



editorial

A POUND OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR AN OUNCE OF POPULARITY

That's how Young & Rubicam's president Sigurd Larmon put it the other day when talking about the responsibility of mass communication media.

That the broadcasting industry is very much aware of this responsibility has become more and more evident. One need look no further than the recent, inspired Westinghouse Broadcast Stations conference on Public Service Programming. Over 100 stations throughout the country attended this all-important three-day meeting.

As the lead story on Local Programming in this issue points out, station management is caught in a squeeze which makes it extremely difficult to program for their communities as much as they would like to. With 99.9% of timebuying based on ratings, live local programming efforts have been inevitably disappearing in favor of the higher-rated film shows.

As a result, considerably less time has been available for live program origination. Fortunately, many broadcasters have risen to the occasion, concentrating on their news and special events departments.

Some stations feel so strongly the need for local identification and community service that they have resisted the trend to feature and even syndicated film. The point they make is important—and valid. It is that television must be more than an advertising medium. In fact, if it is to operate at maximum effectiveness as an advertising medium, television must contribute more than purely circulation-building entertainment.

A graphic example would be the New York city newspapers. *The New York Times* has created an aura of believability by concentrating on the quality of its product. It far surpasses in acceptance, by both the public and advertiser, its larger-circulation competitors, which in their effort to build up circulation continue to employ circulation gimmicks and news stories that presumably have mass appeal. There can be little question

that as a result their over-all believability has suffered.

And this is where the real danger lies in station programming. Constant yielding to rating pressure will destroy a station's over-all effectiveness in the long run, and have a marked effect on tune-in. That broadcasters are well aware of this is clearly evident by their serious attempts to strengthen their programming contributions.

Other signs of broadcast maturity are the curricular activities being assumed by local stations; the role they are exercising as a major communications force in the country.

A few weeks ago I was privileged to go along on a three-day junket sponsored by the Navy for the Broadcast Industry Advisory Board on recruiting. In attendance were some of the country's leading broadcast men like John Haves of the *Washington Post* station, Crosley's Bob Dunville, Time Inc.'s Ben Larsen, Sanger of WQXR, Harry Novik of WLEV, Don Tabor, president of WCAU, and Todd Storz, of Storz stations.

Here were busy men taking off valuable time to use the Navy use television more effectively as a communications force, and at the same time adding stature to their industry.

In a young, dynamic, swiftly-growing industry, a broadcaster's energies have naturally been primarily concentrated on the problems of development and competitive battle. Under the pressures of the daily struggle it is easy to forget that, by its very nature, television is a powerful force for good or evil in the community and that it is so viewed by those outside the industry. On the broadcaster therefore rests an important responsibility. It is only as he succeeds in living up to that responsibility that he will justifiably receive the command, the respect of public and government.

Fred Rog...