

WTTG lets newsmakers, community talk out the issues of the day

WTTG(TV) Washington has incorporated audience feedback in covering controversial news issues, such as a discussion of the impeachment question. The "Talk Back to the News" concept relies on interaction between a live studio audience or viewer phone-ins and a resident panel of experts. An April impeachment program included Rabbi Baruch Korff, head of the Committee for Fairness to the President; Robert Novak, syndicated columnist, and House Judiciary Committee members Charles Wiggins (R.-Calif.) George Danielson (D.-Calif.).

Another part of WTTG's news-in-debate style was a nightly analysis between the Rev. John McLaughlin, Nixon adviser, and Robert Novak reporting on the impeachment hearings.

KMTV scoop on Gerald Ford made larger by hindsight

Issues '74 is unique in the Omaha market, the only weekly half-hour series covering primarily local and regional issues in interview form with the best available spokesmen. KMTV(TV)'s "no-budget" program has made headlines, sometimes nationally, for its revealing stories.

An example of KMTV's efforts beyond the local interest was an enlightening session with then-Vice President Gerald Ford. Mr. Ford granted an exclusive interview to *Issues '74* on Feb. 17 and KMTV invited his press party and local



What he didn't know. In Omaha, then-Vice President Gerald Ford gave an exclusive interview to KMTV(TV). His comments there made national headlines.

press outlets to view the taping. Mr. Ford's comments on Watergate, possible impeachment, campaign spending and confidence in government made national news.

KPBS-TV gives local election intensified coverage

In a year when voters are looking for new faces and new approaches in the political arena, KPBS-TV, a noncommercial San Diego station, devoted almost 15 hours to election coverage generally slighted by TV—primary election races at both local and statewide levels. The approach was a conversational give-and-take among the interviewers and candidates, lasting anywhere from 30 to 90 minutes, depending on the number of candidates participating. The programs also featured community involvement in an unusual way, when it drew upon area residents as co-interviewers. The result, according to Gloria Penner, director of the TV programing development, was a "human, informal, insightful look at the candidates."

WFTV lets viewers in on debate

WFTV(TV) Orlando, Fla., has attempted to bring back the town-meeting concept of government, by providing Orange county voters with a televised sounding board for questions and opinions on a charter referendum. Prefacing the 90-minute phone-in program on March 31, where three pro-charter panelists debated three anti-charter panelists, the WFTV news department produced a series of reports explaining the major provisions of the document. During the 90-minute live debate, some 300 calls were received.

In June, WFTV reporter Harry Horn produced and narrated a 60-minute special exploring known energy sources including a look at the University of Florida's solar-power farm and the potential for wind-mill power.

KRLN delves into local issues in its public-affairs efforts

Noncommercial KLRN(TV) San Antonio, Tex., has a get-involved approach to politics that has resulted in a number of specials on issues of importance to the community. On the eve of a bond election that would determine Austin's in-

volvement in a southern Texas nuclear project, KLRN aired a one-hour live debate on the controversial nuclear power plant and invited questions from the live studio audience. In anticipation of May primary elections, the station presented a *Politiathon '74*, program in which statewide and county contenders presented their platforms and fielded questions from panels comprising area media representatives. Moving from the political sphere to the pocketbook, the station presented *Income Tax '74: Let's Face It*, a call-in program that featured a panel of accountants, Internal Revenue Service representatives and other tax experts to untangle tax traumas.

WSRE-TV lets the sun shine in

WSRE-TV Pensacola, Fla., takes advantage of the "sunshine law" enacted by that state's legislature that opens all state, city and county meetings to the public. The station regularly video tapes both city and county meetings, editing the film into hour-long programs for evening showing.

WKY-TV's weekly public affairs program offers variety of formats on variety of subjects and issues

WKY-TV Oklahoma City incorporates a variety of formats in its weekly, prime-time public affairs program, *Spectrum*. A series of "Profiles" examining local controversies and controversial people; a series of film documentaries produced by Special Projects Director Bob Dotson (whose "Through the Looking Glass Darkly" won an Emmy and the Robert F. Kennedy journalism award for television), and a series called *Breakaway*, produced by minority affairs producer George Wesley, completes the *Spectrum* line-up.

Aiming at minority issues and attacking stereotypes, "Breakaway" was the most innovative programming of the series. Sample topics: hypertension, a major health problem among blacks; an interview with America's first black woman mayor; the Oklahoma City Muslim movement, and discrimination in women's sports.

WQED puts public affairs programing into action and evaluates results

Noncommercial WQED(TV) Pittsburgh's *People: Pittsburgh* is both a program and a controlled experiment. Its content is not unusual—news, interviews, ethnic heritage programs of interest to the many minorities that make up the city. But its intent is to test the degree to which TV can create a climate of acceptance and communication among city residents that mellows touchy topics such as school busing. The broadcasts are part of a multimedia campaign that also includes a newsletter that ties into the program and elaborates on local subjects of multi-ethnic interest. The project is funded by a federal grant and is designed and evaluated by a 140-member advisory committee of community representatives.

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