

# TELEVISION

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AUGUST, 1962

# 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 with the  
cooperation of the Television and  
Radio Center of Syracuse University

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Photographed in London by Eve Arnold.

## Our man at the crossroads

To NBC's senior European correspondent, Joseph C. Harsch, London is the world's most fascinating city. "London may not have the power it once had," says Harsch, "but it's still a diplomatic crossroads. You're in constant touch with great brains." The brains aren't always British. When the news of Zhukov's ouster came through, it was far too late at night for Harsch to call any of his Foreign Office contacts. But he remembered that George Kennan, former U.S. Ambassador to Moscow, was in Oxford for a sabbatical year. He called Kennan and talked with him for an hour. "London's like that," says Harsch. "Whenever there's a big news event, you can always find someone who knows as much about the background as anybody—and probably more." ■ Harsch started his career over thirty years ago with the Christian Science Monitor. He was in Berlin from 1939 to 1941. . . . at Pearl Harbor when

the Japanese attacked . . . at Kesselring's command post behind German lines when the Armistice was signed.

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It happens on



to bring you the kind of reporting that consistently attracts the largest news audiences in television.

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and Sciences in cooperation with the Syracuse University  
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## CONTENTS

### ARTICLES

<b>The Bloodshot Eye</b>	6
<i>Roy B. Huggins</i>	
<b>Canadian TV—The Wasteland and the Pasture</b>	23
<i>Dean Walker</i>	
<b>TV versus Children</b>	40
<i>Sonny Fox</i>	
<b>The Eternal Triangle</b>	46
<i>Mark Goodson</i>	
<b>A New Vehicle for Television</b>	55
<i>Merrill Panitt</i>	
<b>The Future of National Debates</b>	62
<i>Gilbert Seldes</i>	
<b>TV Takes a Stand</b>	69
<i>Alvin H. Perlmutter</i>	
<b>ETV Revisited</b>	78
<i>Edward Stasheff</i>	
<b>Television Drama in Europe</b>	86
<i>Frank Iezzi</i>	

### DEPARTMENTS

<b>Books in Review</b>	91
<b>Letters to the Editor</b>	96

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## THE CONTROL OF TV PROGRAMS \_\_\_\_\_

It is becoming more and more difficult to keep track of the various kinds of controversy which Mr. Minow has generated. Some shouting still emanates from those circles where it is vehemently argued that no "wasteland" in fact exists. Heard in the background, however, is that growing conflict of opinion in which all disputants readily agree that there may be a number of arid patches in television programming, but violently disagree over the kind of system which might provide the best irrigation. According to some, any government plan for reclamation will not only fail to grow better crops, but will wash away some pretty tall plants already growing. Others maintain that only a government system *can* provide a few necessary patches of melon and avocado amidst the acres of corn and beans.

Here, *Roy Huggins* suggests that government control is a frightening reality. Not only will such interference in programming wash out the fertile acreage commercial television has nurtured, argues Huggins; it will leave behind only a thin residue of the silt of conformity, to be tilled inexpertly by nervous licensees and apprehensive program entrepreneurs as they await the next cultural decree from "The State." The separation of state from culture, he insists, is as inviolable a tenet of democracy as the separation of church and state.

*Dean Walker*, a free-lance writer and veteran observer of Canadian television, shares none of Huggins' fear of government. A limited flow of public control, he reports, has produced in Canada some results startlingly different from those predicted for American TV by Huggins. Canadian television, operating under a complex system of both government and private controls, has produced a veritable "pasture" of ideas and excitement. Creative initiative has not wilted, Walker writes, and award-winning crops have been flourishing there for years.

*Sonny Fox* gives indirect support to Walker's thesis. His long experience in producing commercial TV children's programs has led him to conclude that an independent government service, free from commercial necessity, should be established in the United States. Happily (for the sake of a nearly washed-up metaphor) Mr. Fox likens the establishment of such service to the creation of the Tennessee Valley Authority in the '30s. A TV-TVA, he feels, would create some verdant oases in American television where small knots of weary travelers might find the pause that refreshes.

If things get worse, *Television Quarterly* will have to seek editorial advice from the Department of Agriculture.

# THE BLOODSHOT EYE

A COMMENT ON THE CRISIS IN AMERICAN TELEVISION

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ROY B. HUGGINS

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The widely held belief that television experienced a golden age which was destroyed by the tyranny of ratings and the philistinism of a profit philosophy is one of the many myths of broadcasting.<sup>1</sup> There was a time in the early fifties when television was filled with a heady excitement, and recollections of it invite us to indulge ourselves in nostalgia. But that this brief period was television's apotheosis is denied not only by discerning critics but by the very men who were responsible for programming at the time. Television's impulse toward slow but steady improvement has never faltered, until today. Now, for the first time in that medium's brief history, a decline in quality and spirit is under way, and the abrupt reversal is largely the result of Newton Minow's policies as Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission.

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*Roy B. Huggins* graduated from U.C.L.A. in 1939 *summa cum laude* and Phi Beta Kappa. He did graduate work in political philosophy at U.C.L.A. until World War II. After the war he wrote a successful mystery novel which launched his new career in motion picture writing, production and directing. He turned to the field of television production in 1955 and, after receiving two earlier nominations, won an "Emmy" award in 1959. In 1960 he became a television executive.

This premise is addressed to that group in our society whose first reaction will be one of swift and angry rejection. It is one of the mysteries of these disjunctive times that the liberal community gives impassioned support to governmental control of our greatest source of public art, information and orientation, thus putting itself on the dark side of a battle in which the stake is no less than America's tradition of free speech. The mystery is deepened by the fact that this fealty is granted to a seven-man regulatory agency made up of three lawyers, two engineers, one businessman, and a former member of the FBI. The mystery yields slightly to the inarguable: that no man of good will denies the worthiness of Minow's goals or fails to share his apprehensions concerning the trivial role assigned to this powerful medium by our society. But it should be one thing to share Minow's alarms and quite another to approve his policies. I agree with everything Newton Minow says, but I will oppose to the death his right to say it.

When Minow dropped his two-word bomb at the Sheraton Park Hotel in Washington, he said absolutely nothing new, but he said it as the representative of a new administration, and he said it to the National Association of Broadcasters. An implacable glut of words followed, but with the exception of network concessions to UHF, no significantly original ideas emerged from the Minow phase of the debate, and no viable conclusion seems near. But if no new ideas emerged, a new program of action did, a program that threatens to produce a crisis in American television. I hope to document this statement with facts so manifest in the current experience of television, and rooted in causes which may be inferred with such certainty, that supporters of the FCC Chairman may at the very least consider a reassessment of his role in our culture.

Television's vulnerability is not entirely a question of quality, although one would assume so from reading the assaults upon it. Actually, most of its public problems have arisen out of simple facts of quantity and affective impact. Television drove from the market place such other mass media as pulp magazines, radio drama, the B motion picture as we once knew it, and numbers of large-circulation slick magazines such as *Collier's* and *American*. These displaced media had always been targets for criticism; but when many targets are reduced to one, the total amount of shooting appears to have grown enormously, and the concentrated uproar draws quite a crowd. It is in the nature of crowds to join the action, as witness the history of lynching. No subject, including politics, is today more widely discussed in the public prints than television, almost all of it malign.

In February 1962 an entire issue of *Cosmopolitan* was thrown into the breach, the cover carrying a banner reading "Televisionitis—Special Issue." All of which poses still another enigma. As W. Theodore Pierson, a member of the FCC bar, pointed out in *Television Quarterly*, the competitors in other media who support governmental control of broadcast programs should pause to consider "whether this is not really a cannibal's picnic—that while they may eat at this one, they might be eaten at the next."

There is no question that the FCC, the initials of which, the Commissioners are fond of saying, mean "from crisis to crisis," is charged by law with the duty to see that television channels are used "in the public interest, convenience and necessity." It is equally true that this is a phrase taken from public utilities legislation, and no public utility was ever confronted with a problem so complex, so fraught with social, political and moral overtones as programming. Nor are the broadcasters classified as public utilities. (Although Calvin Coolidge thought they ought to be.)

There is also no question that every broadcaster, in accepting his license, acknowledges the FCC's authority and promises faithfully to use that portion of the public air thus loaned to him in the public interest, convenience and necessity. But at no time in this basic contractual relationship is it acknowledged that the primary function of the public arts is to entertain.

Nearly 50 million Americans have purchased television sets, spending some 25 billion dollars in sets and service. Many researchers have asked them why they bought those sets, and no American has ever been known to reply that he did so out of devotion to the public interest, convenience and necessity. The vast majority simply replied: "For entertainment." When they were asked what television had done for them, "the great majority," reports Raymond Stewart, who surveyed the problem for the Division of Journalism at Emory University, "answered that it had entertained them." But the word "entertainment" does not appear in the Communications Act, and perhaps rightly so. The Congress was doubtless confident that entertainment would take care of itself, but feared that the public interest might not. However, the Act also failed to define the public interest,<sup>2</sup> avoided any language relating to the imponderables of programming for a mass audience, required the Commission to make judgments on program quality, but added a section (326) forbidding the Commission to censor or to interfere with freedom of speech.

The ambiguity of the Act probably resulted from the Congress's discovery of the impossibility of reducing to points of law the tenuous

relationship, if any, between the public interest and the public arts. The broadly stated Communications Act is evidently based on great faith in the democratic process and none at all in the contention of most intellectuals that mass culture is a corrupting and exploitive social force.

Minow plans to reach his goal of raising the aesthetic and public service levels of programming by following two divergent routes. He hopes to increase competition and variety through the expansion of television service. He has been one of the most effective chairmen in the history of the FCC in his efforts to enlarge limited markets, in his courageous fight for legislation to bring the dormant UHF channels into use, in his sponsorship of federal aid to educational television, and in clearing the way for the proponents of pay-TV to prove their contentions or to fail in the attempt. For these labors he richly deserves our esteem and our support.

It was along the second and, in his view, more direct and important route that the dangers lay, and Minow was acutely aware of those dangers from the start. In his initial appearance before the Senate Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce he carefully declared his distaste for censorship. Since that time he has not, in any important public appearance, failed to make this obeisance to the American tradition of freedom of speech. In his first public address he said, "There will be no suppression of programming which does not meet with bureaucratic tastes. Censorship strikes at the tap root of our free society."

But Minow came into government service with a mission: to bring all the power at his command to bear upon the broadcasters, to force them to program for the entire public and not merely for the lowest common denominator of that public, to force the broadcasters to lead the mass audience instead of slavishly catering to it, to raise the level of public taste instead of debasing it. And since Newton Minow is a brilliant attorney who once served under the late Justice of the Supreme Court, Fred M. Vinson, he understood well the awesome limitations of the Act from which his authority stemmed. He was also aware that the Congress, over thirty of whose members have ownership interests in broadcasting stations, had never tolerated control of program content by the FCC. And since this was precisely what Minow intended to accomplish, his course of action demanded skill and audacity.

He began by making a painstaking study of FCC history, and one can infer that he learned much from the Commission's tactical error in issuing the "Blue Book," officially titled *Public Service Responsi-*

*bility of Broadcast Licensees* and containing specific guidelines to programming. That document well represents Minow's views on programming, and it has never been repudiated by the FCC; but Minow has made no effort to resurrect it. Its publication constituted a written, formal expression of the FCC's programming philosophy, and was therefore a vulnerable move, as was evidenced by the clamor inside Congress and out, for amendments to the Communications Act which followed the document's publication. The Act was not amended, but the "Blue Book" was quickly forgotten and was allowed to go out of print in 1960.

Approximately three months after the Senate confirmed Minow as Chairman of the FCC he had prepared his strategy. It soon became clear that it was based on the minimum formal use of his ambiguous authority and the maximum public use of the immense latent power of government, a power to be used obliquely in order to avoid challenge in the courts. The plan greatly heightened the historic problem of staying within the critical limits of Congressional tolerance, but that problem could be solved in the contemporary way: by winning broad public support.

On May 9, 1961, Minow launched his campaign to wrest control of programming from the broadcasters by indicting them for their past performance, choosing a time, a place and a manner calculated to arouse massive public interest and response. His success was astonishing, possibly even to Minow himself, although his famous phrase was not lightly chosen. It figured prominently in FCC publicity releases prepared prior to the delivery of the speech. Thus began that aspect of the Minow regime which is new in FCC history, but very much in keeping with the Kennedy administration's trend away from government by politicians and toward government by administrative personalities.

Having successfully laid the base for his program, Minow followed swiftly with further stinging censures combined with pointed reminders that the air belongs to the people, that broadcasters had better get used to the idea that their licenses are not property rights. "Spokesmen for the Commission" were allowed to make statements that, to quote *Broadcasting*, it was a "distinct possibility that one or more operating stations would lose their licenses in 1962." The old phrase from Chairman Fly's time about the "lifted eyebrow" was resurrected—no more true now than it was then. It is not the lifted eyebrow that terrifies the broadcasters, it is the lifted axe that Commissioner Durr once so bitterly complained of: "The Commission . . . has no power except the death sentence."

Great numbers of broadcasters began to show up in Washington. "Station owners," reported *Broadcasting*, "even those with small outlets at a great distance from Washington, D. C., have been routing trips to include a stopover in the nation's capital this year. This increase in tourism is not necessarily due to cherry blossoms and the White House tour. It is more often so that station management can stop at the FCC to learn why they have been sent letters of inquiry on programming and what they can do to assure license renewal."

The kind of programming Minow held in low esteem became a matter of desperate interest to licensees. They learned that he did not care for "game shows, violence, audience participation shows, formula comedies about totally unbelievable families. . . Western badmen, Western good men, private-eyes, gangsters, more violence, and cartoons." They also learned that he liked such shows as *The Bing Crosby Special*, *The Fred Astaire Show*, *Twilight Zone*, *Kraft Theatre* and *Peter Pan*. Puzzlingly, in the December 13, 1961 issue of *Daily Variety*, the comment was made that "Minow won't discuss his favorite programs or talk specifically about individual shows."

"If I did," *Variety* quoted Minow, "there would be justification in accusing me of being a censor."

As public approval persisted on Minow's side, and President Kennedy continued to hold him in high esteem—and to comment on the fact publicly—Minow became increasingly confident of his policy, which led to the inevitable: the public indictment of specific shows and specific series. This occurred dramatically and with dismaying license at the FCC hearings in Washington in February 1962.

A series called *The Untouchables* was brought before the Commission and was soon being dissected at such length that the questioning covered 67 pages of transcript. Minute details were probed, such as the meaning of a written request to the producer for "less dialogue and more action" in a particular script. The tone of the questioning indicated that the Commission suspected the instructions of being filled with guile. One of the basic principles of film technique is to tell stories through action, to the greatest possible exclusion of dialogue. But the issue here is not film technique but whether or not the Federal Communications Commission was acting in violation of the spirit, if not the content, of the Communications Act in so questioning a programming policy on a specific series, and in making public its disapproval of aspects of that series.

At these same hearings a single show was brought up for discussion, the so-called Fabian episode on *Bus Stop*. There has been so much misinformation published about this episode, creating such a con-

viction in the public mind that it was in violation of the obscenity laws, that I feel compelled to sketch its history to keep the point at issue from being lost. As a matter of fact, the history of that episode sharply highlights, and serves to document, the proposition at hand.

The episode was based on a novel, an allegory on the nature of evil, by Tom Wicker. The premise of the novel was that evil is insidious, not easy of recognition, not subject to effortless defeat, and not inclined to vanish because we set up institutions to deal with it. Like the novel, the show was shocking and disturbing. If it had not been, it could not have been honest. But its violence served an aesthetic purpose and was not excessive, no adultery occurred, and the story did not touch upon, even by inference, the subject of nymphomania. I say this because the show was widely reported to have dealt with "murder, alcoholism, adultery and nymphomania." Ben Gross, of the *New York Daily News*, a gentle and kind man who was offended by the episode's subject matter, made a point of the fact that the show was not, "to be truthful," overly violent.

Then why was there such a strong emotional charge in the general reaction to the show? In all private runnings before the episode was aired the audience response was enthusiastic. But the agency representing the sponsors felt that the story was so uncompromising, so stark, that their clients' advertising would appear in an "environment" that might negate the economic purpose of their sponsorship. (The agency's responsibility to the advertiser, and the "environment" theory of programming, are significant aspects of broadcasting which I hope to discuss at length in the future.) The outcome was a business decision, made despite the stated opinions of several agency representatives to the effect that the show was excellent and ought to be broadcast.

However, the withdrawal of the sponsors resulted in the kind of unsought publicity usually associated with scandals; and rumors began to proliferate among television people, especially reviewers, one being that the whole sequence of events was spurious, a fabrication to create publicity for a series that was not faring well in the ratings race. A reporter for *Newsweek* asked me point-blank if this were not the case, and I fear I was unable to persuade him it was not.

When the episode was finally aired on December 3, 1961, the possibilities for an objective evaluation had become faint. The show was extravagantly praised by some reviewers and enthusiastically damned by others more numerous, who appeared to believe that it had been personally conceived, produced and publicized by Oliver Treyz with the single, cynical purpose of hiking the rating on *Bus*

*Stop*. Mr. Treyz, former president of the American Broadcasting Company, is innocent of any direct connection with the show beyond putting it on the air. The man who produced it, Robert Blee, did so in the conviction that Tom Wicker's premise was worthy of being restated. The show was finished before *Bus Stop* began the season, at a time when the general feeling was that the series would be successful critically and statistically.

An important cause of the heavily emotional reaction probably lay in the fact that the show attacked the cult of optimism, which once so fitly graced the American spirit. That cult still flourishes, with understandable sensitivity to challenge. As Dr. T. Earle Johnson, head of the Department of Speech at the University of Alabama, said recently to a meeting of radio and television broadcasters, "We as a people must have a definite optimism concerning the future of mankind, and you in the mass communications must give it to us."

I have become, for obvious reasons, a rather sensitive authority on the history of the "Fabian episode," and in my inquiries I discovered an astonishing thing. I have asked over 100 people—the entire national Nielsen sample is only 1200—what they thought of the show. A minority said they liked it. A majority denounced it, before conceding that they had not seen it. Perhaps it is time to coin a phrase for this widespread tendency to condemn what one has neither seen nor read. I suggest it be called "the General Walker effect." The Senate's Dodd Committee denounced the show and made no reference while doing so to the fact that they had not seen it. They had run only excerpts. Murray Schumach, of the *New York Times*, writing in *TV Guide*, reported that "this episode, starring Fabian, was rejected because of tasteless brutality, by about 20 affiliates of the network." Having by this time concluded that if you showed me a man denouncing the episode I could show you a man who had not seen it, I called Mr. Schumach. He admitted he had not seen it, then corrected himself and said that he had seen part of it. He then protested that his remark on the show's "tasteless brutality" was a reference to the affiliates' "reported" reasons for not carrying the show. Since his comment was not in quotes, I am sure Mr. Schumach will approve my sharing the information that it was not his own opinion. In a later *TV Guide* article called "What Kind of Season Has It Been?" Roger J. Youman wrote of the Fabian episode: "How it ever got on the air is still a mystery. . . (it) parlayed sex, violence and the animal magnetism of its star. . . into an hour of unalloyed sensationalism cynically calculated to attract the youthful viewers. . . (it was) a symptom of an infectious TV disease. . ." On being asked if he had ever seen the

show which he was attacking so passionately, Mr. Youman admitted that he had not. Senator John O. Pastore, speaking before the National Association of Broadcasters (February 28, 1962) said, "I would be less than candid not to tell you how greatly disturbed I was recently when I read about the *Bus Stop* production involving Fabian." He went on to quote Jack Gould's angry review of the show, and added: "I am told that in the preview of this program by the affiliates, 25 rejected it and two of the sponsors refused to sponsor the program. These I commend for their foresight and courage." Senator Pastore, having thus publicly condemned a show he had never seen and publicly commended a minority of ABC's affiliates for an act he had no right to evaluate, subsequently viewed the episode. I was not entirely unprepared to learn that he was displeased. Mr. Gould, by the way, is television critic for the *New York Times*. It was he who once said, "To shield 100 million people from the harsh realities of contemporary existence night after night can be a major cause of a most dangerous trend—national apathy. . . if the network broadcasters are to make their full contribution, they must disturb, awaken and excite viewers. . . ."

Thus far I have been unsuccessful in efforts to learn whether or not the FCC saw the entire episode. I have been told that they did not, but I choose to remain skeptical of that possibility. In any case, the Commission discussed the show at length in its questioning of Oliver Treyz, and Mr. Minow left no doubt in Mr. Treyz's mind or in the minds of the leaders of the industry that he did not consider the show to be in the public interest. In mid-December 1961, Minow had announced his satisfaction with the progress that was being made in television. "The trends are pretty good," he said. "Progress is being made when 20-odd stations refused to clear a network program they believed to be objectionable." On frequent other occasions Minow has angrily protested this tendency of licensees to air "sterile pap" and avoid "the new, the creative, the daring." Minow may have a few hobgoblins, but consistency is clearly not one of them.

It is quite possible that the Fabian episode was a bad show, and that its premise was poorly stated, although William Wyler has praised it highly, and novelist James Jones, whose attitude toward television is not calculated to warm the hearts of broadcasters, said after viewing it that he "had just seen a show he thought. . . held some hope for the future of TV in this country."<sup>3</sup> However, we need not be too concerned here with the quality, or lack of it, of the Fabian episode. No charge of libel or of obscenity has ever been made against it. Therefore the point at issue is simply the propriety of the

FCC's public condemnation of the episode, the testimony on which occupies over 40 pages of transcript. The script of the show itself was hardly that long.

I would like to set aside for a moment the question of the propriety of Minow's policies in order to pursue a simpler inquiry. Assuming that present FCC policies are within the law and within the tradition of American freedom, are those policies in the best interests of American television? To put the question more pertinently, are those policies in the public interest, convenience and necessity? In the tradition of the long debate, I shall make no effort to define that phrase.

Hal Humphrey, one of the nation's leading television critics, analyzed the coming 1962-1963 TV season in *Telefilm* and wondered what was the "reason for the present stultification of TV's growth." He pointed out that "instead of breaking out of the old program molds and experimenting with what program men like to call 'new concepts,' TV appears to be digging up the old concepts. It's as if the program vice-presidents had decided to find safety by re-living their past." He discussed the schedules for next season in detail and commented: "The program chiefs and network heads face what looks to them as simply a clean-up of crime and sex shows. Either that or ask for federal censorship. But what do they replace the crime and sex with? Well, nobody ever beefed about Jackie Gleason or Lucy Ball, did they?"

In December of 1961, prior to the airing of the Fabian episode, a network program chief met with me to request that I avoid all "controversial" material henceforth because of growing apprehension among the affiliates. Three scripts were immediately taken off the schedule. This was my first experience with actual censorship as opposed to the normal restrictions of the television code. The network was reacting to its own well-founded fear of governmental regulation as well as to pressures from the beleaguered licensees. Subsequently I learned that numbers of my colleagues were finding themselves subject to similar censorship pressures for the first time.

In April of 1962 a network vice-president informed me that the chief of continuity acceptance, the code administrator, had become the most powerful individual at his network. "The really creative producers," he told me, "are being forced to lower their standards to get past continuity acceptance and the general jitteryness among stations."

An acquaintance of mine who handled the sale to a network of a large package of post-1948 motion pictures told me that four of

those pictures were rejected by the network on the grounds that they were either too "controversial" or too "adult." He gave me permission to use this information, but asked me not to reveal the titles<sup>4</sup> of the pictures considered unsuitable for the television audience. Even I was shocked when I heard the names of the four films. Although I see few motion pictures, I had seen all of these. All had been granted seals by the motion picture code administrator and two had been honored by nominations for Academy Awards in fifteen categories, receiving awards in three of the loftiest of those categories.

Obviously Newton Minow did not go to Washington in order to bring about the "stultification" which Mr. Humphrey observed and which the record supports. Minow's dedication and zeal can only have sprung from a genuine desire to stimulate and to release, not to perpetuate what he honestly abhors: television's tendency to avoid the original and the controversial, its fear of the provocative and the shocking.

Where did Minow go wrong? He has been guilty of a number of errors stemming from his inexperience with the medium. His statements on violence are an example of a tendency to oversimplify a complex craft. Violence must always be interpreted in terms of the context in which it occurs. Slapstick comedy depends heavily on violence, where it has a meaning and effect quite different from the violence in melodrama, which in turn has a meaning and effect different from the violence in drama. Minow also seems to have aligned himself with those who naively regard television as a cause of various social ills. Television has been with us far too short a time to be, at present, anything but a symptom of those ills. He evidently assumes that television's aesthetic level has been fixed at its present low point by network executives who prefer it that way. Television has to provide well over 2000 hours of programming every season, and as Eric Sevareid once observed, "Considering the number of hours you have to fill, it's surprising there's enough mediocrity to go around." But Minow's major error was not one of inexperience but of miscalculation. He failed to understand that the single, compelling reaction among broadcasters to the enormous success of his program would be fear—fear of crippling regulation in the case of the networks, fear of renewal difficulties or actual license revocations in the case of licensees who have invested millions in plant and equipment and who have been told by Minow in his most baleful manner that "there is nothing permanent. . . about a broadcast license."

The public arts are created for a mass audience and for a profit; that is their essential nature. But they can at times achieve truth

and beauty, and given freedom they will achieve it more and more often. But imagination does not flourish in a climate of coercion. Television has steadily served to enlarge the range of our experience, but it will cease to do so in the atmosphere of panicked insecurity that pervades the medium today. A private enterprise devoted to the public arts cannot respond in health or vigor or courage to the actions of an enthusiastically supported government agency which has publicly declared its contempt for that enterprise and which can administer punishment only by execution.

Nothing affects our culture more deeply, or touches the spirit of the people more closely, than television. It therefore needs to be criticized, to be called to account, censured, threatened, on occasion publicly condemned, and on fewer occasions publicly praised. When this is done by Americans singly or in massive organizations, television can, and does, respond in a spirit of professionalism and public accountability. But it also responds in a spirit of health and confidence, aware of its rights and its wider obligations.

I do not believe the Congress intended to grant the privilege of public censure to the FCC—an agency of government with coercive control—the power of life and death over broadcasting. Imagine, if you can, the chaos that this nation would suffer were Chief Justice Warren given to constant public pronouncements of his and the Supreme Court's views on corporate and legislative behavior.

Outside the television industry, primarily in academic circles, there is an inclination to reject the idea that broadcasters, particularly those giant corporations, the networks, could possibly fear the FCC. The Commission, it is pointed out, has never succeeded in controlling broadcasting. This is true, but it is also history. Any man who scoffs at the idea that the networks could fear governmental control is hereby referred to Roger Blough, Chairman of the Board of United States Steel.

Today our society is ordered so compellingly by critical international circumstances that no one can seriously doubt that we have entered a new era of general social responsibility. *All* great corporations are today, as the Supreme Court once said of broadcasting, "impressed with the public interest." The argument that broadcast frequencies are scarce, thus putting broadcasting in a unique position, is no longer valid. The scarcity factor is not, and never was, confined to broadcasting. There is a limit to the ability of any medium to meet all the demands made upon it. But there are now too many AM radio stations in this nation. In Chicago (May 1962) Minow declared that the oversupply of AM stations was the most critical

problem faced by broadcasters today, thus nullifying the historic base for governmental control of radio broadcasting. With the opening of the UHF band the same problem will doubtless be faced by television in the near future. Therefore the idea that broadcasting is uniquely marked for governmental control, *in respect to any aspect of programming*, cannot be allowed to stand. We must address ourselves to the more meaningful question of the wisdom of allowing governmental control over *any* source of the public arts, information and orientation, keeping in mind that broadcasting is but one part of our mass media, all of which have the public responsibility inherent in their tradition of freedom and universal in the present era.

The proposition that Newton Minow's policies have proved dysfunctional is independent of the question of whether or not they are in violation of the Communications Act. However, I believe they are in violation of both the spirit and content of that Act. This is an old charge, and Minow met it several months ago with a characteristic point-blank counterattack delivered at a symposium on broadcasting at Northwestern University School of Law, Minow's Alma Mater.

He declared that the dictionary defines a "censor" as a "person whose task is to examine literature, motion pictures, etc., and to remove or prohibit anything considered unsuitable." Prior restraint, he indicated, is therefore the essence of censorship, and he went on to point out that the FCC's review of program performance is therefore not censorship, since it does not precede the act but follows it. "There *is* much censorship," Minow declared, "—even as it is defined here [that is, as prior restraint]—there is much censorship in broadcasting today. . . ."

"The censorship I speak of here takes two forms:

"First, rating censorship. . . ."

We might now take a thoughtful respite from Minow's argument while we ask ourselves how rating censorship can possibly be a form of prior restraint.

I agree with Minow that rating censorship exists. It is often pernicious in its effect on programming, but it is the same kind of censorship (his word, not mine) as that exercised by the FCC, occurring only after the fact, and constituting censorship because it affects the kind of programming that follows, just as the FCC may, by a public condemnation of a particular show or series, or type of series, sharply influence subsequent programming.

Mr. Minow took up this point at the symposium as follows:

“ ‘Well, all right,’ say the critics. ‘Maybe the Commission isn’t censoring by prior restraint—but it’s using a device just as awesome: fear of subsequent punishment. Maybe the broadcaster *is* free to air what he chooses, but then you say if you do not measure up to the Commission’s public interest standard, you may end up without a license. You have us groping.’

“They certainly would be groping,” Minow continued, “if it were so. But it’s not. The Commission requires applicants to set out their programming proposals. We take those proposals seriously whenever we grant a license. *If the applicant did what he said he would do, there obviously can be no controversy between him and the Commission at the time of renewal.*” (Italics mine)

In his first paragraph, quoting the critics, Minow is—whether he knows it or not—referring to specific types of programming. The fear his unnamed critics were talking about is not a free-floating anxiety among broadcasters but a specific response to the threats, criticisms, and actions of the FCC. The fear is functional, related to immediate activities in the production and scheduling of specific television programs.

Mr. Minow’s second paragraph, the minor premise of his syllogism, does not relate to specifics at all. When a licensee outlines his programming plans to the FCC in the form of a pledge to perform in the public interest he does so in terms of *categories*. He is not expected to be specific as to content and could not be if he chose. Can a prediction be honestly made, covering a period of three years, about a thing as volatile and time-orientated as programming? Mr. Minow’s conclusion is therefore false. But there is more than a flaw in his logic; there is an Aristotelian flavor to his either/or definition of censorship. In the actual arena of broadcasting, one program’s *post facto* review is another’s prior restraint.

However, the critical flaw in Minow’s polemic is not a failure of logic but a failure of awareness of the realities of the business of broadcasting. There are 508 television stations in America which have nothing to do with the conception and production of the programs they broadcast during prime time. These are the stations affiliated with the networks. Only 35 of America’s television broadcasters are not so affiliated. The networks and syndicators distribute the bulk of programming, which is largely supplied by Hollywood producers. Neither the networks, producers nor syndicators are licensed, and they have therefore made no pledges against which the FCC can compare performance, the factor on which Minow based his argument. In the summer of 1960, the FCC held hearings in Hollywood seeking

to clear up contradictory testimony as to who, if anyone, exercises control over program content. Those hearings were covered by Al Preiss, editor of *Telefilm*, who concluded that "only one point was made unmistakably certain: the individual stations, who are held responsible under federal law, have no part whatsoever in the creative process." As one involved in that process I can state that Mr. Preiss's conclusion is correct.

This would be a poor answer to Minow if he were taking the position that network programming is not in the public interest, and that licensees should therefore do their own programming; but the FCC has taken the official position that network programming is in the public interest.

Minow's advocates would point out that he did not rest his entire case on the argument of comparing promises with performance, and they would be right. Minow once said, in seeming contradiction of his later statement at Northwestern, "... simply matching promises and performance is not enough. I intend to do more."

And he has done more. He has kept an astonishing number of balls in the air. He has condemned private-eye shows here and claimed to like them there. He has censured specific programs here and protested there that his sole concern is with "balance" and "the overall programming performance of the licensee." Minow has made this latter statement frequently. It is the traditional position of the FCC, and was given support by the Supreme Court in three famous cases of license revocations. The court held that, *because of the scarcity of radio frequencies*, the Commission is concerned not only with the traffic on the air, but with "the composition" of that traffic.

Much is made by the FCC of these High Court decisions; but they were rendered over two decades ago, and involved cases so flagrant that when Commissioner Durr was once asked, "Wouldn't the three stations... have been prosecuted anyway, if there hadn't been an FCC, perhaps under criminal statutes?" Clifford Durr answered, "Yes, I think that's true." Minow has claimed that the Supreme Court has never failed to support the FCC in cases having to do with program control. This is a half-truth; the lower courts overruled an attempt by the FCC in 1953 to prohibit giveaway shows.

Minow suggested to his critics, in his Northwestern University speech, that their quarrel was "not with the Commission, it is with the Act itself." He can say that again, and if I know his public habits, he will. Under the deliberately inexact terms of the Act there are almost no grounds for judgment that are so clearly rooted in our laws and traditions that no question of censorship can arise. However, the three Supreme Court cases were of this rare kind.

Once the FCC steps beyond the limits of this kind of case, the Commissioners would appear to enter the forbidden ground of censorship, since the concept of "overall program performance" is a pure abstraction. It has reality only as it relates to a series of concrete programs. Thus if a license renewal is denied for poor overall performance there must have been value judgments made on programs. Value judgments are not the same as judgments of fact related to statutes. The former require that personal tastes, even prejudices, be called upon in forming an opinion. Or, to put it as baldly as it should be put, a denial of a license on programming grounds must mean that the licensee broadcast too many programs aimed at tastes different from those of the majority of a seven-man regulatory agency of government.

Minow and his supporters often make the point that the broadcasters' cry of censorship is pure cynicism, since the broadcasters tolerate censorship from sponsors. The point is a crashing irrelevancy. The influence of sponsors is decreasing with every season, but the essential point is that *broadcasters can say "No" to a sponsor*. I have heard them do it bluntly and often. They cannot say "No" to a powerful federal agency armed with censorial powers.

No one seriously questions the need for a Federal Communications Commission; it was originally created at the request of broadcasters (FRC). Its technical responsibilities alone would make it a vital agency of government. Under Minow it has already taken many legitimate steps toward a better popular culture, and there are more it can yet take. (Again the temptation to discuss collateral issues has to be resisted—in this case, the number of effective measures which seem clearly permissible under the law, but which Minow has failed to propose.) However, it seems all too obvious that an amendment to the Communications Act is urgently required, clarifying and delimiting the power of the FCC over programming. Once the Commission removes itself, or is removed, from its dysfunctional role of public scourge, it can do much to stimulate others to take up the task of policing public responsibility in broadcasting. Over 80 million Americans belong to one or more of nearly 200,000 voluntary, non-political organizations, clubs, societies and associations. Is it overly optimistic to assume that from these an audience can and will develop that is critical, articulate and effective? And is this not the only assumption we have a right to make in a society in which the separation of culture and state is almost as deeply rooted in tradition as the separation of church and state?

Many alternative proposals and possibilities for the enrichment of our culture through broadcasting are clearly viable, but we may

be denied them all if the many sensitive, articulate Americans who uncritically support Newton Minow's policies do not take a hard look at their position. Is it possible they have allowed their contempt for *kitsch*, their "dread of being caught in a profane mood," as Henry Rabassiere so aptly put it, to lead them into attitudes that contradict their basic views? If the Congress proposed to set up an agency with the power to decide whether or not publishers were operating in the public interest, would they sit back and applaud, or rise in a fury of protest?

If television is to remain free to be good, it must remain free to be bad.

As poet W. H. Auden once said:

We hear a lot about the gulf between the intellectual and the masses but not enough about the ways in which they are alike. If I meet an illiterate peasant we may not be able to say much to each other, but if we both meet a public official, we share the same feeling of suspicion; neither of us will trust him further than we can throw a grand piano. If we enter a government building together, we share the same feeling of apprehension that perhaps we shall never get out. Whatever the cultural differences between us, we both sniff in an official world the smell of unreality in which persons are treated as statistics. The peasant may play cards in the evening while I write poetry, but there is one political principle to which we both subscribe, namely, that among the half dozen or so things for which a man of honor must be prepared, if necessary, to die, the right to play, the right to frivolity, is not the least.

Highbrows and lowbrows of the world, unite!

#### NOTES

1. Although Paddy Cheyevsky, single-handedly, came close to making it a reality.
2. A task which has, throughout history, proved too much even for political philosophers.
3. Reported by producer Mark Goodson to the convention in Chicago of American Women in Radio and TV.
4. On May 21, 1962, *Daily Variety* headlined the story of the rejection of these pictures and named them. They were *The Sweet Smell of Success*, *The Fugitive Kind*, *The Defiant Ones*, and *I Want To Live*.
5. This exchange took place at Princeton in 1959 in a discussion on broadcasting and government regulation sponsored by the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions. Diffidently participating in the discussion was an unknown young attorney from Chicago named Newton N. Minow.

# CANADIAN TV—THE WASTELAND AND THE PASTURE

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DEAN WALKER

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When twenty top producers stalked indignantly from Canadian Broadcasting Corporation control room one summer's day in 1959, every daily in the country front-paged the story in knee-high type.

Cause of the fuss: the producers believed management had yielded to political pressure, that the prime minister had wrangled the removal of an ultra-critical morning talk show. Maybe one Canadian in a hundred had ever heard this program, yet producers, press, and public groups all obviously thought the issue so serious that they combined to keep the hullabaloo high until the producers had gone back to work, the program had been returned to the air, and the whole principle of CBC integrity and independence had been noisily rehashed and reaffirmed.

To politicians it was a clear warning: "Hands off the CBC!" The incident nicely illustrates the strengths and weaknesses in the way Canadians run their broadcasting.

As Americans are hyper-sensitively aware, there are always dangers

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when a broadcasting institution is run by government appointees and depends on public subsidy. This is exactly the Canadian situation. The major network gets 70% of its money in public grants and is directly responsible to Parliament through its publicly-appointed Board of Directors.

Must the CBC, then, to keep its income high, pander to Parliament's majority party, the government of the day? Skeptics and pragmatists would obviously think so; they would presume CBC must tread lightly. Yet CBC programs in 1962 are outspoken, lively, provocative and ambitious in a balanced schedule of both mass and minority appeal unique in North America.

If that 1959 furor pointed up a weakness in this system, the reaction to it showed a compensating strength which Canadians rely on. CBC has kept its standards high enough to attract the sort of principled employees who will protest suspected interference fiercely, publicly, and effectively. There is proof that CBC's standards stay high: after 25 years its programs are still provocative enough to make politicians *want* to interfere with them.

The 1959 incident finally petered out in diminishing headlines and Parliamentary backbench bickering. But only after the disputed program went back on the air.

Canadians are used to controversies exploding around their national broadcasting system. Its defenders watch politicians' attitudes towards it with a tissue-skinned sensitivity. A prime minister who merely wrote CBC a critical letter found himself forced to declare publicly and humbly that he had written as "a citizen," not as the country's leader. In mid-February, a government Member indignantly labelled a CBC production (of Feiffer's "Crawling Arnold") as "depraved, disgusting, absolutely immoral, and a rank violation of the sanctity of the Canadian home and family." Would the minister, he asked, exercise some control over the "apparently degenerate minds which often appear to have completely taken over CBC programming?" With the country's eyes on him, the minister replied properly that to interfere with any CBC program would be against Government policy and would help lay the foundations "for either a Fascist state or a Communist state." All he could do with complaints, he said, was pass them along without comment.

Not only politicians get mad. There is hardly a month without some group throwing a public tantrum over broadcast material. It is all par for the course for a corporation aiming to "serve Canadians in all walks of life; to meet in fair proportion their varying interests and tastes; to provide many opinions, reflections of many develop-

ments, of many aspects of life. . . ." Over any broadcast week, CBC tries to offer something for everybody and, as any group's meat is inevitably somebody else's poison, violent attacks on the network are a ho-hum affair.

"Arguing about the CBC is Canadians' favourite national sport," according to network president J. Alphonse Ouimet. "It is a healthy one. We say that CBC should have no taboos, no sacred cows, no areas of discussion which are automatically blanked out as things-we-just-don't-talk-about."

It is this outlook, backed by conscientious effort, which makes Canadian broadcasting such a bewildering, if often appealing, Strange New World to visiting Americans.

It is a complicated mixed-enterprise system the Canadians have, and involves public control at many levels. In television, the predominant network is a crown corporation (CBC) with sixteen "O-and-O" stations and 49 private enterprise affiliates. Competing with it in major markets is an eight-affiliate private enterprise network.

Both public and private broadcasters are bound by regulations created and policed by another government-appointed body, the Board of Broadcast Governors.

Most Canadians have a roughly similar political-economic-philosophic outlook to Americans, and are almost equally dedicated to the principle of private enterprise, so how can they allow such public interference in—of all things—broadcasting? This, after all, is the area in which U. S. Americans especially mistrust regulation.

Yet Canadians, on the whole, have not regretted public enterprise in broadcasting. Perhaps their 25 years' experience can offer lessons or warnings, for Canadians use broadcasting to help cope with uniquely north-of-the-border conditions. Their country is huge—27% larger than the U.S.—yet "occupied" by only 18 million Canadians, most of whom live near the U.S. border. Because they *are* so similar to U. S. Americans, Canadians consciously emphasize and nurture any differences they can find.

It is not easy to maintain a "nation" in any meaningful sense while living cheek-to-jowl and sharing the same language with an energetic neighbor with ten times the population. Canadians, however, decided 100 years ago that they wanted to do this and hang the effort and expense!

Since then, although the U. S. Marines have never moved in, the country has been continually invaded by U. S. capital, films, publications and—now—canned and broadcast television programs. 44% of the capital value of Canadian industry is currently held by U. S.

investors. "Canadian" editions of just two U. S. publications (*Time*, *Reader's Digest*) absorb 40% of consumer magazine ad revenue. U. S. filmed TV shows are temptingly cheap to Canadian broadcasters, and "live" broadcast signals respect no border. To Canadian nationalists, this hurts—and if most Canadians weren't nationalists, they wouldn't bother staying Canadian.

When Prime Minister Diefenbaker recently introduced a bill to stop so much Canadian advertising flowing into U. S. magazines, he summed up the general attitude:

"We in Canada," he declared "believe we have the right to assert the preservation of those things which are Canada's. Otherwise we shall in the days ahead be dependent entirely, or almost entirely, on the viewpoint of another nation."

The sentiment has been expressed through the years by Canadian thought-leaders and particularly by the enquiring Royal Commissions that Parliament appoints with such happy abandon. In 30 years, Canadian broadcasting has been probed and analyzed by three Royal Commissions and fifteen Parliamentary Committees—that's one every 21 months—and so far no commission, no committee has ever denied that broadcasting must be made to play a major part in creating and conserving things Canadian: it must present a service that is basically Canadian in content and character.

The Fowler Report on Broadcasting (1957) explained articulately why Canadians tolerate government in broadcasting:

...The very creation of the Canadian confederation and the territorial expansion of the original union across the continent were, to some extent at least, responses to pressures from the United States. The building of the first Canadian transcontinental railway was only the first of many devices to pull together into a nation the vast expanse of Canadian territory...The natural flow of trade, travel and ideas runs north and south. We have tried to make some part, not all, of the flow run east and west.

We have only done so at an added cost... However if the less costly method is always chosen, is it possible to have a Canadian nation at all? The Canadian answer has been uniformly the same for nearly a century. We are prepared, by measures of assistance, financial aid and a conscious stimulation, to compensate for our disabilities of geography, sparse population and vast distances, and we have accepted this as a legitimate role of government in Canada.

... We cannot choose between a Canadian broadcasting system controlled by the state and a Canadian competitive system in private hands. The choice is between a Canadian state-controlled system with some flow of programs east and

west across Canada, with some Canadian content and the development of a Canadian sense of identity, at a substantial public cost, and a privately owned system which the forces of economics will necessarily make predominantly dependent on imported American radio and television programs...

This, then, is the background to State involvement. Here is the shape it takes in television in 1962.

Top-o'-the-heap is the 15-member Board of Broadcast Governors, established in 1958 to regulate the entire industry, a job previously handled by CBC. It is the BBG which now recommends what license applications be granted and it is the BBG which writes and polices regulations for both the public and private sectors of the industry.

CBC is a Crown Corporation with its own Board of Directors—12 people of various occupations, and including the CBC president and vice-president. With sixteen stations of its own and 49 private enterprise affiliates, its French and English TV networks reach 94% of the population. It broadcasts both sustaining and sponsored shows, grosses in commercial revenue some \$38 million a year (\$25 million, net of agency commissions and affiliates payment) and receives about \$75 million a year in Parliamentary grants.

CTV is a completely commercial, newly-licensed private enterprise network with affiliates in, so far, eight markets. It has no "O-and-O" stations, but each affiliate owns network stock. Total station participation is currently 20% (with a BBG-set limit of 49%).

After Canadian television was launched in 1952, only one license was granted in each market. The theory was to capitalize on the private enterprise demand for licenses and have business help spread the medium to the less profitable hinterlands, thus developing a national service as quickly as possible for the least public money.

The theory worked: in eight and one-half years 85 stations and satellites were opened (65 of them privately-owned) and hooked to the world's longest network (4,000 miles). By the time of the Fowler Commission most Canadians could receive Canadian TV.

Private enterprise broadcasters had beefed to the Commission about having their advertising competitor, CBC, also their regulator. Most private broadcasters' complaints did not impress the commissioners ("...free enterprise," the Report suggested, "has failed to do as much as it could in the development of Canadian talent, not because of a lack of freedom but because of a lack of enterprise..."), but they did recommend setting up the independent Board of Broadcast Governors to regulate both CBC and the private enterprisers.

The private broadcasters cheered, yet may have been better off with the devil they knew, because the new BBG immediately wrote far more comprehensive regulations than CBC ever had. Central themes: all stations must carry at least 55% Canadian programs; all stations must be at least 75% Canadian owned.

The Board, chaired by a former university president, could not have been expected to know the business ground-rules of broadcasting. It erred, for example, when it made the 55% requirement take force on an April 1st, the end of a season and the worst possible time to launch new schedules. It later reversed this decision.

With its annual \$75 million in public money, CBC can easily meet the 55% requirement and it can help its private enterprise affiliates meet theirs. But the new network and stations have only commercial revenue. Could the Board fully estimate the difficulties it was forcing on these licensees? Could the Parliamentarians who originally drafted the phrase "basically Canadian in content and character"? Can public control work?

The difficulties in Canadian programming are, of course, due to market size. CTV stations reach only 65% of 18 million Canadians. Production budgets, then, can be only a fraction of U. S. budgets, and line costs in such a huge country are obviously high. Most Canadians can tune U. S. border stations, with their big-budget shows needing no other motive than mass appeal. For CTV Canadian shows to have to compete with these seems unrealistic, at best.

But this is not altogether the BBG's concern. As a public controller, it must put national motives first, and three Royal Commission reports and several Parliamentary Committees have agreed Canadians must be offered Canadian shows. Although the private enterprise stations obviously cannot run long at a loss, public controllers see no need to guarantee them especially large profits. By the Massey Report yardstick, businessmen as such have neither civil rights nor property rights in broadcasting.

The applicants for the new station licenses knew they would have to meet the 55% requirement before they applied. But they all believed major market stations in Canada must inevitably be as profitable as Ontario's Roy Thomson had found independent TV in Scotland. "It's like a license to print money," he had reported to them glowingly. To win a long-awaited "second station" in Canada every applicant turned up at the public hearings with a parade of promises any experienced broadcaster could have recognized as unfeasible. Significantly, Thomson himself did not apply.

Can public control work? Could a board of broadcast outsiders be expected to distinguish the flattering from the feasible? Yet, presumably it was on the basis of these extravagant promises that it awarded the licenses. All promises are binding, the Board warned, but many new stations have not kept them. So far, the Board has not clamped down on such offenders.

Can public control be free of political bias? BBG chairman Dr. Andrew Stewart calls himself non-political and declares that, before his appointment, he was promised there would be no political interference in Board decisions. However, majority rule prevails in the BBG, which is stacked with Progressive Conservatives. Each member makes a "public service" vow on appointment and probably means to keep it; but, as even Dr. Stewart has wondered: "Who knows what goes through their heads at the moment of voting." Many Canadians believe there has been political bias in granting licenses.

The Chairman nevertheless believes that even a Board heavily but unofficially weighted with government supporters may make more meaningful decisions than an American-style Commission, where appointments are officially by party and, on any crucial issue, the vote mostly splits along party lines. The Broadcast Governors' individual votes, he pointed out, are not recorded.

The Progressive Conservative government of course denies that it leans on the Board to grant licenses to its supporters—yet its supporters have somehow felt the need to point out anyway that under a Liberal government in pre-BBG days, when CBC made the license decisions, most winners were Liberals. These to-and-fro accusations are taken seriously in Canada where the political spoils system is not willingly acknowledged.

On whatever basis the licensees were picked, they now face serious problems.

Just to avoid bankruptcy, they restrict their Canadian content to game-shows, interviews, teenage bandstands and other low-budget possibilities. They complain that CBC uses public money to compete unfairly for advertising dollars, that the Corporation grew suddenly commercial-minded after CTV went on the air. Yet, in chasing commercial revenue more vigorously, CBC merely follows still another directive from the Fowler Commission and from the latest Parliamentary Committee.

Of course, television in most Canadian markets has always been competitive. Two-thirds of the population can tune U. S. stations. Before Canadian television even got started in 1952, Toronto alone had 146,000 TV receivers, all tuned to Buffalo stations. Torontonians

now, with three U. S. networks, two Canadian networks, a Canadian independent and even a Telemeter pay-TV system available, probably have more real programming choice than any other viewers in the world. In *this* market, public controllers have ordered the new station to offer 55% Canadian programs.

Is Canadian television the better for all these complicating elements of public control? The vital question is, of course: Better for whom?

For private enterprise broadcasters, the controls definitely limit commercial scope and profits. However, most of CBC's private enterprise affiliates have done reasonably well financially. Although they must carry sustaining CBC shows without charge, they pick up more than U. S. affiliates would on network commercial shows. Relationships between CBC and its affiliates are currently cordial.

As for the "second stations," Dr. Stewart at least is still sure they will learn to live with and cope with his Board's regulations. "They are having their troubles now," he conceded recently, "and this is going to be a bad summer. But, as their cities and the Gross National Product grow, they *will* prove tremendously profitable."

Businessmen, inherently anti-public enterprise, have mixed feelings about the regulations. They recognize the issues are complex. Many of their own enterprises flourish only because of tariff protection—a form of nationalistic public control in itself.

Once, with so many sustaining shows on CBC, advertisers faced a TV time shortage; but now, with two networks available and CBC acting more commercially, this problem has largely disappeared.

And now some advertisers and even some private broadcasters suspect there may be business advantages in some aspects of TV public control. When a Canadian company buys, say, a Western, it can after all be sure its program will not be submerged amongst a dozen similar shows.

Confirmed private enterprisers in Canada once gazed wistfully at the American broadcasting system with its anything-goes commercialism; but now some wonder if such careful attention to some short-sighted sponsors' aims is not actually reducing TV's commercial effectiveness within the U. S. The American medium has a ratings-prompted sameness, while Canadian companies place their advertising in a varied schedule which, in CBC's case at least, includes both mass and minority shows, frequent controversy, genuine vitality, and plenty of national identification.

Even the president of a "second station" recently mused: "I don't really object to having a BBG and regulations. I wouldn't like

them to be able to tell me when to sweep my floors, but I suspect that if all we broadcasters were allowed to go hog-wild we might make decisions against the long-term interests of the medium. We need an over-riding authority—over the CBC, too—and these BBG men aren't demagogues."

But the values and drawbacks of public control can only meaningfully be discussed in terms of the *public* advantage. Has mixed-enterprise Canadian television been to the advantage of the viewers, the 18 million Canadians Ouimet calls "CBC's shareholders"?

Certainly Canadian television in 1962 is no wasteland. It is, rather, a pasture of ideas, comment, analysis and, above all, of effort. Artistry is frequent and so is experiment. CBC programs won 22 Ohio State Institute awards and honorable mentions this year. Admittedly its "mass appeal" shows, apart from a hockey game, a country music show, and a panel, rarely appeal to the masses as effectively as top-rated U. S. programs. But CBC's middlebrow and reasonably high-brow offerings, mixed with its general entertainment shows, make it probably the best-balanced network in the world.

The Corporation keeps out of the numbers game. Ouimet stated: "A great deal of nonsense is talked these days about what is referred to euphemistically as 'giving the people what they want.' This usually means finding out what programs are the most popular and providing nothing else. This might be an easy way to stay out of trouble, but I don't think it's a way of 'Giving people what they want.'

"Each of 18,000,000 Canadians," he continued, "has his own separate and distinctive tastes. Each has a right to his freedom of taste, along with the other basic freedoms. They just cannot be classified into categories such as highbrow, middlebrow, lowbrow. I think it is a great mistake to try. Some broadcasting systems are founded on the assumption that this problem can best be solved by applying the rule of numbers. According to this system, the test of a program's worth is the size of its audience. This isn't a solution to the problem. It is simply a decision to ignore it."

Under this outlook, CBC puts on a ballet, now and again, and opera and serious drama. In terms of "adult education" this apparently pays off. Ballet in Canada has never before had such public support at the box office, and amateur theatricals are flourishing. "Many people," believes Ouimet, "don't realize they have the capacity to appreciate something 'better' until they are—even accidentally—exposed to it."

Audiences seem to increase steadily for the "quality" shows, and this flies in the face of Robert Sarnoff's FCC declaration that "the

artificial stimulation of government prodding of broadcasters will not speed viewers to change their tastes." It conflicts somewhat with Frank Stanton's view that "the *fast* way to growth or improvement in free societies is often the wrong way. The only sure way is through the increased acceptance by the public of what is good and the increased rejection of what is shoddy. This is sometimes a painfully slow process."

Any sort of "cultural speedup," U. S. network chiefs declare, is impossible; broadcasters must wait until the public proves that it wants something "better" before they will supply it.

CBC does give people something better, whether they want it or not. For those who do, this makes it a satisfying network to have around. For those who don't, the network—and its competitors—also supplies Westerns and private-eyes.

The more stimulating Canadian programs do draw a comparatively small audience, but nationalists argue that in television even minorities are huge. Ouimet said:

"Perhaps *only* 250,000 people will watch one of the 'heavier' operas. This is more people than could be accommodated in a year's run at the biggest theatre. And in the audience of 250,000 may well be someone, say up in Northern Saskatchewan, to whom this program represents the only opportunity he will ever have to see that opera."

In these terms, 250,000 people are a "small" audience only to an advertiser, and Canadians have public control precisely to avoid advertiser control.

Not all Canadians agree with CBC's catering to minorities. Plenty moan about too much ballet and not enough wrestling. From the better shows the viewers stay away in millions. It is the U. S. series which someone once lumped together as "chewing gum for eyeballs" which attract the mass Canadian audiences.

Yet, without public control forcing the pace of Canadian production, the situation would be worse. CBC and BBG can now at least say: "Canadian material is there if you want it."

Public control obviously works for talent. CBC in 1960 paid \$12,729,000 to Canadian performers and \$2,658,000 to writers and musicians. Its French and English television production centers make Montreal and Toronto the continent's busiest TV cities outside Hollywood and New York. CBC, with its two languages, two TV and four radio networks, broadcasts more programs—100,000 a year—than any other organization in the world. The extent of this artificially prompted activity is out of all proportion to population.

It is expensive—but talent gets a better break than it could expect in any other English-speaking country of similar size.

CBC TV programs are of export standard: RKO-General bought a quarter-million dollars' worth last year; Associated Redifusion bought \$300,000 worth, and there are other international sales.

Unfortunately, perhaps, talent is exportable too. Top performers head across the border for the king-sized rewards of Broadway, Hollywood and Madison Avenue. CBC-trained Canadian directors—Norm Jewison, Stanley Harris, David Greene, Arthur Hiller, Fletcher Markle—are in demand on U. S. networks. The recent Judy Garland "special," probably a classic of its type, reunited CBC writers Peppiatt and Aylesworth, and director Jewison.

CTV will add stations to its network but will never be as nationally significant as CBC. It will not have the public revenue, will not be obliged to cater to the smaller settlements as CBC must. CBC programs of any significance will always have top impact on Canadian consciousness.

Is it undemocratic for a small group of CBC program executives, guided by personal opinions rather than ratings, to decide what Canadians should see? Frank Stanton warned: "The more sophisticated who are restless with the type of entertainment that appeals to others may need a rededication to that hopeful experiment that is our democracy."

Yet it can be argued that there is more democracy when the range of programming to be made available is decided by people ultimately responsible to the public (via Parliament) than by advertisers ultimately responsible only to shareholders. Certainly advertisers want to "please" the greatest number of consumers; but, as CBC-man Gene Hallman suggested to the NETRC recently: "Surely the broadcaster's responsibility is to create and maintain a genuine sense of choice, variety, and programming experience in recognition of the individual and pluralistic basis of your society. Unless television can do this, it may become one of those institutions in American life which worried de Tocqueville—an agency expressing in modern form the tyranny of the majority in a democratic society."

CBC looks for "balance," aims to please the minorities as well as the majorities, so that "every week in the year, every Canadian in the land will find a fair share of programming to his taste on the CBC networks." Yet it cannot carry *too many* esoteric programs or the voice of the voter will boom loud on Parliament Hill.

Crux of democratic control over CBC is the Parliamentary Committee where thirty MP's from both sides of the House take a fine-

tooth-comb approach to every aspect of the Corporation's procedures. There is a risk, as one writer has pointed out, that even Parliamentarians can't tell the difference between a first-class and a second-class network—but someone must be allowed ultimately to speak for "the people." There was a case when a Committee member seriously asked why the network could not have saved \$143,000 on a major production of *Peter Grimes* by having an amateur group perform it. It just so happened, he pointed out, that there was a particularly capable amateur group in his constituency.

It was less amusing and showed at least a commercial disadvantage in public control when a Committee forced CBC to publicly reveal all sponsor expenditures.

Does public control interfere with freedom of speech? Dr. Stewart is concerned about his own Board's regulations which demand equal time for all sides on controversial subjects. (U. S. broadcasters remember a similar dilemma in Presidential election coverage.) "There is a danger here," he admitted. "If it proves too difficult to find time for all sides of a case, the stations may avoid controversy at all. And avoiding controversy is against the interests of freedom of speech."

Quimet said: "Freedom in broadcasting means the basic right of the individual to hear a variety of viewpoints about topics of current interest, to have the main points of view presented fairly by a system or a service which is completely independent of control by any one element of our society. Freedom in broadcasting also means that if a subject is of concern to a significant section of the population, then broadcasting should provide a platform for discussion of that subject, whether the subject is controversial or not, whether it pleases some and displeases others."

CBC focuses sharply on public issues and strives mightily to maintain its integrity. A 1932 internal memo, for example, is still in force; it states that no member of the Board of Directors or of management may interfere in the news department's choice or handling of items. No news or public affairs show is sponsored. And the network standards apply equally at the local level where they have set a standard of independence which seems to percolate through the broadcasting fraternity. "We have proved in 25 years," Quimet stated flatly, "that a public service paid for by the public can be operated without any threat to freedom of speech."

In terms of political freedom the Corporation does have a tender underside in its dependence on Parliament. Its head office in Ottawa is directly opposite Parliament House. Its safeguards against political

interference are nebulous and not guaranteeable. Yet they appear to be effective. Ron Fraser, a vice-president, admitted: "There *are* risks in a broadcasting set-up like ours but we think they are worth taking for the end result. The strengths and weaknesses of CBC are the strengths and weaknesses of democracy. If a weakness shows, it will be in *people*, in the CBC or BBG. Everything we do here is exposed, under glass, in public—we are called to account."

This glare of publicity is a genuine safeguard. Ouimet explained, "The Corporation is the most talked about, written about, editorialized on, praised and damned, of all Canadian institutions other than the government. We have no closets in which to hide our skeletons. We live in a huge glass house, with some 3,500,000 windows, and there we are, every minute of the day, with all our qualities and all our imperfections for everyone to see."

Dailies and magazines spend enormous space analyzing, criticizing and occasionally praising CBC. Pressure groups and pro and con lobbies are always active. (CBC itself does not officially lobby on Parliament Hill.) In the last few years CBC has been in so many wildly headlined scrapes (it is most frequently in trouble in conservative Roman Catholic Quebec) and met such criticism in press and Parliament that its position might have seemed shaky. But Ouimet thinks the opposite may be true. The troubles have just made people more conscious of CBC and what it tries to do. "They have brought out a lot of latent support for us in the community," he believes.

Similarly, while the licensing of second stations and network gave businessmen a new excuse to mount their scrap-the-CBC chargers, the limited budget programs, which are all that second stations can supply, show people just what their money (a-penny-per-day-per-Canadian is the official amount) in public grants buys via CBC. Before the new stations started, CBC could never effectively counter the suggestion that "private enterprise could do it all and better and it would not cost the taxpayer a penny." Now any viewer can see that no matter how good a job private enterprise can do in television, in Canada at least it cannot yet do the job public enterprise does—there is just not the commercial money available.

Most elements of the press, while always happy to moan about CBC and its 8,000 employees, do not seriously question its *raison d'être*, and most journalists and publishers protect its integrity and independence zealously. Some are super-sensitive. Witness this recent *Toronto Daily Star* editorial:

Revenue Minister George Nowlan did well last week when he forth-rightly turned down a Conservative back-

bencher's request that the government interfere with CBC programming. But his defense of CBC freedom from political intervention lost some of its glow because of his pointed suggestion that CBC senior officials do their own censoring.

Mr. Nowlan, who reports to Parliament for the CBC, thus rejected out of hand any direct use of his influence to cancel a CBC show. But in almost the same breath he seemed to put *indirect* pressure on the CBC management by suggesting it sharpen its censorship.

Is there a veiled threat here, to producers and CBC management, that programs must be toned down? Is this implicit use of his influence to get the CBC to tread so carefully that nobody, even Mr. Nowlan, will be ruffled?

Tradition—the record—bulwarks independence. CBC *has* kept its nose clean most of the time for 25 years in a country not yet a hundred years old. A politician or pressure group cannot interfere here lightly.

In the long run, though, integrity does depend on people. The 1959 scandal, CBC executives now agree, could not have happened had not the upper echelons been temporarily weakened after the resignation of a president, the heart attack of his successor, and the appointment of a new Board of Directors, all coinciding with a strike and an investigation by a hostile Parliamentary Committee. In the midst of this, one over-tired executive seriously erred—but even then the CBC was protected because people lower in the hierarchy suspected what had happened and remedied the situation with one drastic purgative of publicity.

Integrity depends on people, and top CBC executives must be considered dedicated. Ouimet, for example, heads an organization which produces more programs than any other in the world and feeds them over two television and four radio networks. For this he earns a not-too-princely \$20,000 a year—maybe a sixth of a U. S. network president's salary.

Collected statements by Dr. Stewart suggest integrity, too. For example, he said recently:

"There is always the danger of the BBG becoming too much of a benevolent despot. We should be watched very closely by Parliament. If Parliament thinks we are assuming too much power, we should be slapped down or fired immediately." Again, he has declared: "We have to resist the bureaucratic tendency to rush into regulations."

"I believe that by setting up the Board," he explained once, "Parliament consciously denied the argument that broadcasting can be left to the direction of the normal criteria and judgments of the market

place. And I am unwilling to conclude that Parliamentary approval of regulation is merely another evidence of paternalism, a further eroding of basic democratic principles and procedures. Our job is to reflect the *intention* of Parliament and the Act, not to dictate *our* tastes to the public, not to run broadcasting as *we'd* like to have it." He keeps close by him a well-thumbed copy of the Act. "Our position is substantially the same as Mr. Minow's. We do not believe it is censorship to make the stations do what they said they would do."

CBC spent most of its first 25 years under a Liberal government which was basically sympathetic to public enterprise in certain areas such as broadcasting. Now it operates under a Conservative government ostensibly more devoted to private enterprise, and pressures on the Corporation have increased.

Under a Conservative government since 1957, CBC has lost its regulatory powers to the BBG. It lost some commercial revenue to the newly-licensed stations. It suffered the most hostile Parliamentary Committee in its history. It lost some control over its affiliates (which may now accept cross-programming from the other network). It was refused capital grants for new Toronto and Montreal headquarters. The blows were so continuous that some Canadians believed CBC was in danger.

But it was pretty safe. CBC by now is woven into the national texture. Canadians of the lowest common denominator—right down where the voter lives—are now conscious of its aims. Yes, they would like a little more wrestling or some new hospital dramas, but no basic changes. The public groups—church, educational, rural, labour societies—guard CBC jealously because, as Gene Hallman put it, "they were involved in the very architecture of public broadcasting."

CBC has critics, but the most vocal need only cross the border to quieten their complaints. Viewers accustomed to having a "balanced" service available just can't stand most American TV. One Toronto editor covered the Washington beat for a year. After the FCC-sponsor hearings he reported with amazement to Canadians that in U. S. television "taboo is piled on restriction and restriction piled on taboo."

He wrote in horror:

TV couldn't offend, couldn't stimulate thought, couldn't touch serious social themes, couldn't cuss, couldn't stoop to slang, couldn't ridicule stuffed shirts or stuffy corporations, couldn't poke fun at fools, couldn't gag on mouthwash, couldn't even twist a heel on a cigarette.

Reading the evidence (before the FCC) I remembered a snatch of conversation in Toronto with Morley Callaghan,

the author and seasoned radio and television commentator. "You may leave the CBC for any one of a hundred reasons," he said, "but if you're leaving for private TV crying 'I choose freedom,' you must be a little addled."

"I can understand now what he meant," the writer concluded, "and why most American TV is deadly dull, and why, after grouching about it for years, I actually miss the CBC."

Chauvinism? Hardly. This piece appeared in *Maclean's* magazine, whose publishers own a slice of the CTV network.

Major contrast between CBC and U. S. broadcasting is in its attitude to sponsors. CBC says it prepares a balanced schedule to meet all its aims, then tries to sell segments. Advertisers rarely carry the whole production costs of a Canadian show.

Obviously it is only the public money which lets CBC take this holier-than-thou attitude, but the aloofness from sponsor control does have advantages. General Motors, for example, wanted to cut a gallows scene from a *G.M. Theatre*, so CBC promptly handed back their money, left the scene in, and ran the show without commercials.

Canadian public control forces better broadcasting from private enterprisers, too.

For the second stations, life is so difficult under the regulations that they must generate ingenuity to find new, low-cost Canadian program ideas, or go broke. Results: CTV devised a unique public affairs show. Its cost-per-thousand is sky-high but, sponsored by a telecommunications company, it features a Telex machine built right into the show. A TV Bingo game, sponsored by supermarkets, is a daily obsession with tens of thousands of housewives and has more commercial twists than a platter of pretzels. Several stations link with local universities to offer credit courses. The game-show has made a big comeback.

Prodded by the Canadian-content rule, the private stations extend their hours and fabricate Canadian programs of all types and of all standards from God-awful to not-bad, just so they can run profitable U. S. shows for 45% of the time. If their Canadian shows often resemble "quota quickies," at least they do show more Canadians discussing more Canadian subjects than ever before. They do put more Canadian ingenuity to work. They do hire more Canadian talent. They do put more excitement into the business of being a Canadian. They *are* "basically Canadian in content and character."

And, to that extent, the Canadian experience proves public control can work.

I think it is worth-while taking a good hard look at some of these loaded words "freedom," "democracy," "competition" as they apply in broadcasting. What do people who speak about "freedom" in broadcasting really mean? So far as I can make out they usually mean freedom from Government control. We are, of course, all against Government control—as we are all, no doubt, against sin. We are all willing to go on the barricades to defend broadcasting against that iniquity. But who are these rather curious allies who stand with us on the barricades beating off the same government forces in the name of freedom? I am rather afraid that they are preparing to stab us in the back. What is, in fact, their interest in freedom? Don't they want to control broadcasting for economic ends—for selfish ends—just as intensely as any government? And why should broadcasters regard bondage to economic interests as "freedom" and bondage to state interests as "slavery"? Both conditions are bondage. And, if we are to serve the public which I would declare to be our main responsibility, we cannot be both bond and free.

*H. Carleton Greene,  
Director-General of the BBC.  
at the Alfred I. duPont Awards Foundation Dinner  
Washington, March 26, 1962*

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It has always been the mark of educated philistinism to despise entertainment and amusement because no "value" could be derived from them. In so far as we are all subject to life's great cycle, we all stand in need of entertainment and amusement in some form or other, and it is sheer hypocrisy or social snobbery to deny that we can be amused and entertained by exactly the same things which amuse and entertain the masses of our fellow men. As far as the survival of culture is concerned, it certainly is less threatened by those who fill vacant time with amusement and entertainment than by those who fill it with some haphazard educational gadget in order to improve their social standing.

*Hannah Arendt  
"Society and Culture"  
in Daedalus, Spring 1960*

# TV VERSUS CHILDREN

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SONNY FOX

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People who push habit-forming drugs to children are looked upon with a loathing reserved for the worst offenders against our society. And properly so. I submit, however, that most TV programs for youngsters purvey a kind of habit-forming narcotic that, like the real thing, dulls the mind and stunts the growth of its victims. Those who doubt this might profitably study the glazed eyes and slack jaws of the addicts who sit by the hour—comatose and contented.

Since the child is father of the man, how in heaven's name are we going to get better adult television in the years to come if the children chew the hashish we give them now? The tragedy is that we know the potential of TV for children. We know it can stimulate as well as tranquilize. It can *inform* as well as *deform*. It can take minds still malleable and leave an imprint of good.

But what do we generally do? For one thing we give our children almost a steady diet of fantasy. Ah, but fantasy is a charming and important part of being young! Of course it is. But part of growing up is separating fantasy from reality. The children must be informed that the world they live in is not occupied solely by evil villains or strong, righteous heroes. They must know that children cannot fly planes, build bridges, and sail boats without growing and learning; that heroes are made and not born (and so are bricklayers). That human life is sacred and not just so many actors thumping to the ground with no one to cry or weep or toll the loss. Where on television are they to learn this?

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*Irwin "Sonny" Fox* began his broadcasting career with Allen Funt's *Candid Microphone* in 1947, and later served as a reporter for the Voice of America. From 1954 to 1961 he has been active in the field of children's programs, first as host of the St. Louis series *The Finder*, and later of CBS-TV's *Let's Take a Trip* and ABC-TV's *On Your Mark*. Having recently formed his own production company, Mr. Fox is now filming a series of children's books.

What else do we do? We distort attitudes and sow wrong ones in the minds of our young addicts. This is what I call "silent violence." I am constantly appalled that parents who are quick to forbid gunfire and violence of the overt sort so often fail to see the other kinds. What day ends without some family-type program doing its quiet violence to the accepted structure of family life? Fathers are dunces—mothers simpering fools. Children are slick and clever and witty. Over and over—again and again. Will a constant young viewer always make the distinction between the tube and the home? I wonder.

What about respect for elders other than the family? And attitudes towards racial groups—what of them? Thirty years ago the racial stereotypes of "Our Gang" were accepted. Do they still have a place in our society today? Not in my house. And the parents, who are quick to forbid a child to play with another if they detect attitudes with which they disagree, go on happily with one ear cocked for gunfire, content that they are doing their job.

Perhaps you have noticed that I have not hit out at cartoons. Except for the fact they train our young addicts early in life to the habit of over-viewing, I do consider most cartoons nothing worse than a waste of time. Young children waste a vast amount of time anyway, so if they choose to do it watching cartoons I cannot get upset. Certainly there is violence and noise in cartoons—that's what attracts them. But this is not realistic violence. When a cat chases a mouse no one frets. Everyone knows the mouse will not be caught. (Please do not apply the above to the so-called adult cartoons.)

As appalling as *what* they watch is the *amount of time* children spend watching their sets. A recent survey indicated that after a child is finished with eating and sleeping and going to school and doing homework, he has 67 hours of leisure time left. Do you know how much is spent watching TV? Over half! Thirty-seven hours a week. *Thirty-seven!* If you work a forty-hour week just think of almost the entire time spent watching TV. It is about as long as a child spends going to school. Do I, as a father, spend that much time with my children? I commute. Figuring the nights I don't get home at all, and including the weekend, I doubt if I spend that much time with my youngsters. (Of course, my children better not be spending 37 hour a week with that machine either.)

Do you wonder that I called it "addiction"? Well, now—whose responsibility is it to control programming and viewing? How are we to upgrade the quality and curb the quantity? The easy answer is—we all have the responsibility—parents, broadcaster, performer, and

advertiser. But I hope to establish that the sum total of the willingness to accept this responsibility does not add up to a good enough answer.

Let's take parents and see how they handle their end of things. At P.T.A. meetings I address there are always parents who ask me how to keep the children from watching too much TV. Now why don't they ask me how to keep them from saying dirty words? Or from eating paint off the window sill? Would these parents let their children pick out their meals for themselves or their own clothes? Mine would be eating cookies, candy and "Cokes" if they made up the menu.

And yet these lovely well-meaning parents have never learned to accept responsibility for controlling television viewing of their children. A while ago I conducted a small survey among the children who attend my programs (about 150 a week locally). I told them that people were quite upset about TV programs they were watching and asked them if they had any ideas on what ought to be done to make TV better for them. I suppose if I kept asking long enough, someone would have mentioned Leonard Bernstein or news. The consensus was that the horror movies should be moved up earlier in the afternoon because some of them missed them on school nights when they had to go to bed.

Of course that's what they want. That's why as adults we are here to see to it that they get what they need to grow up healthfully and able to cope with this world they are hopefully to inherit. If we do not accept this responsibility as parents, then we fail our children. It is surely the responsibility of the parents to *control* TV viewing—yet they often fail to accept it.

Now, what about the responsibility of the people on the sending end? There are some hopeful spots here—but not nearly enough to indicate a significant change in the pattern of programming for our children.

There is no doubt that Mr. Minow's concern with children's programming has helped get programs like *Discovery* or *1-2-3, Go!* off the drawing boards and on the air, but the vast preponderance of peak weekday and weekend TV fare for children is still about where it was before Mr. Minow waggled his finger.

Not that the networks don't admit the need for better programming. It is the old problem of who is going to foot the bill.

So, we pass on to the sponsors. A fair estimate of their position would be: "We are in business to sell merchandise, not to uplift the cultural level of a nation. That job belongs to the schools and the

home." So, for every Shell Oil Company that sponsors a Leonard Bernstein, there are a myriad who clamor for spots on a cartoon show or a minute buy on *Maverick*.

The performer? He just takes orders and, if he is conscientious, he won't say, "Tell your mother"; he'll say, "Ask your mother," and that is about the limit of his responsibility.

The sum total then of parental, broadcaster, and advertiser acceptance of responsibility for better programming leaves us with a lot of pious promises and not a large amount of action.

Well, then, what is the answer? I would suggest that in our present society—where private enterprise is unable or unwilling to meet its responsibilities, the government must assume the job.

Given the economic structure of network television, I do not see how any lasting change in the profile of its programming can be made. After all, network broadcasting is a profit-making, stock-holding corporation even as are General Electric or General Motors. At the end of the fiscal year, if the profits aren't there, heads will roll, if indeed they haven't already. It has happened many times at all three networks. Therefore, it behooves whoever is running the show to treat with reserve those schemes which promise critical praise and little monetary return. TV is, after all, the greatest mass medium of them all. There is no cheap way of programming for the minority. Unlike magazines, it cannot tailor its content to a specific audience. The advertiser watches his cost-per-thousand like you and I count calories. And, even though five million is quite a lot of people, it is too small a group to program for if another program can grab off several times that amount. TV is absolutely right in saying that it gives most people what they want to watch the most.

But what of the lost minority? Are they to be denied the fruits of television because their tastes run to different things? In the 1930s the electric power companies said, "We find it economically unfeasible to run a power line ten miles down the road to serve half a dozen farmers." So the Government said, "O.K., but why should these farmers be denied the joys of this development?" Thus the Rural Electrification Administration was born.

We have a Government Printing Office to disseminate information that the Government feels is vital to the welfare of its citizens. There's some stuff coming out of GPO that a commercial printing company would not touch with a ten-foot stick of pica. But the government has accepted the responsibility of keeping all segments of our country informed on matters of concern to themselves.

So we come back to TV. We find a situation where a segment of our

population—adults as well as children—is not being served by the three networks, or by most local stations. The answer is, I think, clear. The government should say to the three networks: “All right, gentlemen, you continue to serve the majority in the best way you know how. We will now take a portion of the millions in taxes you pay and use them to serve those you cannot. We will set up a fourth network that will be on after school, between 4 and 6 p.m., and then again at night, between 7:30 and 11 p.m. While you program *American Bandstand* and cartoons and old movies, we will put on programs about other countries, and news of science just for the children. In the evening, while you are programming a Western and a private-eye show and a situation comedy, we will present a two-and-a-half-hour opera in English, or a discussion of disarmament, or an important English documentary. We do not expect people who enjoy what you are showing to turn to us. We do hope some of the sets which are now dark may light on us. And if, by chance, a Western devotee might want to sample an opera that has no horse in it, well here we are!”

Then the gentlemen at the three networks could sleep easily again with visions of sugar plums dancing in their heads. And we, as a civilized nation, could proudly say we have accepted our responsibility to our children and to our adults. We have recognized the tremendous potential for good in this little box and we have realized it. We are giving our children and our adults more than bread and circuses. We are giving them a window on a world that is in serious trouble. And we hope maybe that this will help them realize what a great and wonderful world it can be—and that it needs saving.

If this generation can just keep from getting blown to bits, and if we start stimulating our youngsters with some healthy doses of worthwhile programming, maybe someday it will be said of TV, “It helped make a better world.”

What a proud day that would be for all of us in the Academy.

Considering the heavy barrage outside, one might reasonably expect some common cause and purpose within the fortress, but this is not the case. A battle-hardened veteran, and a field observer, of TV's wars reflect here upon the struggle for control of programs inside the walls.

*Mark Goodson* explains the subtleties of the tenuous, every-man-for-himself relationship which program packagers hold with both networks and network sponsors, and points out that the packager's only avenue to survival is his ability to specialize in creating programs which the others have neither the time nor resources to produce.

*Merrill Panitt* believes it is essential that full authority over programming be given to the agency which shoulders the responsibility—the network. This can be accomplished, Mr. Panitt argues, by breaking down the network-advertiser relationship brought into television from radio, and setting in its place a sales and programming structure which is consistent with the realities of television operation.

# THE ETERNAL TRIANGLE

NETWORK-PACKAGER-ADVERTISER

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MARK GOODSON

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After a Broadway show has been selling tickets for a few short weeks, the leading lady can pretty much determine whether she should renew the sublease on her Manhattan duplex or make discreet inquiries to the coast about getting the interim tenants out of her house and pool in the San Fernando Valley.

Not only will the star and her fellow thespians be fairly certain whether the play they are in is a hit or a flop, but all other parties involved in the production—author, director, stage manager, crew, theatre owner, and backers—will share the same information and point of view. If the news is good for one, it's good for all.

On Broadway a hit is a hit is a hit, no matter what your connection with the show. As they say over at Sardi's West, "You can't fight with success." However, over at the East Side branch of this show business eatery, where the TV elite meet, there is often less unanimity. In television, apparently, you *can* fight with success. It is quite possible to disagree on the definition of a TV hit, since it means different things to the various parties at interest.

Thus a television show can rate well and pay a neat profit to the packager, but simultaneously earn the displeasure of the network. It can satisfy an important network need, and yet be cancelled by a disgruntled advertiser inside of thirteen weeks. It can satisfactorily

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*Mark Goodson* is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of California who received his early broadcasting experience as a radio announcer and director in San Francisco. Together with his partner, William Todman, he has specialized in the creation and production of "live" audience participation programs for television, a field in which Goodson-Todman has pioneered since the introduction of *What's My Line?* in 1950.

whisk the advertiser's goods off retailers' shelves, and yet be moved by the network to a different time period in spite of the anguished howls of both sponsor and packager.

Clearly, in television the basic interests of advertiser, network, and packager do not necessarily overlap. This is because their needs, their functions, and their responsibilities are sharply divergent.

To illustrate: Envision an imaginary program, called *Gunpoke*, a hard-hitting Western. It is seen on a week-night from 7:30-8:00 and is sponsored alternately by a soap and a cigarette. It has earned a superior Nielsen rating. From all surface indications the three elements of the programming triangle—advertiser, network, and packager—should be a contented partnership. But this situation deteriorates rapidly under closer scrutiny.

The advertising agency for the soap company has been analyzing its research and has found that *Gunpoke* has been attracting a preponderantly male audience. This is clearly not the group the advertiser wants to reach with its claims about a detergent powder. On alternate weeks the cowboy hero looks appropriately appealing when he takes manly drags on his cigarette, but on soap weeks he looks a bit silly holding a can of sink cleanser.

The soap people have been applying pressure on the packager to soften the action-adventure, "suggesting" the introduction of elements which would offer more romantic appeal to woman. But thus far the script changes have not produced a measurable change in audience composition; so the advertiser wants out. From the soap maker's point of view, *Gunpoke* is no hit.

Meanwhile, the cigarette advertiser thinks the show is fine—exactly right for projecting the strong, masculine image which sells cigarettes. But this sponsor has become increasingly nervous during the last cycle. He has noted that the shows have become softer in tone, with more female characters and more "love stuff." The leading man is caressing more and punching less. This is a result, of course, of the pressure which the soap sponsor has exerted upon the packager in order to swing the series toward the ladies. The tobacco folks want the hard-hitting action-adventure they bought in the first place. To them *Gunpoke* used to be a hit, now it is *half* a hit.

As for the network people, they too are somewhat apprehensive about the show. They are sensitive of press criticism of action-adventure shows. They are very much aware that a Congressional Sub-committee has been investigating "sex and violence" on television, and are bothered by the pointed comments of the Chairman

of the FCC in this connection. The program board at the network has had numerous meetings about this problem and, after an agonizing reappraisal, has determined to compromise by moving the show to a safer 10 o'clock time period where, because fewer impressionable young people are in the audience, the show will probably face less frontal attack.

The packager, meanwhile, has been responding to conflicting pressures. He has been trying to keep the action-minded audience tuned to his show, while *simultaneously* trying to soften the action to please the soap sponsor. He is doing everything he can to prevent the move to 10 o'clock, for he knows that any change of time puts a program in jeopardy, and he also know that the opposition network is already carrying a well-established action-adventure show at that hour. Finally, it is most unlikely that, in the middle of the season and the middle of the hour, *Gunpoke* will have a fighting chance to win the audience.

The net result of all this pulling and tugging is that *Gunpoke* will probably be cancelled. Yet, by most common sense definitions, it is a hit!

This is only one illustration of a conflict of interest within the *menage à trois* of advertiser, network, and packager. There are a dozen variations on this theme; advertiser, network, and packager not only have disparate interests, but divergent responsibilities and distinctive roles in television. These need to be examined.

The advertiser might be our first concern. When an advertiser uses television, he has one fundamental purpose—the selling of goods to the public. He is concerned with the size and the make-up of audience, the impact of his commercial, and, parenthetically, the degree to which a show “polishes” the corporate image. It is in no sense disparaging to point out that the R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company sponsors *To Tell the Truth* not because it has an irresistible urge to finance a theatrical venture or entertain and amuse the public, but because it is an effective way to sell cigarettes.

In contrast to the advertiser, the network and the packager are more directly involved in show business and have only a secondary interest in the sale of merchandise. There is, further, an essential difference between the packager and the network. The packager sells programs only. The network sells programs *and the facilities* which enable programs to reach the public.

The network owns or controls the means of communication, that powerful aggregation of stations which enables it to sell *time*. This control of time gives the network the right—the only and exclusive

right—to *decide* which programs are exposed and which programs will never see the light of day. It is this control of time—and the concomitant right to decide what is telecast—which differentiates the power and functions of the network from those of the packager.

This inability to reach the audience without crossing over the narrow toll bridge controlled by the networks gives the TV packager an acute type of frustration unknown to producers in the other forms of show business. Let us review the sources of his discontent in contrast to the problems of the theatrical producer.

If Mr. David Merrick finds a play he likes, and rounds up the necessary \$150,000 or so of backers' money to get it on the Broadway boards, he will quite certainly be able to find a theatre in which to stage it. Of course, there is always the possibility that he may lose the money, the time, and the effort which went into the production, but there is hardly a question that he can get his play before the critics and the audience. If he were to try television, Mr. Merrick would soon discover that there were only *three theatres in town*, and that the managers of these establishments would have total say over what is and what is not acceptable. He would probably have to fabricate a "pilot" production, which would necessitate the hiring and costuming of actors, building scenery, and rehearsing the entire show to opening night perfection, just to convince the theatre owners that he had a worthwhile thing. And if they turned thumbs down on his try-out he would have no other recourse than to discharge the actors and quietly burn the scenery. There would be no other "opening night."

Any packager who stays in business quickly adjusts to these facts of life. It is ironic that one of the most difficult adjustments is the one required of the *former network executive* who decides to go into the packaging business. He does this, by the way, either because he has been eliminated to make way for a new regime, or because he has tired of working for a salary and wants to collect some of the fabulous profits he has heard that packagers make. His thinking, indeed his entire approach to television programming, has been conditioned by his network background.

In his network days, if he and his policy-making associates took a fancy to a program they could put it on. There was always the risk, of course, that if his decisions were wrong his head would roll. Nevertheless, the privilege of putting the show on in the first place was in the hands of the network executive and his team. What a come-uppance he gets in the package business! After spending thousands of dollars and months of time preparing a project he can end up with no

more than a can of celluloid, which he is free to shelve or save as a souvenir. He can argue, he can persuade, he can sell with all his heart, but he cannot *decide*. *He cannot show it to the audience.*

Let us thrust our network-chief-turned-packager into another situation. To his new associates in the packaging firm he opines: "Gentlemen, one of the troubles with TV packages is that they are frivolous and lightweight. You have wasted your valuable time too long on Westerns, family comedies, mysteries, panel shows, and other such assorted trivia. Now that I have joined you, I recommend that we turn our attention to the more prestigious and meaningful area of public affairs and documentary programs. I suggest we begin with a novel approach to doing the news." This sounds impressive, but when our novice arrives at the network with his presentation in hand, he is confronted by a wall which makes the Berlin barrier seem a flimsy picket fence. His former network associates will lay it on the line: "We look to packagers for *entertainment* programs. Public affairs is exclusively network domain and outsiders are not invited in."

Still another important shift in approach must be learned by our network-executive-turned-packager. He must divest himself of his "scheduling" instincts. A network has the obligation—and privilege—of establishing a diversified program menu which balances Westerns, comedies, dramas, variety hours, audience participation shows, news, and documentary and information programs. The packager has no such balancing privileges. He may find that in order to survive, he can produce only westerns and private-eye series, or he may find it expedient to specialize in panels and games. The network, when it buys one of his shows, will place it in such a manner as to make it part of the balanced schedule. Diversity is the sole prerogative of the network which controls the time periods.

If I have drawn a rather grim picture of life in the packaging business this is not to shed crocodile tears. There are many successful packagers who realize both monetary and psychic income from their work. But just as a baby chick which tries to emulate the duckling will certainly drown, the executive who approaches packaging problems with network logic will surely fail.

At this point, therefore, it would be helpful to adduce an axiom of the television business which should serve as a rule of survival for any would-be packager: *Nobody buys a package unless he is forced to.* The axiom deserves some explanation.

A packager not only makes profits and retains creative autonomy—he also retains *ownership*. The packager does not really *sell* the show to a network or advertiser. He rents or leases it to them over

a period of time, and sooner or later the rental contract expires and rights revert to the packager. He can then do as he likes with it. If it is successful, he may sell it at a good profit or, and here's the rub, move it to a different network.

A specific and dramatic instance of this network change was recently announced in the trade press. *Wagon Train* is a Revue package which has been a leading show on NBC's Wednesday night line-up for several years. But beginning this fall, *Wagon Train* is being changed over to ABC, where it will be broadcast during the same evening period, 7:30-8:30, in which NBC had carried it. The packager will make a substantial profit as a result of the shift and, most important from the point of view of the network, the powerhouse program which NBC built up over the years will now be turned against it in the very same time slot. In contrast, this could not happen to such CBS programs as *Gunsmoke* or *Have Gun, Will Travel*, which are equally big hits, because they are CBS-owned shows and not outside packages.

Still another factor in support of this axiom involves packaging profits. In point of fact, the network makes most of its money from time and facility sales rather than from packages. But no business organization enjoys losing the opportunity to make an extra dollar if it can, particularly when rising costs put a squeeze on profits. When a network produces its own program it makes whatever packaging profits are to be made. The same holds true for the advertiser, who could reduce costs by packaging his own programs. In radio days, when packaging was a less complicated affair, many advertisers packaged their own shows, particularly soap operas.

Finally, there is a subtle and sometimes unconscious motivation which builds network and advertiser resistance to packages—this is the desire of the person spending the money to be *boss*—to deal with his own employees rather than at arm's-length with entrepreneurs. Back in Hollywood's heyday, when major studios controlled their own theatrical units and had no television competition, independent productions were few and far between. Studios kept writers, directors, producers, and stars under contract, and paid them *salaries*. Studios ran the business from the top; they made the decisions, took the risks, and made the profits. It was only the pressure of circumstance—the revolutionary metamorphosis in the nature of the picture business—which *forced* studios to deal with stars and other creative personnel as independent packagers.

The same psychological factors are operative in television. If networks could simply hire package entrepreneurs to produce net-

work-owned shows they would be in more comfortable circumstance. A willing employee is more amenable to control than a partner.

In spite of these very good reasons for *not* buying packages, the fact remains that packaged programs of all kinds are bought in substantial numbers every season. There must, therefore, be compelling factors which work to overcome such powerful resistance. Most of these spring from the basic demands of time, for just as the network's greatest strength derives from its *control* of time, its greatest weakness is a direct outgrowth of the necessity to *fill* that time.

NBC, for example, begins its schedule with the *Today* show at seven in the morning and closes down network operations after midnight. Setting aside the hours originated by local stations, and taking into account variation among networks, the three networks program about *12,000 hours each year*. The entire Broadway theatre combined provides less than one hundred hours of new material. The entire feature movie output of Hollywood is roughly 150 pictures, or three hundred hours of material.

The pressures to fill this time with acceptable programs are unrelenting and ferocious. When blanket criticism is levelled against the standards of television one wonders at the naiveté of the critics. Just imagine the chaos on Broadway if every theatre were compelled to put on a *new play every week*, or if Billy Wilder, who wrote and directed *The Apartment*, were ordered to turn out an equivalent masterpiece twelve times a year. Consider what might happen to literary standards if *New Yorker* editors were required to publish seven issues a week, or if Random House were compelled to publish a best-seller a day.

Still, television is an amazing phenomenon, and in light of the quantity demanded and the deadlines faced each and every hour, its quality is often surprisingly high. Nevertheless, the mammoth appetite of television puts a strain on a limited supply of creative talents. There is a shortage of the following elements: (1) *Performing stars* with box office appeal; (2) *capable writers and directors*; (3) *stimulating new ideas and formats*, and (4) *producers* with demonstrated *records* of success of such certainty that they can be entrusted with the expenditure of millions of dollars.

These four commodities are in scarce supply. It is this scarcity which gives the packager his balance or power vis-à-vis the advertiser's dollars and the network's exclusive control of time. To be in the packaging business at all, one must control at least one, and preferably two or three, of these scarce commodities. Put bluntly: *The packager must have something that the network cannot get without*

*him*. If his program can pass this critical litmus test he has taken the first and most essential step in selling a package.

This simple principle upon which packager survival is based is clearly illustrated in the work of those companies which specialize in preparation of audience-participation programs. In the case of such organizations, the elements are unique ideas or formats which are not related to any of the standard theatrical forms—variety, scripted comedy, dramatic plays, or motion pictures. As a result, the commodity is relatively scarce, and therefore of even greater value to the network. The factors which contribute to this scarcity can be considered here.

Writers can learn to write in many ways. They can begin with short stories or one-act plays and then move on to three-act plays or movie scenarios, and all such experience is directly applicable when they finally turn their talents to television writing. A youngster who studies drama at Carnegie Tech may later get a job as a stage manager in an off-Broadway show and then try his hand at directing. All of this experience, in addition to everything he has read or studied, prepares him to be a director or producer of television plays. Certainly, almost all television performers learn their basic skills in other kinds of related show business.

But none of this experience is necessarily valuable in the audience participation programs. Panels, quizzes, and "idea" shows in general just do not exist outside of broadcasting. One cannot go to The Actor's Studio and take lessons on how to be a panelist! How can one study at the Yale Drama School and specialize in the art and technique of creating a show like *What's My Line*? Each of these shows is *sui-generis*, just as the entire form of audience participation itself is unique to broadcasting. This means that the creating must be done from within. Program concepts can only be developed out of earlier background and experience of the same kind. It means that such organizations must train their own experts. There is no other school from which to graduate.

These principles also apply in the case of those who perform on reality shows—the so-called "talkers" such as Art Linkletter, Arlene Francis, John Daly, Bill Cullen, Jack Paar, Garry Moore, and others with this special talent. There is a great tendency for critics to underestimate what these performers do, because they are not actors, singers, dancers, or comedians in the classic tradition. What they "do" is hard to explain. Mainly, they just "talk" and get paid for being themselves. But they get paid very well, for theirs is such a rare talent that they often earn more than their actor and comedian

counterparts. Some of them are the highest paid talents in show business.

Just as there is a tendency to undervalue the talents of the "talkers" because what they do seems so simple, there is also a tendency to underestimate panel or "game" productions, the simplicity of which is equally deceptive. Advertisers and networks alike are sometimes puzzled by the popularity and durability of this kind of package. Still, there is a valid explanation for its success. What the package offers is *actuality* and *immediacy*—the casting of real people as themselves.

In a recent *New York Times* article, Jack Gould described his enjoyment of a television football game in this way:

There is preserved what once upon a time was the hallmark of a great deal of good television; a realization by those appearing on the screen and those watching it that they were sharing—at that instant—a common experience, an elusive rapport that no amount of electronic simulation can duplicate. . . . For the lack of a better phrase, call it *instantaneous savoring of the event that has just happened*. (Italics mine)

Mr. Gould was undoubtedly reflecting upon the "Golden Age" of "live" drama, where mistakes could not be erased by retakes or editing, where laughter represented the spontaneous reaction of audiences and not the arbitrary order of a director to his sound effects technician, and where actors were perceived by viewers in the very act and process of creation. But valid as Mr. Gould's parallel is, the excitement of the televised football game is even closer in spirit to that form of entertainment which is not written at all, but which takes shape from minute to minute as the program is on the air, where anything can happen and where the ending is unknown to participants and audiences alike. This is the quintessence of that little understood type of program which is described by the catch-all label "audience participation."

It is, then, the challenging task of "live" packagers in the audience participation field to develop new and original frameworks which give performers the chance to be themselves, which offer audiences the fun of being participants as well as viewers, and which generate laughter and excitement out of the yeasty essence of the present tense. But all packagers—film or "live"—must, with diligent and unending effort directed toward creative and exciting program development, struggle to maintain their rightful place within the eternal television triangle.

# A NEW VEHICLE FOR TELEVISION

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MERRILL PANITT

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Television is by its nature a greedy medium—it demands more time from people than they really want to give it, more talent than the world can supply, more money than advertisers can afford to spend, more praise for accomplishments and forgiveness for sins than a reasonable critic can honestly offer. Yet the greed is at least partially justified, for television is the central medium of entertainment and information in American life, and the biggest bang in the mass-producer's arsenal of selling weapons.

*Martin Mayer, TV Guide, July 21, 1962*

If we accept Mayer's thesis (to put it in context he was discussing the effect of television on other mass media) the future of television depends chiefly upon how well it can continue to satisfy its greed for time, talent, money, praise and forgiveness.

It also depends on such unpredictable factors as UHF's growth, pay television, and new technical developments. But we are concerned here only with the structure of the commercial, VHF-dominated, network television we know about.

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*Merrill Panitt* has been with *TV Guide* magazine since its founding as a national publication in 1953. He served as managing editor until his appointment as editor in December 1958. Basically a newsman, Mr. Panitt began his journalism career while a student at the University of Missouri. Over the years he has worked with United Press International, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, and as administrative assistant to Walter H. Annenberg, president of Triangle Publications, Inc.

And if the medium's demands (that's a nicer word than greed) are great, they are being met one way or another. Sets are turned on in television homes more than five hours a day, old movies fill the great gaps in programming left by talent shortages, the networks and most stations are well in the black, and there's just about enough praise for the medium's superb special events programs to balance the forgiveness necessary after exposure of quiz scandals and network interoffice chitchat about "broads, bosoms and fun."

True, in assessing television on his program not long ago, Howard K. Smith expressed concern about what will happen when supplies of old movies, made at the rate of hundreds per year, run out and television must rely upon Hollywood's current production, which is minimal. Mr. Smith can unfurrow his brow. By then reruns of hour-long shows made originally for television will flow in to fill the old-movie vacuum. This is what we used to call in the Army a field expedient—a handmade substitute for equipment that isn't available. Using old television shows because old movies just aren't available will hardly be the perfect solution to the talent shortage, but it will be an adequate one. At least the screens will be filled with *something*.

It won't be the first time the medium has had to resort to field expedients to keep television's antiquated sales and programming vehicle moving. That jalopy, originally constructed to carry the relatively light load of radio advertising, has been tinkered with and patched until we hardly recognize it; but under the baling wire, cellophane tape, and rubber bands chugs the same old decrepit engine.

Readers of this journal need not be reminded of television's beginnings, when made-over radio studios (a field expedient) were used for programs supervised by made-over radio men (another field expedient). There was no one else to do the job, so even with the crystal-clear vision of hindsight I cannot offer an alternative. But the fact remains they were radio men, and they thought of television as the mere addition of broadcast pictures to broadcast sound.

It seemed logical then that television time be sold as radio time was sold, that the network's job after the sale was to act chiefly as the conveyor belt that delivered the sponsor's program to the public. Thus the sales and service vehicle designed to carry radio advertising—and which did a good job of it—seemed adequate for the task of carrying television advertising too. Generally, the sponsor was responsible for producing the show. The network transmitted it to viewers' homes.

Then came the field expedients. Television's demands for time and

talent and money were greater than radio's, so live telecasts were all but replaced by film and tape. Television's impact on the public was so much greater than radio's, the problems of competition so much more complicated, that the networks had to assume greater responsibility for the shows they telecast. As the networks' power grew, the advertisers' power diminished.

Today only a handful of programs are controlled by sponsors through their agencies. The vast majority are owned wholly or in part by networks. When a sponsor shops for a show today, he shops almost entirely at network headquarters. When independent producers have shows to sell, they sell to the networks. As Dick Powell of Four Star said recently: "We have only three customers to think about now—ABC, CBS and NBC."

This situation demanded still another field expedient to keep the old radio vehicle that carries television chugging along. That expedient is the bastardized magazine format. The network makes up its schedule with a number of half-hour, hour, hour-and-a-half (next season's *The Virginian*) and two-hour (feature movie) programs.

For tactical or economic reasons, few advertisers want to spend all their money sponsoring one show. So the networks invite them to buy a few minute spots here, a few minute spots there. The word "sponsor" now applies to about a quarter of the programs on the air. Three-quarters of the shows have spot advertisers, not sponsors.

A couple of weeks before the season opens there still are several minutes here and there on the schedule unsold—and there are a number of potential spot advertisers sitting back clutching their checkbooks waiting for the distress sales to start. And start they do—invariably.

As if this situation weren't enough to prove that the radio technique of selling advertisers time on specific programs is obsolete, we now have a sub-expedient developing. On two of the networks, advertisers no longer have to buy weekly exposure—they may buy a minute every other week. But they *still* have the privilege of deciding on which show their every-other-week minute is to appear.

How long this can go on, and how far this trend can develop, no one knows. (Buys of one minute a year on *The Virginian*, as an example, could lead to 468 "sponsors" for the show.) But this may be the expedient that breaks the old radio jalopy's back.

It's time to face the fact that television is somewhat more than radio with pictures, that it demands a sales and programming vehicle, a basic structure, tailor-made for television.

Such a vehicle should be designed to permit true programming balance on the networks. The extent to which balance is possible

now depends largely on the few advertisers who are willing to spend money to reach minority audiences, to invest in programs of an informational or cultural nature on which the networks—at best—break even.

A network can afford a few such programs a week, still it may also afford a few more that are completely sustaining, and it can afford to pre-empt entertainment with an occasional news special. But beyond this it cannot go and still keep its stockholders happy.

(By now, I trust, we can dismiss the “we give the viewers what they want” argument as irresponsible, as a mere play on the more honest words “we give the viewers what the sponsors will pay for.”)

While the networks do a magnificent news job and some commendable cultural shows every so often, it seems strange that *Play of the Week*, *Festival of Performing Arts*, *Age of Kings* and similar first-rate achievements must go into syndication rather than be seen on the networks. How can anyone argue that there’s a shortage of material, a shortage of time, or a shortage of talent when such programs have to go begging?

The answer is easy: Few advertisers eager to buy a minute every week or every other week on a Western or medical show are willing to risk their money on *Age of Kings*.

It is unfair to criticize the network heads, who are businessmen first and communicators second, for their program schedules. They can be criticized fairly, however, for failing to see that the radio vehicle, or structure, no longer will work for television. As businessmen first and communicators second they cannot help but realize that the long-range future of the medium depends not on jazzing up *Route 66* or saving *77 Sunset Strip* so that they’ll pay off for another season, but in changing television’s structure so that networks can offer balanced programming every night of the week, can take advantage of all the talent and material that *is* available, and can give the schedules variety by interrupting the standard week-to-week schedules with frequent specials offered without apology and without compromise.

So long as sponsors were buying complete shows which they controlled, so long as sponsor identification with programs was considered essential, so long as viewers held individual sponsors responsible for what they saw on their screens, the radio vehicle was able to carry TV. But now that three-quarters of the programs on network schedules have two, four, a dozen or more advertisers, it is ludicrous to continue the twin fictions of sponsor identification and sponsor responsibility in programs that have multiple advertisers.

There no longer is any question as to who is responsible for net-

work programs. It has been confirmed again and again before the FCC, before Congressional committees, before anyone willing to listen to a top network executive speak. It is the network.

The network is *responsible*. But the network lacks *authority* to balance its programming—that authority still rests with the advertiser who can pick and choose the programs he will support. Responsibility without authority is meaningless.

What is required is a new vehicle, a system of television that would give the networks the authority they need to carry out their responsibility to the public and to their stockholders.

Such a vehicle is possible—a brand new vehicle, not more field expedients for the old radio jalopy. Television could have, should have, a *television* format. Here is a suggestion for such a format:

The networks would continue to set up their schedules of programs; but instead of selling time on *specific* programs to spot advertisers, they would sell *time* only, with different rates for each class of time. It would be up to the network, under some equitable arrangement, to decide where in each time class period the spot advertising would go.

Unlike the British commercial system, any advertiser who wanted to sponsor an entire show—as Hallmark, United States Steel, General Foods and some others now do—would be free to do so.

It would be made absolutely clear to viewers that the programs are the network's responsibility; in the case of controversial programs, special disclaimers would be broadcast. Indeed, a controversial program could be aired with commercials before the opening of the program and after its conclusion—with no billboards or middle commercials to tie advertisers to program content.

The chief aim of such a structure would be to achieve the kind of program balance possible when the "Will it sell?" sword no longer dangles over the heads of network planners.

It will be argued that with such a format television networks would be even more obliged to attract peak audiences at all hours than they are now; that advertisers would seek out the network with the highest ratings most of the time.

With all three networks adopting the new format simultaneously, there would be little appreciable change in program line-ups—at first. Certainly there would be no guarantee that each network would immediately increase the number of its informational shows, come up with several first-class dramatic programs each week, or go in for massive doses of culture. Nor would such steps, at this stage, please the vast majority of viewers.

But it would be *possible* under such a system for a network to

present *Play of the Week* and *Age of Kings* and *Festival of Performing Arts*. As things stand now, it isn't economically possible. Nor is there any reason to believe that it would ever be possible so long as networks are saddled with responsibility and deprived of authority in programming.

The argument is academic at this point. Certainly such a television structure has occurred to the men in charge of all three networks—and at one network was even considered seriously until its own sales staff protested. The FCC wondered aloud whether such a television vehicle might be possible, and the networks quite understandably chorused “No!” I believe they reacted so more because they felt it was none of the Commission's business than because they objected to assuming authority over their schedules.

If this format is not the final answer, perhaps a variation on it or an alternative would be possible. But certainly some change is required so that each season will not bring another slew of long programs formulated as much to attract sponsors as to satisfy viewers. Viewers need more variety in their television fare, not more medical shows or more Westerns or more of whatever the trend of the year may be.

Some change is required so that we can at least see a way clear to truly balanced programming.

Some change is required so that advertisers cannot dictate or even influence—directly or indirectly—nearly all of television's program content.

Some change is required so that a few advertisers will not bear all the burden of supporting (“contributing toward” is more accurate) informational and cultural programs.

Some change is required so that controversial themes are not watered down because advertisers (and with some reason) do not want to offend any minority.

Some change is required so that some of Hollywood's vaunted talent can go to work turning out something besides assembly-line potboilers, which are the only things they can now sell to the networks and the only Hollywood product the networks can now sell to Madison Avenue.

A *television* vehicle for television is required. It is the only possible way to move television out of its present dependence upon escape entertainment (more often than not, second-class escape entertainment) so that it can satisfy its greed for time, talent, money, criticism and praise, so that it can eventually fulfill its vast promise.

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## TELEVISION AS A POLITICAL FORCE

### DEBATES AND ADVOCATES

In January 1947 the American television networks moved their cameras to Washington to record President Truman's first address to Congress. Of the event, an observer wrote: "It was the first time a President of the United States had ever been televised addressing a joint session of Congress. It likely won't be the last." This kind of prognostication, it turned out, was quite safe, for as television extended its reach into millions of homes it also extended its political influence—until, as many insist, it became the decisive factor in the 1960 presidential election. In this and subsequent issues *Television Quarterly* explores the various kinds of political activity in which the medium is engaged.

Here, *Gilbert Seldes* examines the future of national political debates on television. He points out that a number of political considerations, as well as national needs, must be given attention in the drafting of a uniform, and essential, set of ground rules for TV confrontations.

At another level of TV's political influence, *Alvin Perlmutter* reviews the growth, and satisfactions, of editorializing by local TV stations, setting the stage for a review of station involvement in local politics to be published in the November issue.

# THE FUTURE OF NATIONAL DEBATES\*

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GILBERT SELDES

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The accepted essential condition of a public debate is that the participants start on even terms. Nothing may be contrived to heighten the *natural* advantage in talent or intelligence of one or conceal the *natural* deficiencies of another. A debate between candidates for the presidency on these conditions can occur only once in eight years. In the intervening campaign one of the debaters is usually president of the United States.

My own impulse is to say that one of the debaters suffers from the disadvantage of being president. But the principle is the same if one takes the office as an advantage to the candidate. Once in every two elections the debaters are placed in the same framework but are not seen in the same perspective.

This principle applies to any kind of confrontation. A second may have more bearing on the specific kind of debate in which the candidates meet, the debate by television, for instance. It requires us to consider that while the qualities of mind and temperament which make a good debater are highly desirable, there may be other qualities which at certain times are equally, or even more, desirable in our chief executive.

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Among the first to recognize the artistic and social significance of the new media, *Gilbert Seldes* has shared his critical insights through his major books, *The Seven Lively Arts*, *The Great Audience*, and *The Public Arts*, as well as in numerous reviews and essays. He has also had long experience in the production of radio and television programs. Mr. Seldes is now Dean of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania.

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\*From the forthcoming book, *The Great Debates*, to be published by the Indiana University Press in fall, 1962. By permission.

It is my guess that if President Eisenhower had been eligible and nominated for a third term, the debates of 1960 would not have occurred. One cannot be sure of the reasons that would have been given since no one can say openly that a candidate's health does not permit him to do what his opponent does, nor is there an acceptable phrase to conceal other disqualifications for debate which do not imply disqualifications for office.

In 1956 no pressure to accept debate existed. In 1964 and thereafter the pressure will be intense. Consequently, the selection of a candidate may be decided by attributes desirable in a debater. We do not have to say that these are necessarily opposed to or cannot coexist with qualities most desirable in a president. We can say that of two men, virtually equal in statesmanship, the one who has proved readier in debate will be preferred. We can, with some confidence, shift the testing period back to the pre-convention period—and again we face the gross inequality once in each eight years—that the incumbent is not compelled to outrun others for the nomination.

My argument leads me to at least a tentative conclusion: that certain kinds of confrontation between candidates should not become fixed ("traditional") as part of the process of choosing the president. Before examining the possible confrontations closely, I am compelled to recognize—and in self-defense to say that I do recognize—a fact of American political life which is an unsanctioned part of the whole pre-convention process, namely: that the capacities of each candidate, *as a campaigner* play a considered—and considerable—part in the final choice. Again there is a difference if the incumbent chooses to run because the party machinery and the psychological danger of repudiating the head of an administration while asking for the return of that administration to power combine to force the nomination even though everyone knows that someone else might be a better vote-getter. The avowed candidates within the president's party are not taken seriously; they may be working for the vice-presidency if it is open or laying the ground for next time. The incumbent candidate, consequently, has no need to prove himself in pre-convention argument and actually misses an opportunity to show his mettle; he is virtually disqualified during the pre-convention period from open politicking.

When, however, both parties must put up new men, the primaries become a magnificent free-for-all and if the political mechanics could be worked out, the place for the great confrontations would be here. The difficulties are probably insurmountable, but if all candidates were to declare themselves in all states, and if all the states held

their primaries the same day, the situation would have an almost mathematical elegance since none of the debaters would be, at the time, the chosen representatives of his party, and, potentially, the next president.

In the above situation, the condition of equality would be met, each candidate having the same degree of freedom, each indicating, without the advantage of position, his degree of responsibility, each free (without the compelling necessities of office) to expose his irresponsibility. At such a moment, the most penetrating cross-questioning is not only permissible, it is desirable. To be sure, the meetings would be intra-mural; the decision between parties would still have to be made. But the total presentation of each man's temperament and the total rendering of his character and intellect could be properly accomplished. (Apart from the financial complexities involved, the method has the defect of virtually eliminating the non-campaigning dark horse.)

Changes in our present system of primaries may give us greater opportunities to know the eventual candidates, but they will not significantly alter the pressure on delegates to pick a good campaigner. If we accept this as a fact of our political situation, we can ask whether the introduction of face-to-face debates is anything more than a shift in technique. If the tradition of choosing a good campaigner or the best campaigner, out of all the postulants considered fit to become president, hasn't, on the whole, imposed intolerable burdens on the candidates or unbearable presidents on the country, why should we have reservations about a new and in many ways superbly useful device?

The reason stems from that imposed inequality which must occur in the alternate elections when a president is also a candidate. If the debates become an accepted form of campaigning, they will be expected; and it is conceivable that a president, feeling himself on sure ground, might insist on a debate whereas a president who felt that his office or some delicate situation (as in foreign affairs) made debate dangerous might not be able to avoid a challenge from his opponent.

The president, in that event, would be compelled to do what no president has ever had to do before: accept conditions imposed on him from the outside. Until now, both candidates have been able to choose their own ground—to make a grand tour, to appear, televised or not, in large halls, to submit to spontaneous (or fake-spontaneous) questions, to be initiated into Indian tribes and to kiss babies. Each has, in a sense, chosen his own audience. And, in consequence, each has been able to decide what to say and what to leave unsaid. Each

has challenged the other in such terms as to allow for the exercise of choice and judgment. Unless the debates are greatly altered from the form in which they appeared in 1960, a thoughtful candidate might not feel free to ask a president certain questions, as a thoughtful president might feel compelled not to answer them. A demagogue in either position, especially a non-incumbent, might ask questions that a refusal to answer or an evasion might prejudice the welfare of the state.

It isn't even necessary to impute low motives to such questions. An outsider, without the information which had reached the president, might in all candor ask a question. In the House of Commons it is accepted that a minister may insist on "having notice" and refuse an instant response. But such a reply, in a debate with another candidate for the presidency, would immediately draw attention to the delicacy of a situation—an incident might follow—and worse.

This is, perhaps, a proper place to bring into the open the reasons for some of the reservations implied above. One is that I do not believe we need the same kind of individual in the presidency at all times. A master of political economy might have been useful in many ways in 1932, but if he was also dour in temperament, without a certain lightness, he could not have done what Roosevelt did. I am, therefore, afraid of anything which would dictate the qualities of the candidates and particularly dubious of such requirements as the TV debates impose. And I cannot accept the proposition that those who are not good on the screen are exhibiting deficiencies in their essential character. Nothing was more marked in Governor Stevenson's campaigns than his obvious dislike of the apparatus of transmission—he was effective on television only if he stood before an audience; at home when he recorded for TV and in studio conversations, he was ill at ease and hurried and basically uncommunicative. I remember also the radio and newsreel appearances of Huey Long and remember also how frighteningly persuasive he was.

I shall, in outlining the safeguards which I think essential, indicate why I think the debates should be limited in number. One reason connected with my present argument is that if they become only one of several methods, and not the essential one, delegates will feel more free to choose candidates who have other qualifications.

Exposing myself to contempt, I confess to feeling that at times we might need in the White House a man who dislikes and cannot cope with the mass media. We might need a man whose total training (let us say in science) had removed him from all public arenas. We might need a man so analytical as to preclude action on the spur of the

moment. We have needed Washington and two Adamases as well as Jefferson and two Roosevelts.

I turn now to the future. Can we invent conditions to eliminate the wrong questions and to make telltale evasions unnecessary? It is my strong conviction that the ground rules will have to be the same for all occasions, that we will not have one set for the campaigns in which a president is running and another when he is not. (I have been assured that I am wrong; the simple expedient offered was that the president would appoint a deputy to debate for him! This was offered by a respected elder statesman among journalists who had no connection, I must add, with the Eisenhower or the Kennedy administration.)

If we are to have the same rules, we can arrive at them, at the future structure of the debates, by asking what their function is. As we go through the list—excerpted from the triumphant announcements of television executives, from enthusiasts who believe that the television debates were the decisive factor in Kennedy's (almost invisible) majority, from the reported man-in-the-street comments—we find that only one element stands clear of reservations and doubts: people who wanted to hear the candidate of their choice were compelled to hear also his opponent. Pendant to this, it is quite possible that the undecided, who might not have troubled to observe either candidate, were drawn to both because of the publicity surrounding the event. If the campaigns are, as I believe them to be, part of our pluralistic educational system, this inescapable attention to "the other side" is of prime significance. This is what must be preserved in whatever rules are contrived.

It follows that whatever distracts the attention must be eliminated. The producing networks have been unduly criticized for trifles, most of which were natural errors in a first time out. The press was the great offender, coming to a low point by vaguely imputing to someone the idea of a conspiracy among make-up men to ruin Mr. Nixon's appearance (as a sort of counterweight, no doubt, to the discussion of Mrs. Kennedy's hairdo, which also seemed for a time to be the major issue of the campaign). The original error was that the production structure prevented the debate from taking place and substituted an awkward panel show. As the series progressed the candidates moved forward; the confrontation was more direct even if they were in different cities.

It is not too difficult to discover the lessons for the future. Assuming that the debates will occur, they can be planned and spaced and a gentleman's agreement, if possible during a campaign, must exist so

that neither side can demand additional events. The subject or subjects of each debate must be agreed upon and, although this as a sensitive area, the speakers must be kept within the agreed bounds. Many people feel that the debaters should face one another *and no one else*. (There is no reason why they should not each face other questioners at other times.) The debates should be few in number so that the candidates would be forced to use other forms of campaigning on and off the air. Other rules will no doubt be developed. They should all be framed with one intention: to give the debates a unique character, to prevent them from being confused with programs.

Anyone critical of the debates as they occurred in 1960 and anyone suggesting that total freedom of questioning (with total compulsion to reply) may be undesirable is promptly accused of lacking faith in the American people or in the democratic process. I think it the part of common sense to admit that democracies are capable of making mistakes. I think it salutary to remember that when the debates were first discussed in 1960 one network specifically and one tacitly invited advertisers to participate. I do not suggest that the usual forms of sponsorship with the conventional commercial messages would have been used, but these networks were willing to associate advertisers and products in some way with the debates. It was only the forthright declaration by Dr. Frank Stanton, President of CBS, that his network would not accept advertisers that put an end to the project—which would, if carried out, have given a further “program” air to the proceedings.

I note this because the ground rules for the debates must be founded on realities. Those who make them must have clear concepts of what the debates are intended to accomplish and what their effect on the presidency may be. They must know that just as commercial broadcasting has created the audience for the debates, it has created certain expectancies in that audience, has taught the audience to recognize certain moves and attitudes as being desirable or unworthy. The tempo of television has, for instance, put a premium on speed, and this is reflected in a superinduced admiration for the quickness rather than the quality of wit and has somehow equated the process of contemplation—the painstaking working out of a judgment, the careful consideration of what has been said before replying—with slow-wittedness, with the stooge for the popular comedian’s brightness. We know very little yet of the effects “in depth” of television, but we know enough to say that in such an event as campaign debates it is the informational, and not the entertainment, side of the medium that must prevail and wherever

the two tend to be assimilated harsh measures must, if necessary, be taken to identify the nature of what we are doing.

No ground rules will overcome the basic inequality of the campaigning situation in alternate elections. None I can think of will do more than diminish the tendency to nominate the good TV campaigner (who may conform to, or alter, the image of the TV "personality"). But since we are going to have them, let us understand that their structure and tone cannot be left either to showmen or political strategists to improvise. We must examine the capacities of television, find all the possible ways of using it, speculate on the consequences and in my opinion, if we must make guesses, let them fall on the side of too much, rather than too little, skepticism. It will do little harm to move cautiously into a new and at moments obscure terrain.

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*Edward R. Murrow*

*V. K. Zworykin*

*Ward Quaal*

*Richard Pinkham*

*Stockton Helfrich*

have something vital to say

in

future issues of

**TELEVISION QUARTERLY**

The Journal of The National Academy of  
Television Arts and Sciences

# TV TAKES A STAND

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A. H. PERLMUTTER

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The broadcasters' search for ways to serve the public has led them down many roads, but none is so significant as the current move toward editorializing. Many agree with the position of The National Association of Broadcasters that the broadcast editorial "can be an important force for community improvement...that through the editorial the broadcaster can be a watchdog of the community, guarding against corruption or alerting citizens to neglected problems." A number of stations have taken to the air with daily or occasional statements of opinion on subjects ranging from local traffic problems to United States foreign policy. But there are many, many more who, still far from asserting themselves on issues of the day, have not yet taken the first step toward drafting their own editorial policies and scouting their communities for subjects in which their stations can take a positive, active interest.

The current surge of interest in broadcast editorials has several roots. The initial impetus was provided by the revision of the famed Mayflower decision some fourteen years ago. This was the ruling that gave stations the green light to express opinions on the air. Response was disappointingly slow. Only a few adventuresome broadcasters gave serious thought and action to this new freedom of the airwaves, but most held back. Their reasons, though not always stated, appear to have been based on uncertainties over sponsor and government

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reactions to a drastic departure from established procedures. To take a public position on a political controversy was something a government-licensed operation did not do with haste. Others advanced more sound reasoning—that a broadcaster must not assume the advocate's role until he has properly prepared himself for it, studied the pitfalls, established rules and regulations, and initiated a qualified staff to do the job as it should be done.

Another influence came from other news media, primarily newspapers. As pointed out by Federal Communications Commission Chairman Newton Minow in a special NAB conference on editorializing early this year, America's traditional avenues of communications are contracting, not expanding. Although daily newspaper circulation has increased in the past fifteen years, the variety of news and opinion available to Americans has been sharply cut. With more than 1440 cities with daily newspapers, there are only 60 cities remaining with competing newspapers. The others are one-newspaper towns or cities with several newspapers under the same ownership. Many broadcasters have taken the big step to editorializing in order to provide their communities with another editorial voice.

By far the most significant impetus to electronic editorializing has come from the examples set by the industry itself. As in any new venture, there are pioneers in the broadcasting of opinions, too. They have charted a course which is by and large commendable—one that has proved a valuable foundation for similar action by those who needed more time or more convincing arguments before embarking on the journey themselves. Although much of their early work shows signs of inexperience and lack of adequate research, they have come to some basic conclusions which are serving others in good stead.

To understand how a good editorial works, a definition is in order. Most broadcasters accept the editorial as a clearly labeled on-the-air expression of opinion on a subject of public interest. The opinions expressed are those of the station licensee or his designated representative. They are not to be confused with those of individual commentators who express their own opinions on the air, as do columnists in the newspapers. Usually, positions are taken on local issues where positive follow-up action can be taken. Most station licensees or managers deliver them on camera with little or no use of visual illustration. Editorial lengths vary from one minute to thirty minutes, with the consensus being that a station's regularly aired opinions can make the point with impact in two minutes or

less. And they can always be followed on succeeding days by opinion pieces on another aspect of the same subject.

For the most part, the station manager himself presents his case, but notable exceptions can be found, as in Miami's WTVJ where News Vice-President Ralph Renick follows his newscast with a distinctly labeled editorial. WTVJ's persistence, in fact, is held responsible for clearing the political roadblocks to Miami's first expressway system. Through painstaking research and reporting, followed by daily editorials pressing the issue, that station won action from government officials. Renick, with the full backing of WTVJ President Mitchell Wolfson, has tackled other thornier problems, letting the chips fall where they might. When Dade County Commissioners awarded what appeared to be improperly arrived at contracts, WTVJ researched the matter and aired its conclusions. The contracts were subsequently cancelled.

In New Orleans, WDSU-TV surprised the community by its strong stand during that city's difficult integration problems. But that stand won both satisfaction and respect for the station. Outstanding for its carefully designed editorial policies is the Westinghouse group of stations. Its basic approach is summed up by this question: "Does the individual point of view, as expressed by the station, contribute to the public betterment and a fuller measure of information and understanding?" If the proposed editorial does not meet this requirement, among others, it is not undertaken.

Those who have taken the step to become advocates have found that their earlier fears of sponsor and community reaction failed to materialize. They now claim their move has resulted in increased audience, stature, prestige and good will—even among those who have not always agreed with the opinions expressed. By taking a stand on matters of public interest—a stand based on research and facts—the broadcaster is achieving a maturity not heretofore enjoyed. He has not only stepped in to fill the void left by the competing newspaper, but has also embellished the editorial function with a technique, character, and an immediacy of which the newspapers never dreamed. One such crusader of the traditional style is Springfield's William L. Putnam, President of the Massachusetts station that bears his initials, WWLP. A sampling of Putnam editorials show these classic opening lines: "We smell a rat!" and "Every so often we see signs of hope in a reawakening of the leadership in our state government to the moral responsibilities of public office. But these signs don't last long!" Putnam represents the broadcast equivalent of the time-honored newspaper tradition. He per-

sonally decides what goes on the air, prepares, and delivers the editorials himself. He settles all arguments that result from these talks, including equal time. Says Putnam, "From time to time I seek advice and wisdom from others, but the real responsibility lies totally with me."

To some station people the community is a challenge and the editorial a tool to meet that challenge. Wolfson at WTVJ sees his Miami as having unique problems—an unusually rapid growth with the resulting problems of government that include sanitation, traffic, recreation, schooling, and others. He considers it his job to move officials and citizens toward positive solutions. Editorial pioneer Daniel Kops of radio station WAVZ saw New Haven, Connecticut, as a lagging, inactive city in need of a strong new administration. He placed the weight of his editorials behind the man and policies of his choice, got the man elected, and has served as a catalyst ever since. A concrete example of Kops' activity can be found in New Haven's redevelopment program. He has consistently used his editorials to hammer home the need for improved city government in a positive, constructive approach. His station gave voice to the community groups and organizations seeking to improve their own lot, assuming a role of leadership in a city where both newspapers have the same ownership. Kops has learned over the years to select his topics on the basis of timeliness and to concentrate on those issues which have the support of an organized group—thus giving them a reasonable chance of success. Like most broadcasters, he has found that the editorial by itself is not all-powerful—it needs follow-up action and outside help. An editorial may stimulate and suggest, but an action group is usually needed, too.

On controversial subjects there are at least two sides to be heard, and in keeping with the FCC "Doctrine of Fairness" stations seek out opposing points of view. The common practice is to deliver copies of editorials to interested parties, certainly to those who are mentioned by name or office. When requests are received for equivalent time on the air to present the other side of the argument, it is up to the station management to grant or reject the request on the basis of fairness. By and large these requests have been minimal, and those officials or community leaders who have had their rebuttal have heightened audience interest on the subject. An enlightened exchange on an issue of importance often adds to the ratings as well as to the stature of a station.

It is acknowledged that controversy can often become a large-sized problem politically and commercially. There are those stations

that have felt an occasional squeeze from influential officials or groups who threaten economic reprisals against an unpopular position by "getting to the station's advertisers." Though the answer is never a simple or easy one, Daniel Kops' recent advice to a group of broadcasters sums up the only realistic attitude to this problem: "If you are ever challenged in the practice of editorializing and you are confident you are doing the right thing, you must never back down. If you do, you will never gain respect in the future."

In spite of the impressive record daily being forged by local-minded managements, evidence is mounting that the community approach is not enough. Once a station has established its reputation in commenting on traffic and zoning, the next step appears to be toward issues of national and world importance. One would almost expect the active editorializing by Washington's WTOP to include foreign policy and international subjects. That city, after all, lives and breathes events from the White House to the State Department to the Embassies. And there is a growing list of stations that almost regularly take on the bigger issues. One of the more popular subjects of recent months was President Kennedy's run-in with the steel industry. It became fodder for editorials in Tampa, Cincinnati, Springfield, and elsewhere. Also used for discussion were federal tax proposals, United Nations actions in the Congo, and the Peace Corps. The trend towards broadening the editorial scope to include these larger issues is, perhaps, a logical progression. But the wisdom of the move is something to be questioned if the local station does not have adequate staff and facilities to research the matter sufficiently. In such a case this material might better be left to the network news departments and their skilled, experienced commentators. In a few isolated examples, however, management has invested in a special fact-finding trip to the source whether in Washington or South America. Reporters and station managers have through this procedure brought international issues home to their viewers for a first-person, in-depth treatment. Though costly, it is a method to be applauded and encouraged.

The one area of editorializing on which broadcasters themselves appear to disagree most lies in the endorsement of political candidates. The FCC has never attempted to define the subject matter of editorials. It has gone on record, however, as encouraging statements of opinion that would stimulate community thought and action on matters that are controversial. A pioneer editorializer, the late Nathan Straus, Chairman of the Board and principal stockholder of New York's radio station WMCA, took the view that the broad-

caster's controversy should not be confined to non-political matters. Consequently he went on the air in 1960 with a bold editorial endorsing John F. Kennedy for President of the United States. Mr. Straus' position was not a popular one. According to the most reliable account (an FCC report to the Senate), only slightly more than sixty stations in the entire nation took any stand in the 1960 campaign and these were not necessarily for a Presidential contender. To come out forthright for a candidate is to risk the wrath of a party that may eventually control the make-up of the Federal Communications Commission. And the facts of political life include those legislators whose periodic inquiries into television's activities are not enthusiastically welcomed by the industry's leaders.

Yet the FCC has encouraged political opinions. It has gone along with the principle that if a stand is to be taken it must be a firm one, with no question left as to where that position begins and ends. The major official caution comes under the well-known heading of the "Doctrine of Fairness"—allowing for the presentation of all points of view on a given controversy. One notorious example of a broadcaster's endorsement of a candidate on election eve has somewhat muddied the waters, but critics are agreed that this isolated example—by a commentator not a station—can not be taken to represent what otherwise has been a fair, intelligent approach by other members of the industry. Although the Straus trail-blazing has had some followers, another school of thought manages to prevail. This side is succinctly stated by Miami's Mitchell Wolfson as part of his personal philosophy with regard to TV editorials: "WTVJ will not and does not endorse any candidate for political office. It is our feeling that endorsement of a candidate by *any* medium gives that medium an indirect claim on the candidate. Further, while the newspapers are not federally regulated, television is, and it is our interpretation of the FCC rules that any relaxation of our policy would open us up to a multitude of requests for 'equal' and 'equivalent' time."

It is interesting to note another apparent trend that indicates radio editorials are far more adventurous, far more probing than their TV counterparts. Of the sixty political endorsements already mentioned only two were by television stations. In New York WCBS radio and WCBS-TV were given their editorial heads at the same time and with the same rules. Their operations, however, are completely independent of one another. While WCBS radio devoted over 150 of its editorials in prime morning and evening times to matters of controversy, including unpopular positions against a state bonus

for Korean Veterans and a change in the drinking-age limit among others, its sister station on television has aired a total of five editorials—one urging court reform and two attempting to head off or curtail newspaper or train strikes. But that WCBS-TV is editorializing at all is greatly to its credit. For at the moment it is the only New York TV station that has taken the advocate's position. Norman Walt, CBS Vice-President and General Manager of WCBS-TV, says he is currently interviewing and screening candidates for the position of full-time editorialist for his station; when that person is found WCBS-TV will increase its editorial endeavors almost immediately. WCBS radio has had such an editorial writer for almost three years. An interesting sidelight of these stations' efforts occurred when each took a different stand on the same subject: WCBS radio was in favor of the highly controversial off-track betting proposals while WCBS-TV opposed the idea.

At this point it seems evident that radio will maintain the editorial lead over television as long as its programming remains more flexible and as long as television's technical requirements remain complicated and costly. In radio an opinion can be aired within minutes after it is written and approved, and the broad choice of local-station time allows for frequent repetition. But on television good local time is a rare commodity, and if film or photographs are needed to drive home an argument, time must be allowed for processing and editing.

The NBC and ABC news departments are still wrestling with the problems of formulating their editorial policies. NBC has indicated interest in pursuing the advocate's course but has announced no definite plans. ABC-owned stations, according to News and Special Events Vice-President James Hagerty, will begin editorializing in the fall. The move is being taken now, he says, because of the increasing need for broadcasters to assume the responsibility of adding their voice on controversial subjects of importance. The ABC stations will take stands on any significant subject but will not endorse political candidates. Though the networks are generally agreed that the best approach is at the local level, only CBS has thus far embarked on network editorials with its president, Dr. Frank Stanton, in each case championing a cause of direct concern to the business of communications: first, by urging equal access to news coverage by radio and TV to that enjoyed by the printed media, then advocating an amendment to Section 315 of the Federal Communications Act, and, more recently, opposing Congress' proposed postal rate increase bill.

An analogy has been made relating the broadcaster's editorial activities to those traditions established by the newspapers. This is

a truism to be deplored as well as applauded. For if broadcast editorials have been borrowed from newspapers, it is acknowledged that they have taken some of the bad along with the good. In their efforts to present regularly scheduled opinions on the air, broadcasters have found themselves supporting ideas and organizations that are as controversial as Mother Love and Peace, a newspaper practice NAB President LeRoy Collins terms as "innocuous pieces of cat-purring." If the editorial can be such a valuable tool, why indeed is it sometimes "wasted" on lesser matters?

No one can deny that filling a daily editorial program with lively controversial material while maintaining high standards of reporting and research is a task requiring more time and staff than most local stations are willing to appropriate. Yet a perusal of editorials aired throughout the country in recent months turns up an astonishing number of paragraphs in support of charity drives and do-good organizations with no apparent purpose other than pleasing someone and offending no one. Although industry leaders call for stands based on facts, conviction and courage, most broadcasters prefer to use their facts in their own way. In their opinion, it is an important and a good policy to criticize an official when he deserves it and to praise him when he is doing his job well. They believe the spectrum of editorializing must of necessity run from bold advocacy to commendation which nobody would dispute. To them the editorial is a two-sided glove to be used for slapping or patting as the individual case requires.

The broadcast editorial is still young. It is making its way through trial and error and a large cooperative effort in which stations exchange their experiences and lessons for mutual benefit. Though honest differences of opinion on procedure will persist as these new voices grow in strength and stature, their very growth and durability should prove heartening to every member of the American community. Each time an editorial is on the air there exists one more opportunity to stimulate thought, create discussion and whet the desire for more information on a subject of public importance. And, properly handled and pursued, the result can be positive community action. Through the editorial, the broadcaster is finding his most valuable tool for exercising community leadership.

## ETV: A REBUTTAL

*Edward Stasheff* makes use of our "equal space" policy to dispute the conclusions drawn about ETV by *Yale Roe* in the May issue of *Television Quarterly*. Writing after a lengthy absence from ETV, Stasheff's view while not always unsympathetic with Roe's admonishment that it "ought to grow up a bit," reflects a deeper appreciation of some of ETV's old virtues and new accomplishments.

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## INTERNATIONAL TELEVISION

In view of Telstar's recent and dramatic debut, *Frank Iezzi's* first-hand account of the difficulties encountered by the European TV writer takes on even greater significance. His analysis of an important aspect of international television marks the first in a series of continuing investigations by *Television Quarterly* within this expanding field.

# ETV REVISITED

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EDWARD STASHEFF

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After four years away from active immersion in educational television on the national level, it is good to look at it again, to see the changes that have taken place in NETRC, in the ETV stations, in the growing Instructional Television movement, and in the production centers, those producing studios which have no transmitters of their own but prepare and record programs for transmission over both commercial and educational stations.

For the stimulus to scan the landscape closely once again, I am grateful to Mr. Yale Roe, who is certainly one of the wittiest and most charming critics who ever cast a concerned and slightly jaundiced eye at the ETV scene. His comments, in the May 1962 issue of *Television Quarterly*, are well-intentioned, constructive, even sympathetic. He comments with regret, not anger or malice, and he clearly wants for ETV the very things it wants for itself—good programs and good audiences.

Mr. Roe, however, chastises ETV for errors of omission and commission which were much more prevalent five years ago than they are today, although admittedly still to be found here and there. Let us remember that the nation's oldest ETV station, KUHT, began broadcasting nine years ago, while three new stations came on the air just at the end of last year, with two even younger ones likely to sign on as this goes to press. True, the older members of the family share their experience with the younger ones, and NETRC advises all of them, but it does take a while for newcomers to catch on—and

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no one maintains that all ETV stations, regardless of age, are operating up to the standards of the best of them. And even the best, whether in programming, production, operations, or promotion, admit freely that they would like to be doing more and doing it better. There are, however, the ever-present limitations of the twenty-four-hour day and the hundred-cent dollar.

The important thing to note, in this writer's opinion, is the steady progress that has been made—by NETRC and its network; by the individual ETV stations in their local operations; by schools and production centers in their non-broadcast productions. Interestingly enough, just about everything Mr. Roe quite rightly would have ETV do, *has* been done and *is* being done, though quite probably not as widely, nor as intensively as he, or this writer, or Jack White or some sixty ETV station managers would have it done.

To begin with, it is hard to find evidence that "the library argument precludes a frame of reference within which the merits of a program series might be judged." Even if "someone out there must like it," a good librarian would not justify the shelving of the complete works of Mickey Spillane; nor have I ever heard an ETV Program Manager defending a *poor* program on Bridge, Gardening or Driver Education on the library basis. A *good* program, with evidence of viewer acceptance, would need no defense; it would be serving the needs of a definite audience or segment of an audience and, by helping viewers to do better the worthwhile things they will do anyway, would be fulfilling at least one definition of education.

To return to the library analogy, while a good ETV librarian does try to stock titles which will appeal to as many readers as possible, he is the first to complain (though not necessarily where he can be heard by any but his staff) if one of the "books" is poorly written, printed or bound—even though it belongs in a "worthy" classification.

This, however, does not prevent him from grouping his books in cases and alcoves which will attract particular types of readers. Mr. Roe suggests that a station might decide to program time segments for specific groups only—an excellent suggestion that most stations have been following for years. To mention only a few of the many examples: classroom programming occupies solid blocks of time at most stations, as such titles as *The Twenty-One Inch Classroom* or *Classroom Ten* would suggest. The Chicago Board of Education has put concentrated time, money and effort into a Junior College course on television which, in the last four years, has seen hundreds of devoted adults completing the standard two-year curriculum at home.

As for public affairs, programs for area opinion leaders, or cultural offerings, ETV's most recent development is the concept of "Prime Time Programs" which was begun over NET stations last September. All the affiliates of the NETRC agreed to schedule a special block of NET offerings between 7 and 10 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Mondays are devoted to one-hour documentaries, largely international in approach and subject; Wednesdays are given over to "Prominent Personalities" such as Ansel Adams, Edward Steichen, Louis Armstrong, Eugene Ormandy, Mies van der Rohe, Frank Lloyd Wright, Edward Albee and Lorraine Hansberry, all presented in half-hour formats; Friday nights feature a Festival of Arts, an all-inclusive heading under which the stations have broadcast *An Age of Kings*, the Boston Symphony, BBC classic dramas, operas, and even a Japanese art film with English subtitles. Programs in the Friday group run ninety minutes or two hours.

Mr. Roe, again most justifiably, fears that a station which programs everything from Shakespeare to bridge will become everything to everybody and nothing to anybody. He overlooks the possibility that it may become a something, a very particular something, to a great many anybodies who find different things in it, but always things they value. It is perhaps unfair to use one of the outstandingly successful ETV stations, WGBH-TV of Boston, as an example, but the fire which destroyed the WGBH studio building and everything in it provided a dramatic instance of the regard in which a station can be held.

Within eight weeks after the fire, WGBH's appeal for funds had brought in \$550,000 in contributions. About \$200,000 came in major gifts from foundations, companies, and affluent individuals, but the greater part came from more than 12,000 people, each giving a modest amount. Benefit projects, many of them started by school children, went on in nearly every city and town in the WGBH viewing area, with some contributions coming even from Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Vermont. As for co-operation from commercial broadcasting, all three of Boston's commercial stations helped to keep WGBH's television programs on the air with a gap of only twenty-four hours, and continued to aid by lending facilities and equipment. WHDH-TV, the local CBS affiliate, made a special studio available, and CBS itself contributed \$35,000 worth of cameras and related equipment, along with an encouraging telegram from Dr. Frank Stanton which accompanied the offer of the equipment. Clearly, WGBH had established a recognizable role not only in its community but throughout most of New England.

Turning to another point, no one could (or would want to) quarrel with Mr. Roe's request that ETV should make "whatever education is communicated as interesting as possible." It doesn't always show on the screen, but most ETV Program Managers have lost their boyish laughter and youthful spirits in continuing efforts to find educators who are "effective communicators" and to support them with "the kind of production that will compel attention, elicit interest, and stimulate response." To single out only two, from the dozens seen on ETV programs this past year, let us turn to the opposite ends of the school continuum. In the N.Y.U. Production Center in New York City, Barbara Yanowski captures on video tape the magic and wonder of science for first graders in a highly imaginative series called *Scienceland*. Produced for the Midwest Program on Airborne Television Instruction, and to be broadcast this fall to the school children of parts of six states from a plane flying at 23,000 feet, this series combines charm, showmanship, artistic production values and sound scientific concepts, suited to children of five to seven.

The University of Michigan Television Center has no transmitter, but produces educational programs on video tape and kinescope which are distributed to some thirty commercial and education stations, at their request. The distribution schedule, as this is being written, includes stations from Durham, New Hampshire, to Los Angeles, California, and from Athens, Georgia, to Seattle, Washington. Be it noted that the stations, most of them commercial, which carry these programs pay a modest price for them and air them in competition with the best commercial programming being offered by their neighbors.

Of the many fine communicators who have somehow avoided tripping over their Ph.D. hoods in the Michigan studio, let us consider Dr. Arthur Eastman of the English Department. Dr. Eastman did a series on Shakespeare last year which attracted a responsive and enthusiastic audience. One particularly touching letter came from a convent near Detroit. The Mother Superior wrote that the time of the sisters' special service on Sunday mornings had been changed to permit the nuns to watch Dr. Eastman's program over a local Detroit station! This year, Dr. Eastman is taping a series of lessons in American Literature called *From Franklin to Frost*, aimed at the Eleventh Year students in high schools, and also to be broadcast by MPATI. Not the least of this professor's accomplishments has been his ability to shift from superb instruction of college juniors, seniors, and graduate students to equal impact on high school juniors.

These are only two of many; they have been selected by this

writer because he has seen several of their video tapes, and has sat in classrooms with teachers and students who have been held spellbound by their inspired and inspiring instruction. True, there are still occasional programs whose presenters are highly qualified academically, but who lack whatever it is that leaps through the camera chain to attract and hold a viewer; and there undoubtedly will always be a few. It is not always possible for a Program Director to over-rule or persuade a Dean or Departmental Chairman who insists that "Professor X is the one to do that program for you, because he knows more about this subject than anyone else alive." The encouraging thing, to this writer, has been the growing number of Deans and Chairmen who now say, "Well, from what I've seen of your programs, you want someone who is pretty fluent and articulate, who comes across well, and who knows how to hold an audience. Now, we've been giving young Dr. Y our big lecture sections, and he might be your man." Even young Dr. Y will need a few programs under his belt before he is at ease before the cameras, but video tape has made it possible for him to see himself immediately after each production; the learning process has been accelerated.

"The experience of commercial stations already attests to the possibility of selling such programs (as *Open End* and *An Age of Kings*) to commercial enterprises who are willing to make a community contribution of this kind," says Mr. Roe. Again, he is right to call this to our attention, and to find nothing wrong in the acceptance of commercial assistance for the production of educational programs—at least this writer would agree with him wholeheartedly. But this writer also feels obliged to point out that WTTW, Chicago, led the ETV field in the acceptance of commercial assistance at least five years ago. As for NETRC, just in the past year, NET series have been underwritten by Westinghouse Broadcasting Corporation, International Business Machines, American Cyanamid, the Humble Oil Corporation, and such diverse organizations as the American Medical Association, the National Science Foundation, the AFL-CIO, and the National Association of Manufacturers.

Increasing viewership begins with stimulating programs, but often needs further assistance, a desirable but not always possible aim. Not only ETV managers would agree on this point, but so would Jim Aubrey, President of the CBS Television Network. Appearing at an FCC hearing on January 24th of this year, Mr. Aubrey testified that the network lost about \$5,000,000 on news and public affairs programs in 1961. He cited two cases in which, according to ratings, public affairs telecasts which the network regarded as impor-

tant had attracted considerably less viewer interest than competing programs. One was *Eisenhower on the Presidency*, which attracted only 11 per cent of the network audience for its time period despite an intensive advertising and publicity campaign. His second example was *The Population Explosion*, which a year ago was seen by only one-fifth of the total network audience.

According to the *New York Times*, "Mr. Aubrey conceded that in terms of other mass media, the number of persons watching *CBS Reports* had been 'very large.' But he described it as 'small' in terms of TV and competitive programs." Be it noted that the massive promotional machinery of CBS could not build what the network considered a satisfactory audience for unquestionably important programs. Be it also noted that at the same FCC hearing at which Mr. Aubrey reported a loss of \$5,000,000 on news and public affairs, Dr. Hyman H. Golden reported an increase in network earnings (by all three networks and their owned-and-operated stations) from \$9,900,000 in 1952 to \$95,200,000 in 1960—a tenfold rise in eight years. Now let us consider the audience-building efforts of the ETV stations, most of which run for a month or more on the production budget of one half-hour network show.

Among the cases in which stations have done exactly what Mr. Roe recommends, one could cite such programs as the Edward Teller-Linus Pauling debate on the dangers of nuclear testing (made available only to ETV stations by the participants), and programs featuring Eleanor Roosevelt, Robert Frost, Dr. Carl Jung, and Augustus John. Dr. Teller has also explained physics to teenagers; the Fine Arts Quartet of Chicago has analyzed and played the quartets of Beethoven and Bartok. True, some educational stations "miss the opportunity to seize upon something of significance that will elicit emotional response and interest from the particular community," but others seize upon it avidly. Again, to name one of many, KVIE, Sacramento, devoted a full day last December to "live," remote coverage of a California Highway Commission hearing on the route of a proposed freeway through downtown Sacramento. KVIE began its pick-up at the start of the hearing, 10:00 a.m., and carried it to conclusion at 7:30 p.m. Then the station immediately began a re-broadcast of the entire proceeding by video tape, which ran until 4:00 a.m. Laudatory phone calls were still coming in at sign-off!

Nor is "star power" neglected either by NETRC or by a good many individual stations. When Howard K. Smith left C.B.S., his first new assignment was to act as commentator on *Great Decisions—1962*, a NET series which began on ETV stations in February.

Pablo Casals began his *Master Class* series for NET a little over a year ago to enthusiastic reviews from the regular and trade press. ("Never in the history of TV music appreciation has there been a comparable series."—*The San Francisco Examiner*.) Martha Graham, daughter of Pittsburgh, appeared in *The Dancer's World* and danced in *Appalachian Spring* for her native city's WQED, and won awards at the Edinburgh and Venice Film Festivals. Max Morath, a Denverite with a largely local reputation, achieved national recognition when his series, *The Ragtime Era*, was produced by KRMA-TV, Denver; it played the NET stations, then was aired by such commercial outlets as WOR-TV, New York.

Another recommendation which is certainly valid concerns "the aggressive utilization of publicity techniques." Few ETV stations allocate what Mr. Roe and this writer would both like to see assigned to promotion—but then, few ETV stations allocate as much to *anything* as they would like! Yet with all the budgetary limitations that exist, it is well to note a number of outstanding examples of effective promotion. During the past year Edward Morris, development director of WTTW, received one of the ten annual awards of the Publicity Club of Chicago, given for outstanding publicity campaigns. Station WHYX-TV co-operated with the Philadelphia *Daily News* in a project to foster interest in science among some 250,000 students who had been receiving televised teaching. The newspaper carried articles outlining the lives and careers of twenty-five great men of science from Thales of Miletus to Enrico Fermi, and outstanding students read the *Daily News* stories before the cameras of WHYX-TV. The newspaper publicized the television series as well as the students.

ETV publicists, moreover, share their experiences and help each other. The same Ed Morris who won a Publicity Club award was host at a meeting of PR representatives of thirty-eight NET stations in June, 1961. Promotional activities were discussed by one panel of selected representatives; at another session, fund-raising techniques which had proved successful in San Francisco and Chicago were shared. On another occasion, Kitty Jackson, WGBH-TV's Promotion Director, described her views on preparing award presentations in *Inside Channels*, a family publication circulated among ETV station staffers.

Why was Miss Jackson asked to describe her methods? Partly because just a month earlier her station had won six TV awards at the annual Ohio State Institute for Education by Radio-Television, more than were won by any U.S. network or station. Lest it be assumed that these were awarded for academic respectability and

stuffiness, let it be pointed out that showmanship, effective use of the medium, and evidences of audience acceptability were three of the criteria which the judging groups used in determining the winners.

No one denies that not all the stations do equally well in programming, production and promotion, nor even that the admittedly outstanding stations do equally well all the time. But this writer emphatically denies that the educational broadcaster has much "complacency" to "give up;" or that the broadcaster is satisfied that "his program *potpourri*, filled with bridge and botany lessons, is really an 'educational' endeavor." Every educational broadcaster known to me isn't satisfied with anything about his station, and it is this dissatisfaction that has brought about the steady improvement in ETV that the years have seen.

For it is not easy to define educational television, any more than it is to define education itself. Perhaps the definition used by Warren G. Hill, State Commissioner of Education of the State of Maine, will serve for ETV too:

Education isn't the three R's, or homework, or unlimited facts, or a Phi Beta Kappa key, or a high-school diploma, or a degree from an Ivy League college. Education is a state of mind, a sense of responsibility, a commitment, a never-ending progression toward the realization of a dream.

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## IN NOVEMBER

### DIALOGUE

*Reuven Frank and Don Hewitt*

Two top-flight producers in news and public affairs consider the agony and the ecstasy of their challenging craft.

### TV CRITICISM IN AMERICA

*George Condon* of the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* and *Larry Laurent* of the *Washington (D.C.) Post* guide a panel of their colleagues through a discussion of critical standards across the nation.

### POLITICS AND POKER

Representatives of a number of public affairs-minded TV stations review the policies and pitfalls of handling local politics on television.

IN VOLUME I, No. 4

## TELEVISION QUARTERLY

The Journal of The National Academy of  
Television Arts and Sciences

# TELEVISION DRAMA IN EUROPE

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FRANK IEZZI

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Several years ago I undertook to compile an anthology titled *The World's Best TV Dramatic Scripts*, and to that end I made three study-tours of the major TV nations of Europe: England, France, Italy, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, Holland, Denmark, Norway and Sweden. In each of these countries, in consultation with TV *cognoscenti*, I sought to determine which was the "best" original TV script written to date by one of its nationals. The term "best" was simply held to mean that script which most successfully employed TV as a story-telling medium by capitalizing on its creative opportunities and minimizing its aesthetic limitations. Ground rules of selection stipulated that the script should have been written expressly for TV. No works adapted from another medium, documentaries about local political problems, or comedies of the revue-type were considered.

In some countries the field of selection was narrowed by an annual Academy Award-type presentation in which the national TV industries rewarded their best contributions. In Italy, for example, three scripts were selected as the "best," from which I chose one. In some countries, the USSR for example, only one script was offered, and selection was guided by a "beggars can't be choosers" philosophy.

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In most countries, the selection was a difficult one to make. For example, Holland has five separate companies—some religiously affiliated, some politically controlled, some commercially motivated—sharing Holland's single TV channel. Modesty forbade each of these companies from suggesting one of its own scripts, but understandable self-interest discouraged each from disqualifying itself too soon. Eventually two scripts were suggested, either of which, it was felt, would well represent Dutch TV writing.

One might well ask if, after nine months of study, travel, interviews, kinescope and video-tape screening, house visits and espresso-cafe sessions with dozens of European TV writers, agents, producers and network officials, I might have some conclusions about European TV writing. If the reader will accept the term "impressions" rather than "conclusions," the following remarks about the problems facing the field of TV writing in Europe, and what could be done to overcome them, might be offered.

Quite apart from the scripts selected for inclusion in the anthology, my impression is that the general artistic level of original writing for TV is quite low in the European countries I visited. There are two major factors which contribute to this sad situation. First, in none of the countries in question is writing for television remunerative enough to provide a full-time livelihood. Virtually all the TV writers I met were part-time writers. One literally turns out a full-length serialized detective novel every six weeks, with the regularity of clockwork. To date, he has published more than three dozen of these novels. Another is a full-time psychologist, a full-time newspaper reporter, a full-time music and drama critic, and, quite incidentally, a part-time TV writer. Still another is a university professor of linguistics who writes TV scripts as a hobby.

Indicative of the low remuneration for European TV writing is that one of the highest fees paid for any of the scripts chosen as the "best" was \$225, and this sum was for a one-and-a-half hour original drama which thrilled hundreds of television viewers! Secondly, the more established, more financially secure European writers of plays, poetry, and novels are extremely reluctant to jeopardize their reputations by writing for TV. They are loathe to write for TV not only because it pays so poorly or because they are not trained or experienced in writing for this upstart medium, but also because they have sincere and severe reservations about the aesthetic possibilities and creative opportunities of the new medium. These "name" writers seem more sensitive to the limitations of the medium as a creative enterprise than they are to its potentialities.

It must be apparent that if no individual European nation can afford to establish and support its own stable of TV dramatic writers, the answer must lie in some sort of co-operation and sharing among the group of nations involved. The area covered by the fifteen member nations of Eurovision is roughly equivalent in size to the area covered by our Atlantic seaboard states. In order to appreciate the impracticality, even the folly, of having each of these European nations artificially insulated from its neighbor with respect to TV writing, let us suppose that each of our Atlantic states were forced to provide its own crop of TV drama writers. If New York could manage, Rhode Island probably could not. Obviously, if a European writer, of any nationality, could get more mileage from his script, his audience would be increased and so would his financial reward.

The Eurovision network has made some strides in the direction of the general exchange and sharing of TV programs; but these have been mostly in the area of such programs as music, sports and public events, which do not depend for their appreciation upon a knowledge of the particular language of the country in which the program originates. At a time when giant steps are called for in the area of TV dramatic script and tape exchange, Eurovision has thus far managed only baby steps.

How might the European TV writers' output be shared among the European nations themselves, and perhaps between the European nations and the United States?

With regard to exchange and sharing among European nations, this could be effected in terms of exchanging both the actual written scripts, which are the blueprints of the full TV production, and the fully-mounted "live" or taped production of these scripts. Perhaps one of the nations should volunteer to set up a combination translation center and clearing house to which the best original TV scripts from each nation could be sent, at which they could be translated into the appropriate languages of participating nations, and from which they could be distributed to member nations for local production in the appropriate language, much like speeches are dispensed at the United Nations. The time has come to cut away with machete-like thoroughness the jungle vines of copyright, royalty, and legal restrictions which strangle such free exchange of written materials. The removal of these encumbrances of official red-tape could be effected with the same swiftness exhibited by these European nations when they conceived of and executed the Common Market economic arrangements.

With regard to the exchange of taped and "live" productions of dramatic scripts, this could be accomplished in two ways. First, taped

dramatic programs from a given European country could be dubbed, or lip-synched, into the language of the country which wanted to borrow the show, much like many foreign films which are shown in this country. This process is expensive, time and energy consuming, and, despite steady refinements being made, is still aesthetically unsatisfactory.

Again borrowing from film technique, another method of sharing taped programs is to equip such tapes with sub-titles in the language of the borrowing country. This method fares better with Europeans in that they, unlike most Americans, are at least bi-lingual and promise to become more so with the advent of the Common Market. The viewer of such a sub-titled dramatic program thereby supplements what he hears with what he reads. But this method, too, is time-consuming and costly.

Secondly, it might be better if "live" rather than taped dramatic programs be shared. Perhaps "live" dramas can be presented from a given country in the language of that country, with each participating country sharing the "live" production provided *beforehand* with a teleprompter-type taped set of sub-titles. These sub-titles—in the language of the receiving nation—could be superimposed electronically "live" over the "live" picture, while the language of the sending country is heard, muted but audible, for the benefit of the many bi-lingual viewers in the receiving country. In that way, immediacy, a *sine qua non* of good TV in general and TV drama in particular, would be preserved. The mechanisms and technical details could be worked out once the European nations in question recognize that for their common welfare, share they must. An audience multiplied fifteenfold could enable producers to pay writers of original TV drama a higher fee, thereby attracting better writers. As these better writers bring to bear their talents, and are able to demonstrate the latent but inherent potentialities of TV as an aesthetically-rich, story-telling medium, greater demand for TV drama will be developed and the present vicious circle might be broken.

What about TV script and tape exchanges between the European TV community and the United States? My impression is that the main obstacles to such exchange seem to be financial opportunism and lack of understanding communication. First, American TV writers, or more frequently their agents, spoiled by the relatively high fees paid in the United States for the few original TV scripts produced here, expect comparable compensation from European producers and networks, unaware that these latter are in no way able to provide such astronomical sums. As a result, very few original

American TV dramatic scripts are available, despite the irony that European producers and networks desperately need such original material and that American TV writers need to have some place for their scripts to be produced.

The converse, unfortunately, is equally true. When a European TV writer, or more accurately his hand-wringing agent, contemplates breaking into the reputedly lucrative American TV market, the mental cash-registers begin to ping and the ante goes up. Many other obstacles exist to limit severely the number of European TV plays which come before American TV cameras: the dearth of American TV drama programs on the air, the unbelievably muddled international copyright laws, the reputed monopoly over the few dramatic shows by the stable of writers whose services are owned by the few giant talent agencies, and the absence of any orderly system for ferreting-out the exceptionally worthwhile European scripts, having them translated and bringing them to the attention of the American reading public and of American TV producers.

It is in this latter connection that two projects are making a humble start. First, an anthology of the world's best TV dramatic scripts, containing the cream of world TV dramatic writing, should make the point that Madison Avenue has no complete monopoly over TV writing talent. Second, an embryonic International TV Script Exchange has been established. This agency hopes to serve as a clearing house for translated TV dramatic scripts. The project is a big one, but so is the need. With international "live" TV via Telstar now an actuality, some such organization is called for. It is to be hoped that some far-seeing TV organization, like The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, might be willing to help such projects along.

# BOOKS IN REVIEW

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Mehling, Harold. **THE GREAT TIME-KILLER.** Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1962.

Television is like modern art: people have strong feelings about it, and they know what they like. Free-lance writer Harold Mehling knows what he dislikes. His dislikes include almost everything connected with television as it is currently functioning. His criticisms are essentially rehashes of the trite but not necessarily true comments about the medium that have been the vehicles by which a number of television figures have developed reputations as statesmen. Among the subjects with which Mr. Mehling deals are commercials, Hollywood, sex and censorship, writers, blacklisting, ratings, the FCC, color television, the quiz scandals, pay-television, NAFBRAT, and formula programs.

If there were any one group that is the chief target of this jeremiad, it would include the advertiser and the advertising agency. The medium's ills are attributed directly to the advertiser. (An unusual index gives products and the companies that sponsor these products on television.) Mehling also gives the addresses of the networks and the FCC and FTC. Mehling concludes his book by suggesting that writing to these groups represents a great opportunity for viewers "who would like to see the medium rescued before they die."

The shrillness and ferocity of Mehling's indictment are so unrelieved that they detract somewhat from its impact. Another deterrent is that many different subjects are dealt with so briefly that no one subject is treated adequately; and the transitions from one discussion to another are blurred.

The book can best be understood as the most recent of the last decade's outpouring of books of complaint by popular writers like Vance Packard, John Keats, and Robert Osborn. These masochistic books, like Mehling's, eschew a balanced presentation of the subjects they discuss and exude fervent confidence in their argument. They also share a lack of interest in how the situation they are discussing may realistically be appraised.

Although this book is thus another symptom of the American public's current desire to suffer by hearing yet one more complaint about how badly off we are, it is also a symptom of something else that is even more significant: television's role as our most penetrating medium. Mehling cares enough about the importance of the medium to ventilate his strong feelings about it. But, to coin a phrase, strong feelings are not enough. After over a decade of television, we ought

to have advanced to the point at which we can discuss the range of quality of television, rather than see it as all bad.

Mehling's title provides perhaps the most significant clues to why his book falls so far short of the mark as a searching critique of television. What does it mean to "kill time" in America? What were the television viewers doing with their time before television? What are the long-range effects of so much viewing, in terms of underlying patterns of perception? How is the American national character being reinforced or modified by television? With the decline of movie stars, what is the effect of television's inability to produce its own stars? What relationship do art-forms like television or movies or novels have to the fantasy needs of the viewer or reader? These represent the kinds of central questions to which we urgently need answers. But it is unlikely that we can get much help from the kind of overly literal interpretation and free-swinging tirade in which Mehling has engaged.

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Peters, J.M.L. **TEACHING ABOUT FILM.** New York: International Documents Service, Columbia University Press, 1961.

This book is another in the Unesco series "Press, Film, Radio and Television in the World Today." The author calls attention to the increasing emphasis being given in many countries to teaching film appreciation, including films for television. Broadcasters or teachers of broadcasters-to-be who are conscious of the social revolution in progress will not quarrel with the thesis that "film and along with film, television—is by and large assuming the proportions and shape of what we call a 'second world' for our youth and therefore education must take serious note of the way in which young people 'live' in this modern environment of the visual mass media." Thus educators have a challenge to construct a bridge "between the life of children and adolescents in the everyday world and their imaginary life in this 'second world' of the cinema." "Film-teaching" is the author's way of building this bridge.

The term "film-teaching," comparable to "history teaching" or "science teaching," is suggested as more adequately describing the approach for aiding teachers in their work for increased understanding and appreciation of entertainment films. Although the book is directed primarily towards teachers of children and adolescents who may use it as a handbook for a unit in film-teaching or in extra curricular film clubs, it can be of value to the college instructor in audiovisual education or television production who desires a compact reference book or a co-text.

Part One deals with the basic general problems in film-teaching. The two chapters on understanding film language and appreciation of a film as a work of art are valuable for a succinct introduction to

the film medium. The use of a sequence from a Carol Reed film, with photographs, descriptive narrative, preliminary shooting script, and final shooting script, gives concreteness to the consideration of film language. The discussion of film aesthetics also contains a number of specific examples to illustrate the generalizations and principles.

Part Two is concerned with practical methods and techniques which may be employed by the teacher. The recommendations for specific distribution of film-teaching projects and subject matter for different age groups, ages 7 to 9, 10 to 12, 13 to 15, and 16 to 18, are provocative and should stimulate considerable diversity of opinion. The author is frank to admit the many individual differences which present problems in such a summary. The overcrowding of the curriculum which exists is recognized. Persuasive arguments are given for connecting film-teaching with other subjects, particularly English, when this language is the mother tongue. A strong case is established for students to make their own films. Detailed suggestions for exercises at different age levels are offered. College instructors who would like to introduce units in actual film making in their television production classes can find here some definite guidelines.

Frequent references to approaches and experiences in various countries where teachers have been active for a number of years are included. The author states that it is hoped that the appearance of this book will stimulate further interest and activity in film-teaching, and calls for the teachers in different countries engaged in such teaching to share their experiences and work out pedagogical methods. This book is a stimulating prototype and deserves careful reading by those concerned with "What Makes Johnny Watch?"

*The University of Michigan*

*Garnet R. Garrison*

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To those contemplating a career in television, this word of caution. Once plans for publication of this journal were completed, a form letter requesting books for reviewing purposes was sent out to all publishers. Each was asked to supply a review copy of "any book which would be of *real interest to professionals in television* and other mass media." In due course the Henry Regnery Company of Chicago sent along a new work by Dr. Karl E. Voldeng. Its title? *Recovery from Alcoholism*.



# TELEVISION QUARTERLY

## — LOOKING AHEAD

Perhaps Dr. Stanton's observation that "everybody's business is nobody's business" holds the key to an understanding of the state of American television criticism, where professionals have become hard-pressed by amateurs. The very confusion of aims, purposes, and motives underlying much of television criticism has made evolution of inflexible critical standards a torturously slow process. Beset by problems of defining a TV aesthetic, and of then reconciling its aesthetic and sociological divisions (not to mention the working out of such unresolved technical approaches as whether programs should be reviewed before or after the fact), TV criticism's function has often become as tenuous and thin-spread as much of that which it purports to judge.

Now from Kenneth Tynan, who in palmier days took his full share of acerbic swipes at the popular arts, comes the suggestion that professional criticism is simply impossible—in more ways than one. Mr. Tynan's fatal error was that of becoming a television producer, and after a season of creating the *Tempo* series for the BBC, he reflects (in *Encounter*, June 1962) upon the shattering critical indifference and/or incompetence to which the program was exposed in the British press.

By the very nature of their profession, Tynan writes, "TV critics cannot be other than amateurs. . . no editor in his right mind would employ the same man to write about drama, film, music, ballet, books, opera, education, religion, politics and current events; yet a TV critic is expected to tackle all of these and more."

By concentrating upon those subjects he knows about, Tynan observes, the critic may become quite effective, "...but self-respect insists that he should be equally dogmatic on the subjects about which he is ignorant."

TV criticism needs "Renaissance men," concludes Tynan, but in view of their absence editors might do well to create separate critics for the various kinds of program offerings, or at least ask their existing subject-matter specialists to extend their surveillance to television.

Those who share A. J. Liebling's attitudes toward the American press might conclude abruptly that the typical editor would be content to provide only that superficial entertainment "coverage" which would assure readership, but would avoid any critical analysis which might strike too close to home. Few editors would add more critics to their staffs, fewer still would turn their veteran hands from other assignments to promote a rival advertising medium, and some would not recognize a "Renaissance man" if he walked into their office and bit them on the typing finger.

But fortunately, neither embittered individual producers nor the entire "anti-press" school have drawn an accurate portrayal of press criticism of TV. Professionalism, if it does not abound, survives and grows steadily more perceptive and mature. It has its dedicated practitioners—its polished observers whose instincts are sound and who have displayed a sensible willingness to examine both sides of TV's coin.

The problem is not one of finding good professional criticism of television, but of paying it the proper accord and respect.

*A. W. B.*

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

That was a superb piece of analysis of the Western by John W. Evans. An altogether acute (and to me, unexpectedly fascinating) dissection. And he laid it all out on the napkin, piece by piece. Beautiful writer, too, and honest thinker.

*Maz Wylie*  
*New York City*

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In *Modern Man and the Cowboy*, John Evans demonstrates why most critics would maintain that social scientists tell us nothing new; they have merely constructed a formidable jargon of their own for purposes of restating the obvious. So what's new about the audience's need for a hero? Has Evans ever read Brunettiere, *The Poetics*, George Pierce Baker, Castelvetro, or hundreds of others who have been defining and refining rules and principles of dramaturgy, and the relation between characters in a play and people in the audience, for the past twenty centuries?

There is a certain pompous arrogance about his suggestion that much criticism directed against the Western is "sophomoric." Criticism's function is to seek out aesthetic as well as moral values. At its best, it is willing to judge—to say that a Western is either "bad" or "good" as a work of art. Most are bad. At least they are to everyone but Evans. Probably all "social and cultural effects" evaluation of the influence of mass media will, in the final analysis, only confirm "in depth" the simplest facts about audiences which have been known for centuries. It will also confirm status quo standards, and permit men the debilitating luxury of escaping from freedom of decision in all matters of taste.

One wonders how far George Schaefer or Lewis Freedman might have gotten if they had simply said, with Evans, "So long as it has a hero—so long as it provides escape—there is no justification for criticising a play!"

*Frank Williams*  
*Detroit, Michigan*

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Congratulations on your second issue of the *Quarterly*. Too many magazines that deal with aspects of our industry seem to suggest that the quality days of TV are gone, done in by the boys with the money, the sponsor and his ad-men—that it has become a sell-out medium controlled by men with little taste and no integrity. The implication is that no patch of green will ever again bloom in the wasteland, or conversely, there is no wasteland at all; those weeds are all exotic flowers incognito and only sterile eggheads can fail to see their beauty. It is refreshing to read a journal that is aware of TV's inadequacies but dedicated to the notion that things will get better if we will try to make things better.

My special thanks for the dialogue between George Schaefer and Lewis Freedman, the best piece in the issue. Hopefully, producers with a loose grip on the handle will read the words of these two keen fellows and be encouraged to aim higher—seeing that there is nothing incompatible between a passionate love of quality and enormous professional success.

*George Clayton Johnson*  
*Pacoima, California*



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