuances by which they select among fungible product, as long as national program selection is dominated by three firms, the television industry is effectively "monopolized."

In the economist's eye, the network system, combined with the limited number of franchised local station affiliates, is inherently non-competitive. But, historically, Congress and the FCC have repeatedly made the policy judgment that these monopolistic structural elements are in the public interest. For a variety of reasons deeply imbedded in the institutional history of broadcasting, the public bodies, rather than try to force a restructuring of the system, have been content to tinker with the operating details. Even to that extent the FCC has found the system overreacting.

Earlier, in the heyday of radio networking, except for news and public affairs and other "public service" programs, program control rested with the advertising agencies. They produced or selected programs and brought them to the networks. The networks' role was restricted to selection among outside packages. The results were described by the Commission in the 1946 Blue Book, which stated that advertisers were interested solely or predominantly in entertainment and news that could entice mass audiences:

The concept of a well-rounded structure can obviously not be maintained if the decision is left wholly or preponderantly in the hands of advertisers in search of a market, each concerned with his particular half hour, rather than in the hands of stations and networks responsible under the statute for overall program balance in the public interest.

To right the balance, networks and stations were beginning to experiment with package programs, selected, written, cast, and produced by the network or station, and sold to the advertiser with the commercial position specified by the network. "This practice," the Commission concluded hopefully, "appears to be a step in the direction of returning control of programs to those licensed to operate in the public interest."

About 15 years later, when the TV networks, heirs of the radio networks, had achieved firm control, the FCC found that network domination resolved the public interest issues no more than did advertiser domination. To achieve a balance between these two extremes, the 50-50 proposal was devised. It was designed to strengthen the independent program producers against the networks, and to make possible a return to the network schedules of advertiser-supported programs with less than maximum appeal—the historic *Firestone Hour*, *U. S. Steel Hour*, *Bell Telephone Hour*, and the *Kaiser Hour*.

The networks and their organized affiliate associations reacted characteristically. The 50-50 rule would, they claimed, spell the doom of American broadcasting. Their same lupine cry was heard when the Commission spun off the Blue Network and first promulgated the network rules; when it limited station ownership; when it issued the Blue Book; when it outlawed "must buy" and option time; and when it decreed the "personal attack" rules. Such little faith of the broadcast establishment in the tensile strength of its imposing structure is traditional and somewhat puzzling.

Aside from such Cassandric predictions, the 50-50 proposal is open to criticisms of substance. Lack of overt advertiser support poses a strategic difficulty. There is no strong constituency, no countervailing power to support the Commission's proposal. The networks offer a valid, although not necessarily fatal, objection that television costs have outgrown individual network sponsorship, and for the program supplier or another middleman to acquire multiple sponsors for the programs not controlled by the networks would involve economic risks.

Furthermore, the 50-50 rule cannot guarantee that program diversity would be enhanced. The bulk of network advertisers cherish ratings with as much cupidity as the network, or perhaps more. And since the networks would retain power of selection among the outside programs, it could ultimately exclude the tiny minority of advertisers who might choose institutional good will with selective

audiences at high costs-per-thousand, in preference to a high-ratings package that would maintain the flow of audience.

Occasionally, a Xerox or a Hallmark might slip through, but the question nags whether the probability would be significantly greater than within the present process.

While the players were reenacting their traditional roles in the latest episode of the 50-50 series, the game took a new turn. One of the pragmatic heretics among the broadcasters is Westinghouse. For some time it has contended that if the Commission is to succeed in encouraging non-network program units, it must go farther in station controls than in the past.

While the Commission was struggling, Westinghouse pointed out that mere excision of the option-time clause would not materially change the balance of power, or provide non-network program suppliers with a significantly greater access to affiliated stations in prime time. It urged that in a segment of four hours, option time be retained for three hours, but that affiliates should be prohibited from carrying additional network service.

The Commission rejected the Westinghouse remedy as too extreme. The FCC's historical rationale in network program intervention is to strike down undue restraints on the station's freedom of selection. Deletion of option time was consistent with that philosophy, whereas the Westinghouse proposal was antithetical.

The current policy crisis stems from the gap between theory and practice. As was anticipated, in the post-option time era the larger affiliated stations enjoy somewhat more freedom at the margin in substituting non-network programs for the regular network schedule. However, their alternatives, typically, are restricted to a movie or an off-network syndicated program. This does not materially increase program diversity or strengthen the market for first-run syndicated program fare. The passing of option time, condemned by a near-unanimous industry as the tolling of the death knell, *mirabile dictu*, is only dimly recalled by the current crop of network and station managers.

Once again Westinghouse is proffering its previously rejected advice. It specifically proposes that between 7 and 11 p.m. no station in any of the top 50 markets with at least three stations should be permitted to take more than three hours of network programming other than news and public affairs.

To fill the hour, an affiliated station could carry a locally produced show, an off-network syndicated program, a first-run TV



syndicated program, a network news or public affairs program, or any other conceivable choice excluding a non-news or public affairs network program.

Since networks traditionally do not program between 7 and 7:30 p.m., the effect of the Westinghouse proposal would be to add one half hour of station availability. Theoretically, the networks could continue to program the 7:30-8 p.m. or the 10:30-11 p.m. slot, using independent stations as outlets in the top 50 markets. The Westinghouse plan does not seek to dislodge the networks from the syndication field or from any other activity.

The Westinghouse representative stated the issue this way:

...as broadcasters we are seriously concerned about the lack of new programming, new programming ideas, of diversity in programming, and lack of choice of the viewer by reason of the basic and fundamental and practical lack of choice of programming on the part of the individual station operator.

At the present time, there is nothing in the offing to balance the great power of the networks to effectively determine what the public will be able to see... We feel very strongly that the future of this industry depends in large measure on whether or not the industry can improve its programming service to the public and develop programming that can better serve the needs of the public.<sup>2</sup>

The validity of these observations by Westinghouse is not blunted by recognizing that the company's proposals are consistent with its economic interests. As a licensee of VHF stations in the major markets, Westinghouse would experience no difficulty in selling a prime-time hour to national, regional, or local advertisers for at least twice as much as it receives from a network sale. As a program producer Westinghouse would also benefit from access to other VHF stations in prime time.

In the latest round, Westinghouse's proposal won a few points. It was endorsed by the National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting as encouraging program diversity. Its main thrust was supported also by the Department of Justice, which would, however, bar the networks from domestic syndication or from other participation in programs produced by others. Most significant was ABC's qualified acceptance of the Westinghouse plan, as "the least of all evils," and one that possibly "might have real positive benefits."<sup>3</sup>

Supported by these organizations, the FCC could legitimize the Westinghouse proposal. The measure certainly has merits potentially more significant than the 50-50 approach. It could stimulate the development of first-run TV syndicated programming, with benefits

that might ultimately trickle down to the unaffiliated UHF stations, although the immediate effect would be to increase the UHF's competition for syndicated product in the 7:30-8 p.m. period. If one or more of the networks chose to program the 7:30 or 10:30 half hour, they would certainly use some independent UHF stations.

While the Westinghouse plan encourages more TV program suppliers, it would yield no quantum increase in program diversity. Independent suppliers will take no more risks in amortizing large first-run syndication investments. The incremental increases in program choices is likely to be no more substantial than the results of eliminating option time.

After almost five years of labor, however, the FCC should beget a pachyderm, not a mouse.

To increase competition and maximize program choices requires sweeping changes. Neither the 50-50 plan nor the Westinghouse alternative would bring about changes sweeping enough. This requires both program standards and major structural changes.

There are encouraging signs, however, that the FCC is grasping these nettles, although with understandable caution. It supported the Carnegie Commission's recommendations aimed at substantial, continuing federal funds for the long-term support of public broadcasting. And after 20 years of study, the FCC finally voted to permit subscription television in the largest markets.

Regarding cable television, the FCC has pursued policies widely divergent. Prior to 1960 it took a hands-off course; since 1960, it has claimed, and exercised, extensive controls over CATV. Protection of UHF has constituted a major Commission concern. Most recently, in October 1969, the Commission recognized the long-term potentialities of multi-channel cable systems to extend and diversify the nation's communications. It granted all CATVs the right to originate programs, with commercials, and directed that in the future larger cable systems must initiate a local program service.

The FCC has already promulgated program and advertising standards for the newer services. By Commission decree, stations engaged in subscription television may not devote more than 90 per cent of their weekly schedules to movies and sports, and may not carry any commercials in the newer services. This conclusion is much more self-evident as applied to the established broadcast services.

Aside from news and irregularly scheduled specials, prime-time network programs, with minor exceptions, comprise a succession of light-entertainment, mass-audience, fixed-format episodes. Aside from

news and an occasional public affairs special, prime-time station programs similarly comprise a succession of network programs, movies, and off-network runs.

Although created to serve local community needs, the typical TV station is very largely a distribution channel for national programs, except for local news, weather, sports, and commercials. While this description may overstate the case, unfortunately it is too close to the mark. For an industry with the talent, managerial, and fiscal resources of television, the service sags far below its potential.

Against the inevitable mass-audience bias of commercial television, the Commission has a court-stated authority and responsibility to foster diversification. The Supreme Court affirmed this in *Red Lion*, while upholding the Commission's fairness doctrine; the D. C. Circuit Court of Appeals in *National Association of Theater Owners*, while upholding the FCC's approval of subscription TV, remarked on the need of the Commission "to take some cognizance of the kind and content of programs being offered to the public."

The FCC can, and should, devise standards requiring a larger proportion of network and station time to be devoted to serving a broader range of public tastes, and to this end should insist that adequate sums be invested by a highly profitable television industry in program experimentation.

In all the top 50 markets, for example, the public should have a choice in prime time during each evening of the week among programs ranging beyond light entertainment. Such programs stressing quality can attract sizable, although not necessarily maximum, audiences. Elitist programming is surely not the only alternative to mediocre serial fiction.

Without minimizing the FCC's primary responsibility and initiative, only the uninitiated can believe that public-interest policies in these areas can be successfully pursued without Congressional support. Perhaps more explicitly than in other regulatory jurisdictions, broadcast policy is of general political interest and concern.

Without tacit or overt support from the Congressional Commerce Committees, FCC-promulgated program standards could not withstand the fury of the industry's reaction. This was specifically demonstrated in 1963 when the Commission sought to impose by rule the industry's own advertising standards, and capitulated in response to a hostile resolution of the House Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee and, subsequently, of the House of Representatives generally.

Although the Commission, after two decades of study, has made the necessary public-interest finding, the House Commerce Committee currently is threatening to halt the development of subscription television. Similarly, the further development of cable television awaits affirmative action by the Congress to resolve the vexing copyright issues.

Most discouraging is the delay in providing long-term funding of public broadcasting. The initiative lies with the Administration and Congress. Appropriated tax measures are being studied at the staff level of the Bureau of Budget, but with no pressing priorities. The rationale for a manufacturers' excise tax on broadcast sets, or for a gross revenues tax on broadcasting, has been adequately laid out with either or both feasible and justifiable. All that is required is political leadership and public comment.

In summary, the 50-50 rule-making was launched with a limited objective—to loosen the monopolistic control of the networks over prime-time television. The by-product effects, hopefully anticipated, were increased competition in the program supply market and a measure of greater program diversity. After five years, 50-50 has no constituency and the alternative has narrowed to the blocking out of a half hour for non-network programming.

It is time that the Commission declared a moratorium on 50-50, and allocated its limited resources to devising a rational and workable system of program standards. The public interest effects of such action would be of substantially greater consequence than 50-50 or the Westinghouse alternative.

Of more enduring value is the restructuring of broadcasting through the full counterplay of public broadcasting, cable television, and subscription television. None of these, however, is feasible without the full concordance of the FCC, Congress, and the Administration.

To cement this comity requires a substantial measure of public consensus and effective expression of the public's will. Subsequent issues of this journal should be devoted to the discussion of all aspects of these crucial issues of national communications policy.

#### NOTES

1. *Broadcasting*, July 28, 1969, p. 51.
2. *Official Report of Proceedings*, July 23, 1969, pp. 10070-71. Testimony of John D. Lane.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 10063. Testimony of James A. McKenna.

Eight years in any era but the 1960's is an insignificant time span. Constant change, the theme of these years, gave this period importance. One medium that experienced and caused some dramatic changes was television; and as it did, TELEVISION QUARTERLY has tried to comment on these trends.

In researching the following article, the editors have made use of the background supplied in an unpublished M.S. thesis by Mark P. Wisan, Boston University School of Public Communication, Fall 1969. For our new Board members and readers we are including this brief history so they can vicariously share the metamorphosis of the television medium and of this journal.

# A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE TELEVISION QUARTERLY

SUSAN T. GINSBERG, *Assistant Editor*

DAVID MANNING WHITE, *Editor*

Let us suppose ourselves back in the latter part of the year 1961—the year that the TELEVISION QUARTERLY was founded by the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. What lay in store? What new editorial paths would the infant journal tread? What topics would the QUARTERLY examine from 1961 to 1969? Such a list would, as we now perceive, seriously address itself to the varied and complex questions of a decade.

- Government's power over broadcasting
- Evolution of the "telementary"—the TV documentary
- The appeal of the "western"
- TV as a tool of our foreign policy—helping or hurting us abroad
- Children's TV: goals for improvement
- Whither a fourth network?
- The presidential debates
- A defense of ETV—should it aim for the minorities?
- Television and print journalism—a comparison
- Forms of censorship
- Question of satellite transmission
- Why does the BBC purchase American programs?
- Creative television directing
- TV comedy writing—an art form
- Ethics of TV journalism and interpretive reporting
- TV and the politician's image
- Examples of international cooperation: Eurovision, Nordvision
- Creative television editing
- Great television novel
- Unfairness of the Fairness Doctrine
- Europe's pirate stations—will their number expand?
- Does the 50-50 rule encourage diversity?
- Jurisdiction of CATV
- Politics as influenced by television

- Broadcasters' responsibility to Negro viewers
- Potential for closed-circuit TV
- Coverage of Vietnam
- Programming failure of BBC-2
- TV's influence on the Civil Rights movement
- The difference between television and cinema
- The television snob vs. the thoughtful critic
- Why are commercials better than programs?
- Television in France, West Germany, U.S.S.R., Saudi Arabia, India, Israel, Holland, Philippines
- Public television — a search for identity
- Changes in TV programming — fragmentation rather than form
- Press and government: adversaries, not cronies
- How does TV alienate the black community?
- Broadcasters: afraid to speak out
- Is there a revolution in TV humor?
- Violence on television: how to regulate it
- Libel and defamacist
- Television interviewing techniques
- Should programming monopoly by networks be ended?

*How* and *why* the TELEVISION QUARTERLY came into being is a matter of record. In 1961, the FCC head commissioner, Newton Minow, expressed his views in dramatic and memorable phrase: television constituted "a vast wasteland." Minow was supported not only by President Kennedy but also by Governor Leroy Collins, then head of the National Association of Broadcasters. How did the television industry respond?

In programming, the industry was able to stave off government regulation by rapidly increasing its public service programming and by upgrading the quality of its daily fare. On the public relations front, it increased its efforts through such agencies as the Television Information Office. The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences also stepped in. As a non-profit association "dedicated to the advancement of television," the Academy had been known heretofore as the originator and annual donor of the prestigious "Emmy" awards. Now, in partial response to Minow's stated views, the Academy founded the TELEVISION QUARTERLY to serve as its official journal.

In January of 1962, Commissioner Minow again challenged the television industry by calling hearings of the FCC to discuss direct regulation of the networks. The following month, the first issue of TELEVISION QUARTERLY was published.

Dr. A. William Bluem became the Editor and the QUARTERLY's editorial offices were housed at his teaching post, the Television and Radio Center of Syracuse University (later to become the Newhouse Communications Center). Peter Cott, executive director of the Television Academy in its New York City headquarters, served the fledgling journal as its Business Manager. Dr. Bluem articulated the purposes and guided the direction of the QUARTERLY until the Winter issue of 1968. Its hallmark throughout: an independent and critical stance.\*

### FIRST EDITORIAL BOARD

Compared to the Editorial Board of 1969, the founding Board was smaller and less representative of those outside commercial broadcasting. It was composed of Walter Cronkite, Chet Huntley, Jan Jenkins, Robert Foreman, Royal Blakeman, Frank Baxter, Richard Pack, Sydney Eiges, Hubbell Robinson, Robert Lewis Shayon, and Gilbert Seldes. The five men last named, founding members all, have continued with the Board to the present date.

The first Editor and his Board established five general categories for contributors' articles. They saw television as an educational, informational social force, and they saw it in terms of its own relationship with government; as an industry, as an art, as a science.

As the television industry grew and reshaped itself through the dynamic 1960's, the QUARTERLY led the way in mirroring these changes of emphasis. In the last two years special attention was given to the question of television as a socio-educational force, and in terms of its relationship with government.

### AUTHORS

Many of the authors invited to contribute to the QUARTERLY from 1962 through the present date (with no payment, one might add) were writers, performers, directors, producers and decision-makers in some of the finest programs in television's history. A partial round-up would include the names of Steve Allen, George Carlin, Bernard Redmont, Carl Reiner, Sheldon Leonard, George Schaefer, Irwin Sonny Fox, Reuven Frank, Stockton Hellfrich, Roy Huggins, Lou Hazam, Aline Saarinen, Marc Connelly, E. G. Marshall, George C.

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\*This edition constitutes the 33rd published issue, each averaging seven articles and 87 pages. So far, 239 articles have been run. To keep abreast of the growing literature on television, the QUARTERLY has consistently featured a three to five page book, review section, and a yearly book index.



Scott, Gabe Pressman, Robert Sarnoff, Reginald Rose, Cecil Smith, Hugh Downs, Mike Wallace, Howard K. Smith, Julian Goodman, John Secondari, David Brinkley, Roy Danish, Walter Cronkite, John Chancellor, William Kobin, Leonard Marks, Fred Freed, Carl Rowan, Bill Moyers, Ted Koop, Richard Jencks, Bosley Crowther, Dan Rowan, Av Westin, Leo Bogart, Robert Coe, and many more.

#### CHANGEOVER IN '69

In January of 1969, Dr. David Manning White assumed the Editor's chair and editorial offices of the QUARTERLY were moved from Syracuse to the School of Public Communication, Boston University. Joining Dr. White, Chairman of the School's Journalism Division, as members of the Editorial Board were Hyman Goldin and Robert Smith. Tim Cohane and Richard Averson served the journal as associate editors; overseeing production were Susan Ginsberg and Carol Scally.

The changing emphasis of the QUARTERLY in particular and of the television industry at large during the latter days of the 1960's was also reflected in new members of the Editorial Board. It is now comprised of a larger representation of commercial and educational broadcasters together with academicians and critics. Serving as the 1969 Board's Co-Chairmen were Hubbell Robinson and Laurence Laurent. Members were Elmer Lower, ABC News president; Group W's Richard Pack; Harriscope's Yale Roe; CBS' Charles Steinberg; NBC's Sydney Eiges. Also included were Max Wylie, former editor of *Omnibus*; Herman Land, ETV consultant; Evelyn Burke and David Karp, of the Writers Guild of America East and West; Gilbert Seldes, Robert Lewis Shayon, John Culkin, S.J., Tad Mosel, Richard Hanser, Sterling Silliphant, and Melvin Goldberg.

Additional members selected midway through 1969 were Robert Squier, campaign strategist and television consultant, and Melba Tolliver, WABC.

#### THE QUARTERLY'S "RAISON D'ETRE"

The *Christian Science Monitor* noted at the inception of the TELEVISION QUARTERLY:

One cannot help hoping that TELEVISION QUARTERLY will make its interesting and influential way into a large proportion of the 91 out of every 100 homes reported to have at least one television set. Such a distribution could help work great changes in television programming and practices.

A definite need existed for such a critical journal. Twenty years ago television criticism as such was scarce to nonexistent. Today, by contrast, the staff of most newspapers includes a television reviewer, although many lack specialized training or professional background in this complex and ever-changing field. Exceptions to this are the deans of the television critics: Jack Gould, Robert Lewis Shayon, Laurence Laurent, and Michael Arlen.

Although television's impact upon the American populace and its government may well be greater than that of books or movies, serious informed criticism of television exists in far less quantity even today than in the book or film field. A number of excellent books has emerged in the last few years, however, to form a base for a literature of television criticism, and these books have been regularly reviewed by the *QUARTERLY*.

Because the television trade press is not geared to fill the role of critic, the *QUARTERLY* is unique in its assumption of this task. *Television Magazine*, also founded in 1961 as a critical magazine, has since been incorporated into *Broadcasting Magazine* and now functions mainly as the spokesman of the radio-TV industry, not its critic. So, too, for *Sponsor* and *Ad Age*.

The significance of the *QUARTERLY* might well be summed up in the following words of Richard Stonesifer (Spring, 1967):

The gravest threat to television's future...is that those who ought to be most concerned about its health and welfare have either deserted it or have never been brought to feel that it mattered—the educators, the critics, the clergymen, the opinion-makers, the individual citizens of taste.

What is needed are some strident voices resounding across the American landscape. And they have started to sound, most significantly, from within television itself.

### EDUCATION AND TELEVISION

"Education is a state of mind, a sense of responsibility, a commitment."

Edward Stasheff

With few exceptions, articles during the first five years of the *QUARTERLY* treated TV primarily as an amusement and diversion, and only secondarily in its capacity as teacher. In these issues, contributors viewed TV more as a supplement to formal educational systems rather than a unique system within itself.

In 1964, the *QUARTERLY* discussed the medium as an aid to the

classroom teacher. In 1964-66, it was accepted as an aid to adult education, particularly in emerging countries. From 1967 onward, television has been treated by experts in the *QUARTERLY* as an independent educational entity.

We are just beginning to realize and define the extent of television's influence on perceptions. Firsthand experience by the viewer of presidential news conferences, U.N. debates, senatorial hearing rooms, political conventions, has become a commonplace.

We might note, also, that the medium has created the "telementary." Since 1966 television has shaped a new form of "intimate" documentary, ambiguous and fluid, concerned with images rather than with the rigid informational categories of the past.

The medium not only influences perceptions, it reshapes working attitudes. Some implications of this phenomenon have been developed and discussed within the pages of *TELEVISION QUARTERLY*. For instance:

- Sprague Vonier (Winter, 1964) predicted television's role in creating a social revolution by inculcating a standardized, northernized, urbanized value system for all Americans. Ted Koop also stated that TV is breaking down regional attitudes (Summer, 1966).

- Herbert Gans' stimulating article found network TV a more powerful factor than schools. Why? Schools have a captive audience; schools are run on the basis of the teacher, not the student.

- Marshall McLuhan (Fall, 1966) told us that children who watched TV before they learned to read may be quite different from their predecessors.

- Yale Roe (Winter, 1968) first introduced the question of blacks and the TV system. Believing that public TV should be aimed, not at cultured middleclass whites but at Negro slum children, he asked to see a "Negro version of *Romper Room*." Carl Rowan and others have since countered this optimism; they feel that, despite integrated programming, the press *in toto* remains an instrument of white racism.

## TELEVISION AND GOVERNMENT

How did the *TELEVISION QUARTERLY* examine television's relationship with the U.S. government? In early issues, Mark Wisan noted, the journal concerned itself more with the power of government over broadcasting than the reverse. Recently, the *QUARTERLY* has

examined both sides of the question, a change attributable to several factors:

1. The growth of campaign expenditures for political commercials (\$12 million in 1960 gave way to an estimated \$70 million in 1968);
2. The role played by television in the ongoing civil rights struggle, and,
3. The role of television in the elections of Presidents Kennedy and Nixon.

From the very first issue of TELEVISION QUARTERLY, the legal authority of the FCC and the Communications Act has come under sharp scrutiny. Through threatened delay in broadcast license renewal, through control of transmitter power or expansion, through the broadcaster's hours of operation, or his right to sell stock in his station, through fines for technical violations, can the FCC in fact apply pressure on recalcitrant broadcasters and use its influence to change program content?

One contributor posed this question and concluded that the government has far less legal weight over broadcasting than does the audience itself. In the FCC's defense, the then Chairman, E. William Henry, told QUARTERLY readers that the real enemy of broadcast journalists is not the Fairness Doctrine—but, rather, the profit-seeking shareholders and the ad sponsors who refuse to buy controversy. Other Commissioners, including Cox, Loevinger, and Johnson, as TELEVISION QUARTERLY contributors, have explored similar issues.

A Washington attorney wrote in one such article six years ago (foreshadowing Vice President Agnew's current stance):

We must recognize, as a practical matter, that a broadcaster is going to get into trouble if he expresses any editorial viewpoint which is displeasing to the Administration.

In 1961, communications satellites were *the* controversial issue. This journal published a plea for a stronger government policy to insure that satellites be used in the national interest, and advised that the government, not the private sector, afford control. In 1962, the journal presented a Space Communications symposium predicting what did in fact follow—rapid acceleration of program exchange among countries as satellites were perfected.

The Spring, 1964 issue dealt with the industry's role in the Kennedy assassination coverage. Gabe Pressman denied broadcasters' purported role in creating the situation that allowed Oswald's death, while Robert Sarnoff felt that television served the nation as a unique stabilizing influence during the four days of mourning.

In Fall 1964, the legal problems of CATV were examined, as was a new development in the libel law (the defamacast). Fall, 1965 looked pro and con at the newly proposed 50-50 rule and its relevance to CATV and to copyright law.

The National Conference on Broadcasting and Election Campaigns supplied the journal with its findings in Winter, 1966. Equalization of commercial-time charges; debates; and the equal-time rule also were examined.

In addition, the *QUARTERLY* furnished a forum for the discussion of foreign television. From 1962 to the present date, its contributors have examined the television systems of numerous countries: to wit, Scandinavia, Great Britain, Canada, India, Israel, France, West Germany, the USSR, Saudi Arabia, Holland and the Philippines. Also meriting study in the *QUARTERLY* was the growth of foreign affairs programs on American screens.

During 1969, at least one article per issue has served as a "gadfly"—to question the "inside" goals and purposes of such groups as the Public Broadcast Laboratory; the National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting, and others. The Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence also published some of its papers in the year's *QUARTERLY*. In addition, the magazine has also widened its coverage on television's relation to minority groups.

#### A LOOK TOWARD THE FUTURE OF TELEVISION

The background of the *TELEVISION QUARTERLY* and of the industry it examined is now a matter of record. What lies in store? A number of controversial questions might well find a forum in its pages:

Will alternatives to government control of the medium ever be implemented, not merely discussed?

Will a Negro be appointed to the FCC?

Might a domestic Voice of America relieve the burdens of the networks to be all things to all?

How can the industry take the lead to encourage teaching of television criticism within (or outside of) the school system?

Will a dialogue eventually emerge between young radical broadcasters and the broadcast establishment?

For political campaigns, is there a viable alternative to the purchase of commercial time?

Should frequency changes rather than license revocation serve the FCC as an ultimate weapon?

These, and many others, constitute questions whose outcome might well be influenced by discussion in future issues of the TELEVISION QUARTERLY.

## BOOKS IN REVIEW

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Joe McGinniss. **THE SELLING OF THE PRESIDENT 1968**. New York: Trident Press, 1969.

Joe McGinniss, a young newspaper reporter from Philadelphia, wondered how far the packaging concepts of advertising had infiltrated the electoral processes of our nation. In 1967 he latched on to the small group of men Richard Nixon had assembled to manage his mass media drives for nomination and for the big two-party Presidential race. By election eve of 1968, McGinniss had learned much about how the general public can be manipulated by the prefabricators of pseudo-events.

The half-dozen or so key men in the Nixon mass media camp, the author notes, turned instinctively to television, because they believed it to be the medium that could make their boss popular enough to win. To offset the two-time loser image he had earned on the national and California scenes, it was necessary to build his stature, to make him seem above intra- or interparty feuding. He must be sold as the only man who could handle the White House job with all of its awesome responsibilities.

Once the broad strategy had been determined, the mass media chieftains were obliged to instill in Nixon a new confidence about how he projected on television. Experiences of the recent past had given him the feeling that he was the victim of the medium. His eyes, he worried, seemed shifty. Those famous debates with John Kennedy in 1960 had caused much self doubt about his abilities to handle the glib, quick opponent. He was naturally introspective, if not introverted, and lacked confidence in mixing with swarms of strangers. He did not like the handshaking and could not urge crowds to "c'mon to the speakin'" in the fashion of LBJ in his glory days.

After the campaign got going, Nixon's managers realized that their champion, while untiring in his willingness to repeat basic theme jargon over and over, had very little to say on the major issues. He also tended to drift for advice to old friends from the political environments of the 1950's and early 1960's. Such advice was apt to trigger the old sharp-fighting Nixon and cloud the new, carefully built imagery. Richard Nixon had to be kept "cool"; he had to come through the campaign relatively disassociated from any particularized battle that might leave the public disillusioned with his stance.

How then was this warhorse made to seem fresh? How were the mass media aficionados able to guide him away from the trails to near victories and down an electronic road to Electoral College triumph?

First, let us note that the team effort nearly failed, that the voters were nearly overcome by his redundancies and generalizations!

We all know how the environment of 1967 and 1968 proved disastrous to public men and great causes. No need here to relate the dreadful events of bad times, except to remind the reader that when Hubert Humphrey and Richard Nixon finally entered the center stage of politics, the preliminaries had battered the American civilization. The Nixon team concentrated on survival rather than on conscience.

The key manipulators for the brooding Republican were Harry Treleven, from advertising—a “creative director”; Frank Shakespeare, a CBS executive stalled by network politics when asked to join; Len Garment, from Nixon’s law firm; William Gavin, a Philadelphia suburban high school teacher, whose letter to Nixon urging him to run earned him a place in the inner circle; and Raymond Price, newspaper editorial writer.

To judge these men from McGinniss’ account, all were disciples of Professor Marshall McLuhan. They accepted the assessment that television is a “cool, participant medium.” Extracting an essential McLuhanism from UNDERSTANDING MEDIA, “the TV image is of low intensity or definition, and therefore, unlike film, it does not afford detailed information about objects,” they handled the candidate objectively, in the literal sense. Nixon had to project, they decided, like Mike Douglas, the popular talk-show vaudevillian. The trick was to make his bland messages seem important. A neat trick you say!

First, the managers made certain of warm TV receptions by assembling regional panels of usually antiseptic Republicans who would ask acceptable questions, and avoid roughhouse aspects. Only once was the management team foiled by questions that caused Nixon obvious discomfort.

Each panel was composed of what were considered to be appropriate American types. While each panel optimally consisted of seven questioners, one safe black person was the limit. Ethnic balances were handled with chess skill. Each panel was designed to provide the candidate with a warm environment in which to repeat his basic sayings.

Following the conventions, there were some ten panel shows laced through the campaign. Each was produced in a different region of the country and restricted to the regional TV audience. So these panel shows did not permit the nation to catch on that it was being offered a political version of Edward Everett Horton’s road show, *Springtime for Henry*.

Still, this artful series was not considered sufficient to overcome the problem of the lack of substance. Throughout the campaign, the mass media managers feared Nixon would peak out too early on his generalizations. In fact, as the effort drew toward conclusion, Humphrey did gain ground steadily. So the manipulators turned to the *shorts* or TV commercials for insurance.

TV commercials were commissioned featuring the well-worn platitudes and prophecies—on the soundtracks. With each commercial the viewers were treated to news photographs in series, on a subject (crime, war, youth rebellion, etc.) which was so vivid and usually so scare-oriented that the words in tandem became important via association. Apart from the artfully and propagandistically-striking photos the words would have gone limp.

The *technique* of the scare photographic presentation is not new, but artful and pseudo-scientific *application* of it became a major innovation in the 1968 struggles. That is diabolically impressive.

McLuhan was right! TV could be objectively handled to reduce the factor of Nixon’s “hot” personality and to switch attention to presentations very absorbing but not specifically relevant. Emotion was made to work for Nixon, despite himself. And he was elected.



It all seems so neat and structured. The moral seems to be to forego Jefferson and Lincoln and King. Don't worry about the messages about government, be concerned with the *massage*.

It is, of course, not that simple. While it constitutes a vital warning for us all, McGinniss' book tells a partial story. It neglects the whirlpool of disasters that could scarce be controlled by the TV manipulators.

The team that did the TV job was appreciated by the new President. Two, at least, Garment and Gavin, earned places in the White House, and one, Shakespeare, is now director of the U. S. Information Agency. Thank goodness McLuhan is himself a Canadian.

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*Expo '70: World's Fair In Japan (April 24)*

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