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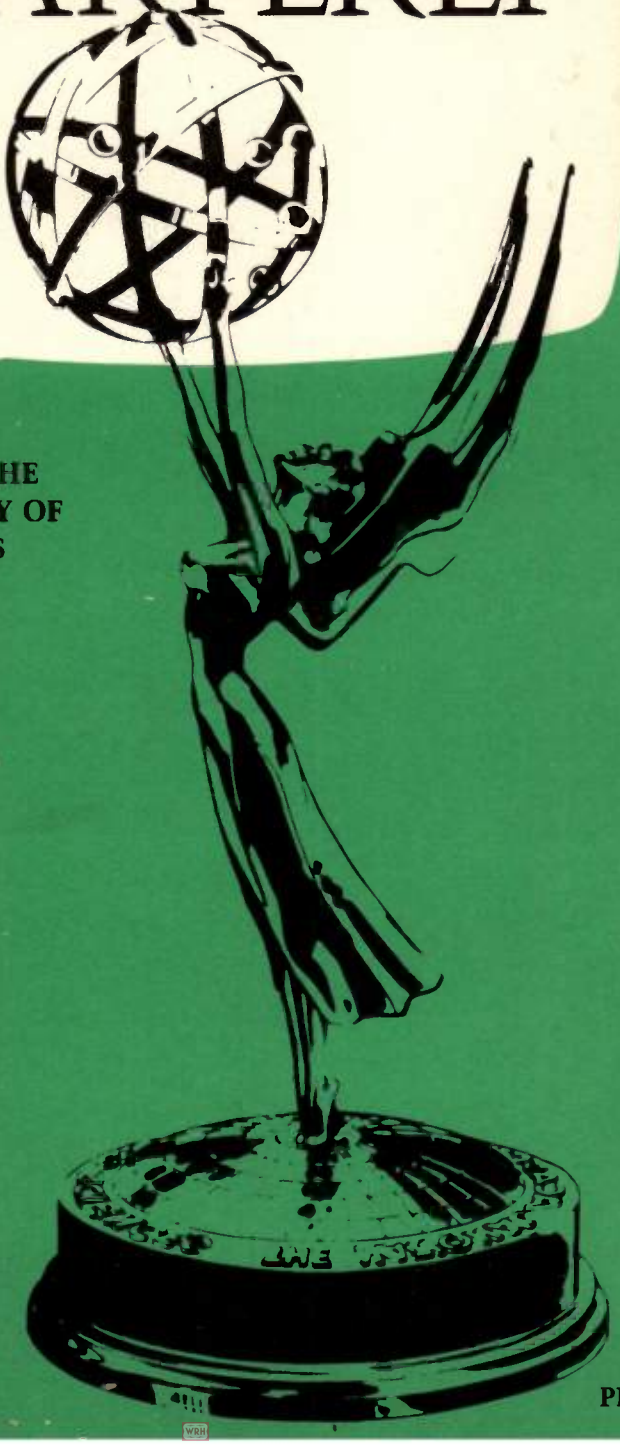
TELEVISION QUARTERLY



THE JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF TELEVISION ARTS AND SCIENCES

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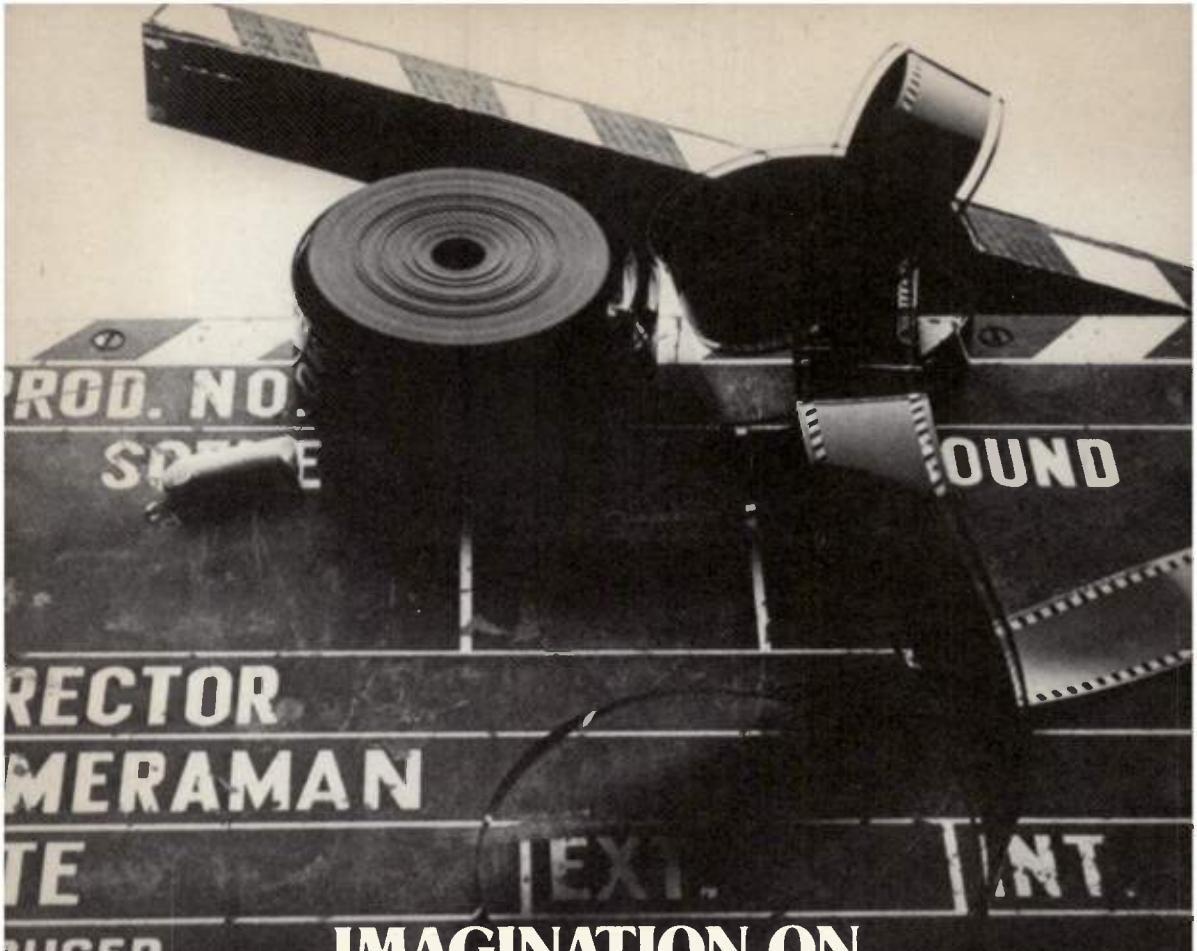

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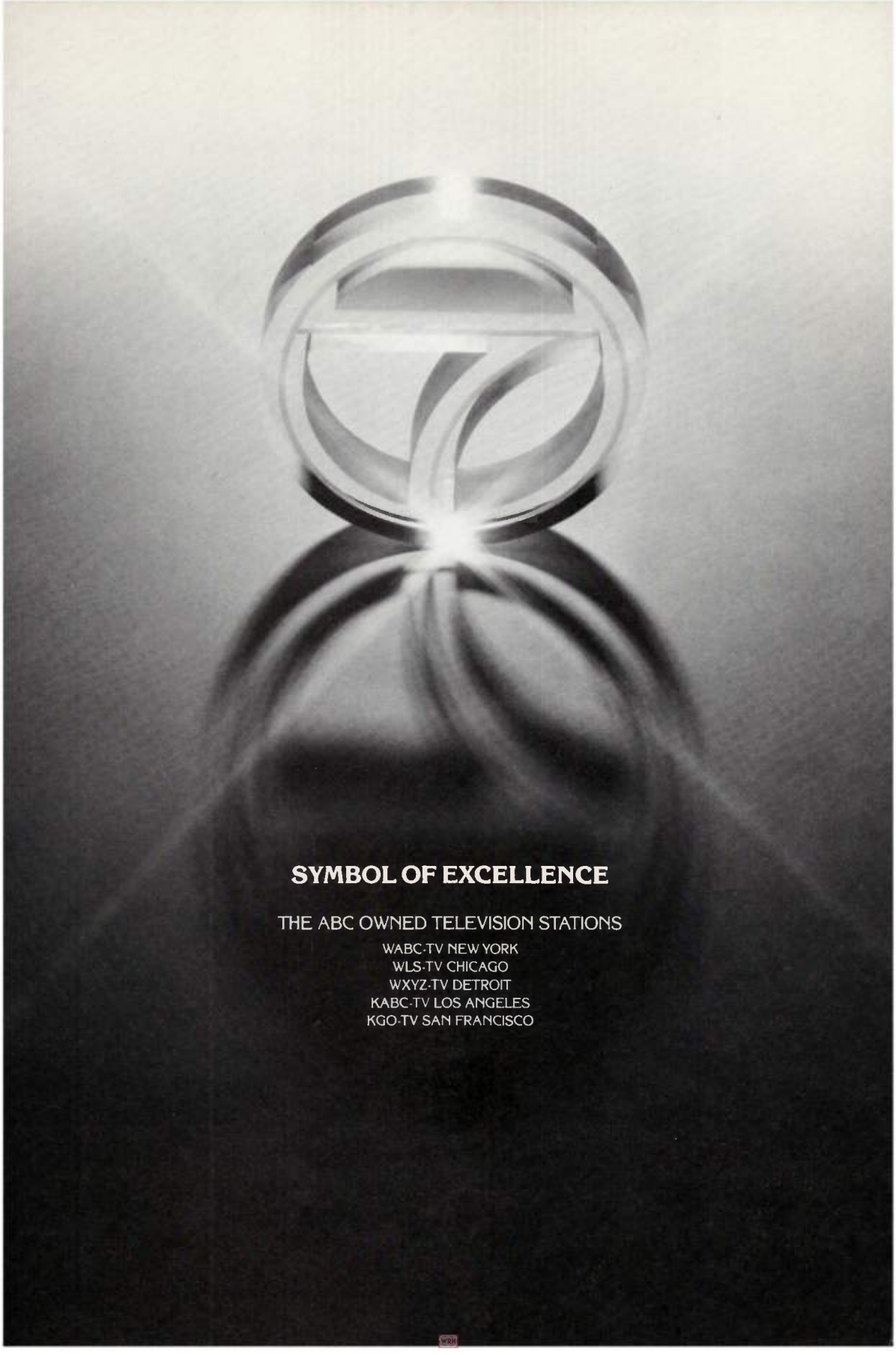
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TELEVISION QUARTERLY

VOL. XIX NO. I

CONTENTS

A New Philosophy For Broadcasting?

Since he burst upon the scene in the fall of 1981 with a dramatic pronouncement before an industry group gathered in the Waldorf Astoria Hotel heralding the dawn of a new era in communications, the Reagan-appointed Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, Mark Fowler, has spoken frequently and widely about the marketing philosophy he believes should dominate the relations between government and the broadcast industry. Perhaps his most striking departure from conventional wisdom is his dismissal of the concept of the broadcaster as Trustee for the public as an anachronism needing swift burial and replacement by the concept on "unregulation."

In the following article, prepared for *Television Quarterly*, Chairman Fowler brings together various strands that constitute his overall approach to communications. He challenges a number of cherished notions that have traditionally sustained those who believe that the broadcaster has a social responsibility which is subject to government oversight.

MARK S. FOWLER

Mark S. Fowler began his career in broadcasting at the age of seventeen as a part-time radio announcer at station WABR, Winter Park, Florida, then at WDVH, Gainesville. In 1963 he interrupted his education to become a full-time announcer, first at WKEE-AM-FM, Huntington, West Virginia, next at WMEG, Melbourne, Florida. Returning to the University of Florida in 1965, he rejoined WDVH as announcer and program manager, while continuing his studies. He graduated from the University of Florida College of Law in 1969.

In 1970, he joined the Washington, D.C. communications law firm of Smith & Pepper. He formed the Washington law firm of Fowler & Meyers in 1975 and practiced communications law until his appointment to the FCC. In 1975–76 Fowler represented the Citizens For Reagan campaign committee as communications counsel, a post he held again with the Reagan For President and Reagan/Bush committees in 1979–80.

Broadcast **Unregulation** in the 1980's

By MARK S. FOWLER

It is hardly news that we have entered a new communications era. New technologies are rapidly making their way into society's consciousness, generating excitement, fear and institutional clashes. A fundamental shift is called for in the relationship between government and the industries the FCC regulates. In broadcasting, that shift, now in process, represents a transition from regulation based on the principle that a station is a trustee of the public interest to "unregulation" based on the premise that the broadcaster, in the real world, is an entrant into and player in a business marketplace and should be dealt with as such.

This shift is in harmony with the philosophy and spirit of the current Administration. Indeed, the new FCC attitude may be viewed as an expression of the Reagan approach to government in the field of communications. During the past year, my fellow Commissioners and I have attempted to infuse the agency with a clear purpose for the next several years of broadcast regulation. I view my job at the Commission as important in carrying out the President's mandate for a leaner, less intrusive presence throughout the country. In this effort, we intend to cooperate fully with the Congress in its efforts to modernize the Communications Act.

We see our task as that of hacking our way through the dense regulatory underbrush transplanted from the 19th century. The laws which guide the Commission to this day derive essentially from the same laws that chartered the Interstate Commerce Commission back in 1887. Whatever the validity of those regulatory notions in the age of the buckboard and the waltz, their relevance must be questioned in the age of the minicam and microwave.

We have established unregulation as a *primary* objective. While almost all of the major industries that came to be known as the alphabet agencies, such as the Federal Trade Commission, the CAB, even the FCC to some extent, have felt the fresh air of deregulation, broadcasting has remained a conspicuous exception. Airlines, oil and gas, and the trucking industry recently, and some common carrier services, cable TV, CB and radio have enjoyed release from old restrictions at the FCC. But where broadcasting is concerned, the FCC

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remains the last of the New Deal dinosaurs. There must come a time when the FCC catches up to the realities of the broadcast industries and eliminates regulations that no longer have valid purposes. The time is now.

In the next few years, almost every aspect of broadcast life, from ownership possibilities to programming and even engineering considerations, will be affected. I look forward to a time, not far off, when the broadcaster will be as free to pursue the development of his enterprise as other media, without the constrictions of Section 315 and the Fairness Doctrine, free from the speculative program guidelines layed down by sheltered bureaucrats in Washington.

Those who operate our broadcast institutions should be free to run their enterprises as businesses seeking to satisfy the needs and wants of viewers and listeners, and winning or losing the competitive race on the basis of their ability to do so effectively and efficiently, rather than hew to a standard of performance deemed by a federal agency to be in the public interest. This idea may indeed seem radical, perhaps frightening, to those who grew up with the concept of the broadcaster's public trusteeship enshrined as the embodiment of the highest social virtue. A cool analysis of communications history, however, will inevitably lead to the conclusion that the public trusteeship concept really has no solid justification.

□

The original electromagnetic sin was to set aside a patch of the spectrum to be reserved for radio—and later—television, regardless of what the marketplace might tell us or otherwise suggest. The frequency was not treated as a property right, but assigned on the basis of a public interest standard which has proven to be amorphous, indeed ever imprecise, fraught with continuing problems that cannot really be resolved. Given the long history of the ratification of what appeared to be basically squatter's rights to some frequencies by commercial radio at the outset, it is undoubtedly unrealistic in this period to think of going to a system of a true free market in which the entire electromagnetic spectrum could be auctioned off, even if that is the right first marketplace step.

To its credit, the system that actually emerged, however illogical, probably contributed to developing more efficient use of frequency bands than might have been anticipated, forcing licensees to develop better tuners and transmitters to enhance their signals, rather than gobble up more spectrum on the perimeter.

Although, as it turned out, revenues were to be finally derived in the main from advertiser support, officially, broadcaster responsibility was seen as actual practice related directly to the public. What this meant was that, in effect, the government and the broadcast industry entered into a sort of pact under which, in return for programming that presumably satisfied the public interest, convenience and necessity standard, the operators would be secured in their

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licenses, and generally enjoy the benefits of protectionism in connection with competing media. The business essence of the broadcast operation would thus tend to be obscured by the public perception of it as fundamentally a public interest institution. In this way government created a tension, both in First Amendment and economic terms, that haunts communications policy to this day.

This tension is implicit in the licensing procedure, since the Commission is forced to examine past or proposed service in order to determine which competing applicant should be awarded a license. There is no way out of program examination, if all other objective criteria are equal. True, the Commission has attempted to avoid this criterion in the past, but cannot escape its use, given the standard of the public interest by which it is bound.

Sooner or later, it was inevitable that the involvement of the Commission in program content would reach the Supreme Court. In 1943, the Court affirmed the FCC's chain broadcasting rules which led to the breakup of the NBC Red and Blue radio networks and the subsequent creation of ABC. Justice Felix Frankfurter defined and gave legitimacy to the mandate for intrusion into the program service of a licensee under the public interest standard when he wrote: "The FCC is more than a traffic officer, policing the wavelengths to prevent stations from interfering with each other . . . The act does not restrict the Commission merely to supervision of traffic. It puts upon the Commission the burden of determining the composition of that traffic."

The Commission's licensing function, Frankfurter explained, goes beyond technical considerations when awarding a grant: "If the criterion of 'public interest' were limited to such matters, how could the Commission choose between two applicants for the same facilities each of whom is financially and technically qualified to operate a station?"

□

Back in that decade of World War II, the general environment was conducive to formulations of this kind, and if First Amendment problems were implicit in such a decision, wartime needs and pressures—the case was decided in 1943—might have obscured them. First Amendment problems are certainly evident today. For example, a station's programming service is reviewed under FCC guidelines which lay down the percentage of news and public affairs programs it should carry. Would not a similar review of a newspaper or magazine to determine whether newsrack or newsstand space should be granted be forbidden? Such an approach would appear to us today absurd, yet it is a basic part of the licensing process.

Actually, the trusteeship model can be traced back to the early part of this century. Virtually from the beginning, spectrum scarcity was perceived to be significant enough to justify continued federal over-

sight. The Radio Act of 1912, forbidding operation of a radio apparatus without a license from the Secretary of Commerce and Labor, was a response to what the Department of the Navy had termed "etheric bedlam produced by numerous stations all trying to communicate at once."

In the '20s, Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover found himself enjoined by the Court from refusing licenses, although he had the power to issue them under the 1912 Act; by early 1926 he was even powerless to choose the wavelength that a licensee was supposed to use. In other words, Hoover was compelled to issue licenses to anyone who applied and the licensees were free to choose the power and the wavelengths they would use, thus reducing the Commerce Department to the role of registrar of frequencies.

More than 200 stations went on the air in the next nine months, resulting inevitably in widespread signal interference. The 1927 Radio Act, which established the Federal Radio Commission, was a response to the chaos. The 1934 Communications Act, which governs broadcasting today, empowered the FCC to license radio stations in the "public interest, convenience and necessity" and to do so with a fair, efficient and equitable distribution of radio service to all communities.

It was the licensing scheme, with its inquiries into program service, as embodied in the 1934 Act, which received broad approval from the Supreme Court in Justice Frankfurter's NBC decision. His rationale: "The confusion and chaos" existing prior to 1927 "was attributable to certain basic facts about radio as a means of communication—its facilities are limited; they are not available to all who may wish to use them; the radio spectrum is simply not large enough to accommodate everybody. There is a fixed natural limitation upon the number of stations that can operate without interfering with one another."

The high-water mark of the Commission's attempts to regulate by raised eyebrow is the "Blue-book" issued in 1946, entitled *Public Service Responsibility of Broadcast Licensees.* It stated that the Commission "proposes to give particular consideration" to four types of programming: (1) local and network programs carried on a sustaining (i.e., non-commercial) basis; (2) local live programs; (3) programs devoted to discussion of public issues; (4) station efforts to limit the amount of time devoted to advertising per hour.

Broadcaster program obligations were further fleshed out by the Commission's 1949 *Report on Editorializing by Broadcast Licensees* which encouraged stations to express their editorial viewpoints on the air. Here was born the Fairness Doctrine, which states that licensees must cover controversial issues of public importance and at the same time provide for contrasting viewpoints.

In the wake of the quiz show scandals at the end of the fifties, the Commission issued its 1960

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Programming Policy Statement: "The principal ingredient of such obligation (of the broadcaster to the community) consists of a diligent, positive and continuing effort by the licensee to discover and fulfill the tastes, needs and desires of his service area. If he has accomplished this, he has met his public responsibility." The Commission "may not condition the grant, denial or revocation of a broadcast license upon its own subjective determination of what is or is not a good program." Yet, because the broadcaster is required to program in the public interest, the Commission did not conceive itself barred by the Constitution or by statute from exercising any responsibility with respect to programming. The ascertainment process by which stations are supposed to "get to know" in this community of service was first discussed in the 1960 Statement.

Since then, the Commission has adopted percentage guidelines for use in public affairs programs; these have been eliminated for radio, but remain with us in television. Later content-related pronouncements appear in the *Fairness Report* and the *Children's Television Report*, both issued in 1974, which, however, avoided creating new specific content-related obligations.

The spectrum scarcity argument as justification for federal regulation of radio was broadly affirmed by the U.S. Supreme Court in its unanimous 1969 decision, *Red Lion Broadcasting Company vs. FCC.* In reviewing the personal attack on political editorializing rules of the FCC's Fairness Doctrine, the Court concurred in the Justice Frankfurter viewpoint of 1943 that scarcity justified content-oriented regulation.

□

Whatever validity the scarcity rationale may have appeared to have in a wartime economy, it must be viewed as archaic in the light of contemporary developments. Even if one limits the scarcity argument to the spectrum earmarked for broadcast use, it is readily evident, in view of recent efforts to expand the spectrum, that additional channels can be created by squeezing frequencies more closely together.

For example, the nine kilohertz concept was much argued about in connection with the AM band; it might have permitted the creation of an additional 12 new channels, but the concept was rejected by the Commission for other reasons.

Digitizing signals so that more information can be transmitted over the same bandwave, is another way to increase the number of channels, but this would incur large costs for new receivers. The FCC might also consider adding more channels previously thought taboo on the basis of interference. Then there is the breakthrough of Low Power TV, covering perhaps a tenth of the typical television service area—this whole new system presumably, will be added to existing allocations without creating destructive interference. Moreover, the Commission is considering a

shoehorn approach to the FM band to add more stations based on demand demonstrated by licensees. In short, what appears to be an already saturated system seems to be able to absorb more and more new channels.

Certainly, it is possible to attack the traditional television scarcity arguments on the basis of how the Commission allocated channels in its tables, particularly VHF television, channels 2–13, which are the scarcest—and the most profitable—of the broadcast outlets.

Most communities have only three VHF commercial television outlets, but that fact is less a function of limitations of the ether and more a function of the Commission's totally avoidable decision in 1952 to provide this number of channels in most communities in its landmark allocation scheme for television, the *Sixth Order and Report*. At that time, the Commission intended, so far as it was possible, that each community of the United States would have at least one local television service.

What resulted, however, was a national distribution system in which only three VHF outfits prevailed in most markets. This "three to a market" approach virtually assured the dominant position of the three commercial television networks, as both the 1956 and 1980 FCC network inquiry studies found. It is nonsense to attribute the relative scarcity of VHF television outlets carrying the three networks to inherent natural limits of the electromagnetic spectrum.

Actually, even under the current allocation scheme, available channels outside the larger cities go wanting for lack of takers. This is especially true in the UHF band—some of the allocations have remained unclaimed for decades. One cannot justify regulation of on-the-air channels in those markets on the ground that their operation employs a scarce resource unavailable to potential entrants. At best, the scarce resource argument applies only in some markets.

Even in large markets, where there may be saturation of available TV channels, "scarcity" is a misleading standard. Given the contrasting character of American major city newspapers, the number of radio and television outlets in the average market appears like a cornucopia. Only a handful of daily newspapers face competition head-to-head.

We have recently seen the demise of such important channels of communication as *The Washington Star* and *The Philadelphia Bulletin*. By contrast, there are very few American towns served by only one radio or one television station. Yet, no one seriously suggests that the relative scarcity of a newspaper justifies the kind of regulation that has been imposed upon broadcasters. Since the *Red Lion* decision, there has been a 38 per cent increase in radio outlets, 21 per cent in television.

True, there may be no more room for additional full power VHF stations in New York or Los Angeles, at least at current levels of per-

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mitted interference. Still one can always buy an existing station, just as one may be in the position to consider buying an existing newspaper rather than launch one. The current complement of VHF stations outnumbers the number of existing daily newspapers in each of these cities, and the number of all broadcast outlets greatly exceeds the number of daily newspapers. Do we try to enforce Fairness Doctrine in the newspaper field? Do we try to discipline the *New York Post*'s international coverage in the area of fairness or support the right of Federal candidates to be heard on the editorial page of the *New York Times*? The idea that the Federal government could tell the *New York Times* what to do in its editorial pages is foreign to the guarantees of a free press.

Finally, the scarcity argument must take account of rapidly developing new media. In the audio area, cassettes and records vie with the plentiful number of AM and FM channels and their sub-carrier services. In video, cable television, multi-point distribution service, video cassette and disc—and in the future, direct broadcast satellite—compete with over-the-air video service in many markets. Even now, a satellite receiver in the backyard can bring in more channels "off-the-air" than a television receiver situated in a city with the maximum number of broadcast stations.

Moreover, although limitless diversity is made possible by cable and video cassette, as well as disc, they do not use any spectrum space. Certainly, where high capacity cable systems are in place, with 50 and more channels, there can hardly be said to be any scarcity of outlets. What really counts is the number of dollars available to pay for either advertiser-supported channels or subscription channels. As for video cassette programming, everything is completely determined by what the consumer is willing to spend for software.

In such a world, the scarcity of media opportunities is a myth. If you want alternatives, as a consumer, you are in a position to find them. The trusteeship model becomes an anachronism. It singles out only one medium for special consideration, neglecting the obvious opportunities for multiple-choice viewing possibilities.

□

One of the persistent arguments in favor of the trusteeship rationale maintains that broadcasters have enjoyed the fruits of a prior grant by government and that therefore regulation under a trustee approach is acceptable as a consequence. In the *Red Lion* decision, the Court said: "The fact remains that existing broadcasters have often attained their present position because initial government selection in competition with others before new technological advances opened new opportunities for further uses."

Other media, such as magazines or newspapers, have not been the beneficiaries of a similar govern-

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ment policy. The networks, in particular, are benefited by prior grants, because of ownership in the largest markets, leading to the claim that the government may regulate some aspects of their conduct in order to guarantee the best service to the public.

But this argument points to a marketplace approach just as much as it does to the trusteeship model. If the FCC concludes that the best service will be achieved under an advertising-supported system, in which the stations air the programs they believe will attract the largest audiences, it need not participate in programming and other licensee business concerns. In view of the fact that new electronic media delivery outlets are subject to serious competition for existing media, "bandaging" stations licensed earlier in the trusteeship mode to that approach simply because there was a prior grant makes little sense.

□

In *FCC vs. Pacifica Foundation*, a divided court upheld the Commission's determination that "indecent" broadcasts as identified in Congressional statutes and defined by the FCC could be punished. Another rationale emerged for regulating broadcasting more intensely than other media. The Court concluded that "the broadcast media have established a uniquely pervasive presence in the lives of all Americans."

Likening reception of offensive broadcast signals to an indecent phone call, the court surmised that listeners or viewers cannot be completely protected from unexpected offensive program content, and so the FCC may deal with this situation. The court also concluded that regulation of broadcasting content was justified because it is "uniquely accessible to children, even those too young to read."

Such may indeed be the case, but that says very little about a particular station's operation, which is, after all, the unit of regulation. It is hardly likely that a viewer watches a single station's entire broadcast output. Other media are "pervasive" as well. Can it really be argued that a one-newspaper town is not "pervaded," "uniquely" by the way that paper looks at the world? What of a blockbuster motion picture? It is repeated for weeks on end in a community and is likelier to pervade the community's consciousness far more than a single routine television show or—in the case of the Pacifica Foundation case—a non-profit FM afternoon broadcast. In other words, the thesis is overstated.

Since many children who cannot yet read watch television, the *Pacifica* decision also argued that regulation of indecent materials carried over the air may be justified. Still, indecent material can be withheld from distribution to children, if it is in the form of print or film. And, parents can have some control over what their children watch when adult-oriented programs are scheduled for late-night viewing. Nevertheless, these restrictions hardly justify a broad-scale trusteeship approach, which

carries with it the power to license and to revoke licenses based on content, any more than a trusteeship mantle can be thrown over bookstores that carry indecent materials on some shelves.

The situation finally boils down to this: Unless broadcasters are to air only what is fit for the youngest viewer—and no one has seriously taken the claims that far—the child audience argument must give way to the realities of a pluralistic society.

If one looks again to the example of print, it becomes clear that just as a government agency would hardly be presumed to be the proper instrument for policing content in Sunday newspapers, mailed advertising circulars or weekly or monthly magazines, so there is little reason to assume that the FCC is a superior clearinghouse for passing judgments on programs, in preference to the advertisers or subscribers who support them.

Broadcasting is received in the home, to be sure. Does that mean we have to be fearful? Even now, it is surely the case that a large amount of television programming enters the home that offends one or another portion of the American audience. Still, given our First Amendment tradition, there is every reason to believe that whatever protection is owed children or adults because of television's "captive" quality, the marketplace, speaking through advertisers or self-selection by viewers, provides an adequate substitute for direct Commission involvement.

□

The broadcast licensee, under the trustee concept, is turned from a businessman into a super-citizen, with obligations that go beyond providing goods and services that the public wants; as one commentator called it—"taxation by regulation." In so doing, the licensee loses some of his marketplace attributes. The tradeoff, which is the grandest myth of all, is that the Commission has pretended to ignore the fact that tremendous wealth has been accumulating in its most valuable licenses, far in excess of the tangible assets of the station.

It is not a question of whether the marketplace approach is perfect—no one proposes that it is. The real issue is something else: whether the Commission, by ignoring until recently the realities of the broadcasting business, has substituted a system of regulation by trusteeship that has caused more harm than good.

This is all in the past—to put it simply, out of date. The FCC will be moving toward a marketplace solution to broadcasting issues. Under the trusteeship notion, the Commission quite naturally assumed that it should fashion the rules by which broadcasters would serve their communities, and therefore, it concerned itself not only with technical rules, or whether licensees told the truth in applications, but involved itself in station programming, as well. This approach finally meant that a major-

ity of the seven Commissioners determined what constituted proper program service to the public.

As one moves away from program guidelines and related constraints, the so-called ascertainment process also comes into question. What began as a somewhat naive attempt on the part of the Commission over two decades ago to force broadcasters to "know" their communities, has developed into a meaningless exercise in which station operators, working with their attorneys, fill up the files of the Commission with evidence that they have done their civic duty, when all that has usually been accomplished has been to create useless work for government bureaucrats and incur costly legal bills.

The simple fact is—and it is more true than even in the past—that to succeed in the competitive battle, the broadcaster must be clued in to the community so that he can be responsive to it and provide a service that is preferred over that of the competition. We are seeing the soundness of this view demonstrated under contemporary radio conditions; the aural medium, largely freed from unnecessary regulation, seems capable of serving the community with great effectiveness. It is about time that television enjoyed the same opportunity.

Under the marketplace approach to broadcast regulation, the Commission should defer to the broadcaster's judgment about how best to compete for viewers and listeners. To put it another way: the marketplace approach says, the public's interest defines the public interest in broadcasting. A successful station then becomes one that succeeds with its programs and its schedules against other stations and competing technologies, not one that promises the right percentage of this or that type of programming in its renewal application.

This change in approach accounts for the way broadcasters *actually* behave in the marketplace as opposed to *how* they should behave under a set of selected criteria. There are three reasons why this will come about.

First, there is a growing national concensus that market-oriented solutions, in which consumers interact with broadcasters unimpeded by the filter of government, are preferable to a system under which the government attempts to regulate the marketplace.

Second, as shown earlier, traditional rationales fail to justify imposition of content-related regulation.

Finally, considerations of the First Amendment move to the forefront. The concept of a free and uninhibited press is undermined by a regulatory structure that has a federal commission conducting periodical oversight of the programming content of broadcasters. Until 1927, when the first Federal regulation of broadcasting was imposed, Americans relied on the market to sort out what ideas were offered.

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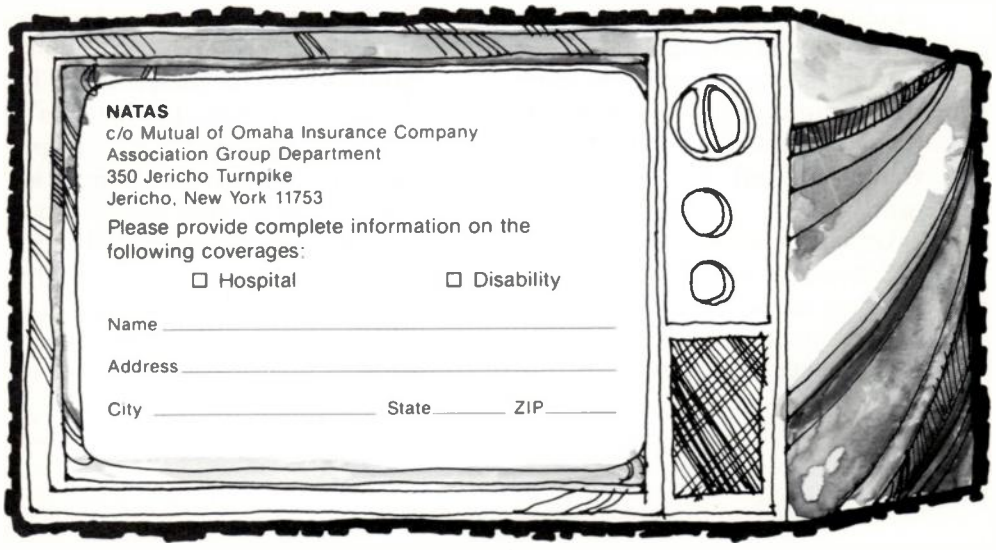

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Even during this century we have endured the so-called vices of a free press; we've had yellow journalism and the editorial deceits of bigots and bullies. But, regardless of how great the temptation to muzzle the press, we have resisted it. It is time for broadcasters to be included in the protections offered by the First Amendment. Continued scrutiny of broadcasters under the trusteeship model is at utter odds with this goal.

Some may argue that removal of federal constraints will leave broadcasters free to eliminate news and public affairs programs.

This is like arguing that if Congress passed a law requiring newspapers to print news and then repealed it, there would be nothing but comic strips, sports and features in them. It is self-evident that if the FCC were to close up shop today, broadcasters would still have every incentive to carry news and public affairs for the same reason that *The Washington Post, Time,* and other American publications do, because there is a market for the product.

The Commission does not *force* CBS to broadcast *60 Minutes,* nor does it mandate that its advertising rates be among the highest in television. As everyone in the broadcast industry knows, that program has been a ratings and revenue leader. Nor is the FCC behind the networks' current effort for an additional half hour of evening news. The pressure for expansion of network news comes from within. The networks, obviously, are aware of the unfailing formula for success in a free economy—find an unserved or underserved need in the market and fill it.

Radio recently has passed through a difficult American winter with high honors earned for service to the public, with its superb reporting of road conditions, emergencies and the like, and this after deregulation. Similarly, television, I am convinced, will perform at a continuing high level simply because it must be responsive to audience needs and concerns if it is to flourish. It is no accident that so many stations have found it makes broadcasting and economic sense to expand their local news operations.

If the First Amendment is to be our guiding principle, then it will be important to recognize that the distinction between commercial and non-commercial speech, once a bright line, has become blurred. This has special application to the right of advertisers to be free to express their viewpoints.

Starting with the *Bigelow* decision in 1975, the U.S. Supreme Court has recognized that such divisions have no place in the grammar of the First Amendment, that businesses have rights to free speech as well as journalists; they speak their minds in the printed media all the time. A broadcasting environment as free as the printed media can allow for discussion of issues in a way that broadcasters today fear might get them into trouble or into expensive litigation with the FCC.

□

One of the most striking features of the era now underway is the

emergence of an open-entry philosophy. Under this view, it is deemed important that obstacles to entry be removed, regardless of the field of communications, where possible, and new players be encouraged to come into the field. This is most clearly evident where the new technologies are involved, as in the cases of cable, satellite, low-power television and multiple distribution systems.

Low power deserves special attention in any discussion of new entry. The Commission's authorization of Low Power Television service, the first new broadcast service in 20 years, opens the curtain on a new drama of immense expansion of over-the-air broadcasting. How the patterns of ownership and operations will finally sort themselves out is anyone's guess. What seems clear, is that in view of the freedoms these new entities will enjoy, the constraints that now hobble the initiative of the established stations are outmoded.

The LPTV operator will suffer no ownership restrictions, no ascertainment or program log requirements, no limits on commercials, nor will he be required to originate programming, carry prescribed amounts of non-entertainment programming, or operate for a minimum number of hours. While he will be subject to the Fairness Doctrine and Section 315, it will only be to the extent the station's origination capabilities allow.

It is equally important to encourage new entries into the television network area. The three commercial networks derive their strength in considerable part from the 1952 Allocations Table, which foreclosed many new opportunities. It was not until the passage of the All-Channel Act of 1962 that new station entries really became possible through UHF. Now is the time to take a serious look at the restriction of station ownership, the so-called 7-7-7 standard, under which no single ownership can hold more than seven licenses in television, AM or FM. This limit does not measure concentration.

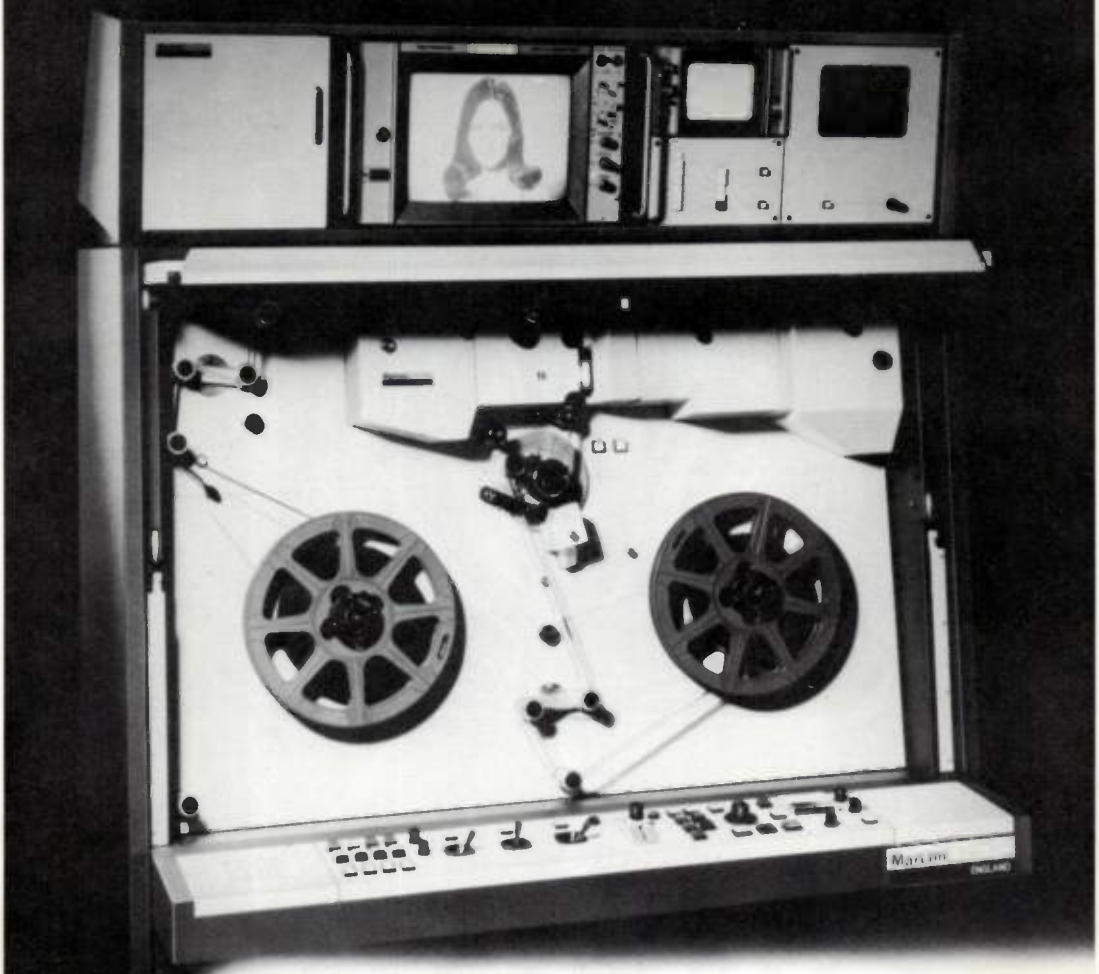
No account is taken of difference in market size: seven stations in the top seven markets mean a lot more in terms of reaching people than the same number in the markets below the top 100. Any rule limiting ownership should bear a relation to anti-competitive aspects of undue concentration, not simply the number of outlets owned.

This is especially true in view of the increasing number of outlets and the new ways of reaching people. If we truly wish to see new network competition, we should encourage the formation of station groups large enough to have the resources to play the network game, or at least to undertake significant program ventures. And we are seeking to promote the entry of new players who have been excluded in the past. Because of past discrimination, some potential entrants have been excluded. Minority ownership policies must be continued and developed to eliminate this marketplace distortion. □

(continued on page 29)

OUR PRIDE IS SHOWING

Marconi deserves an Emmy



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In short, size itself should not be considered an inherent evil. In my judgment, we have been suffering a historic confusion, with the Commission shouldering the burden of attempting to prevent abuses properly the concern of other agencies. From this vantage point, the 1980 recommendations of the Network Inquiry task force appear quite ripe for consideration. After an exhaustive study of network practices, the task force concluded that it was time to get rid of a number of restrictions that are aimed at limiting network dominance.

Under the present rules the networks may not engage in domestic syndication, may not engage in foreign syndication of independently-produced programs, may not share in the profits of either type of syndication, and may not obtain any financial or proprietary right or interest, except the right to network exhibition within the United States, in any independently-produced program.

As the task force sees it, these rules have failed to achieve the Commission's stated objectives. They have disrupted efficient risk-sharing arrangements between networks and program suppliers, they have possibly increased concentration in the program supply industry, and, in the future, will shift network affiliation patterns away from UHF stations and toward local outlets employing other technologies.

The task force additionally recommended that the Prime Time Access Rule (PTAR) be eliminated, since it did not seem to be achieving its objectives—indeed, there appeared to be some confusion about what these objectives really have been. It has been argued strenuously that it is wrong for the networks to be excluded from any portion of the broadcast day in offering programming to affiliates—that goes for the 7:30 to 8:00 o'clock slot, as well as any other period. Proponents of PTAR argue that it has created greater program diversity nationally during that segment and has fostered development of new production companies and local programming.

There are First Amendment values on both sides of the question, but I believe that PTAR distorts the programming marketplace, preempts the judgment of marketplace participants: the networks, the affiliates and the production community. While not on a head-on collision course with the First Amendment, it reflects a kind of judgment the government should not make if we truly believe in a market orientation. Nor, as a practical matter, is it a judgment we can make, based on our imprecise knowledge about what the public would prefer to view in that time period. For these reasons, I question the wisdom of this rule.

□

To conclude: one principle now guides the Commission's efforts. It is the policy of "unregulation," and simply it means that we examine every regulation on the books and ask, "Is it really necessary?" If, in our judgment, it has outlived its

usefulness, we must make every effort to get rid of it. This approach is in harmony with the concept that Government should eliminate unnecessary regulation of business and society.

Our ultimate aim in broadcast regulation is to operate as a traffic cop, not as Justice Frankfurter suggested, as a determiner of the traffic. We intend to rely more on broadcasters to solve their own problems and meet their needs, even insofar as engineering coordination is concerned, rather than devote Commission resources to those tasks. We are calling a halt to any lingering protectionist policy consideration towards new video delivery modes, such as DBS, MDS, cable and STV. The end result should be a commercial broadcasting system where the marketplace rather than the myths of a trusteeship approach determines what programming the American people receive on radio and television and who provides it.

QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

The Anchorman as Celebrity

". . . Part of the problem we all have to deal with is that we appear on a medium which is turn appears in everybody's home. And I find, that you get an awful lot of mail from people who lay claim to an intimacy with you to which they really have no right, except that you appear on television. I have people write to me as though I were their father, their son, their missing husband. . . . We live in an era of great interpersonal loneliness that exists in this country, and television in many cases has become a surrogate. And therefore we become surrogates of whatever it is that's necessary in people's lives. I think that's lamentable, but I don't think we can argue with it . . . I just don't believe that stardom is the right word to use. If you choose to use notoriety, I guess that's fine, it's just that we are familiar, sometimes more familiar, than members of people's families . . ."

—Ted Koppel, in a Dick Cavett PBS program on television journalists.

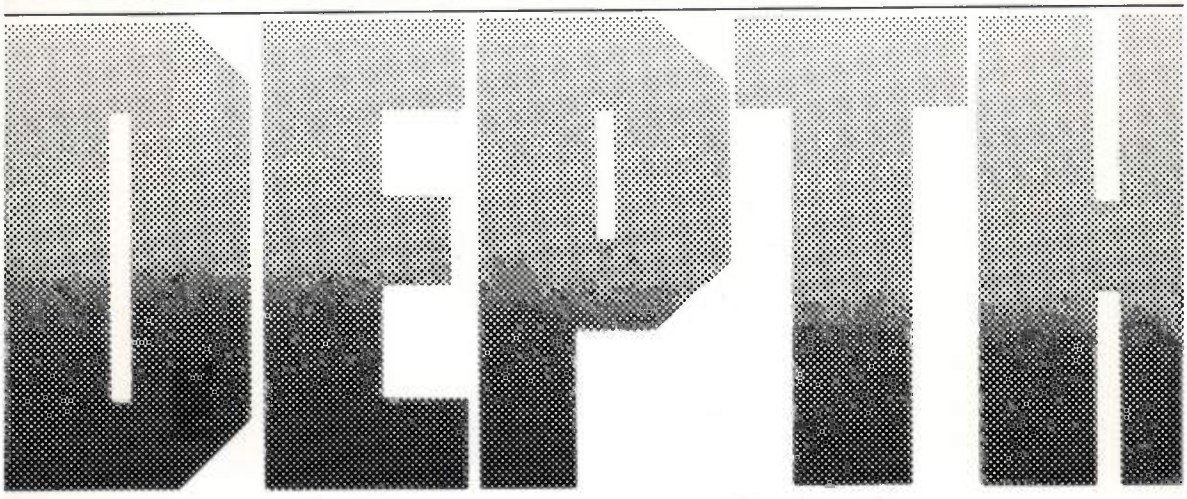
QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

"I don't call these films television movies. They are motion pictures. The only difference is that there are commercials between some scenes. This great snobbism between motion-pictures-for-television and theatrical films is ridiculous."

—Bette Davis, on location with a made-for-TV film.

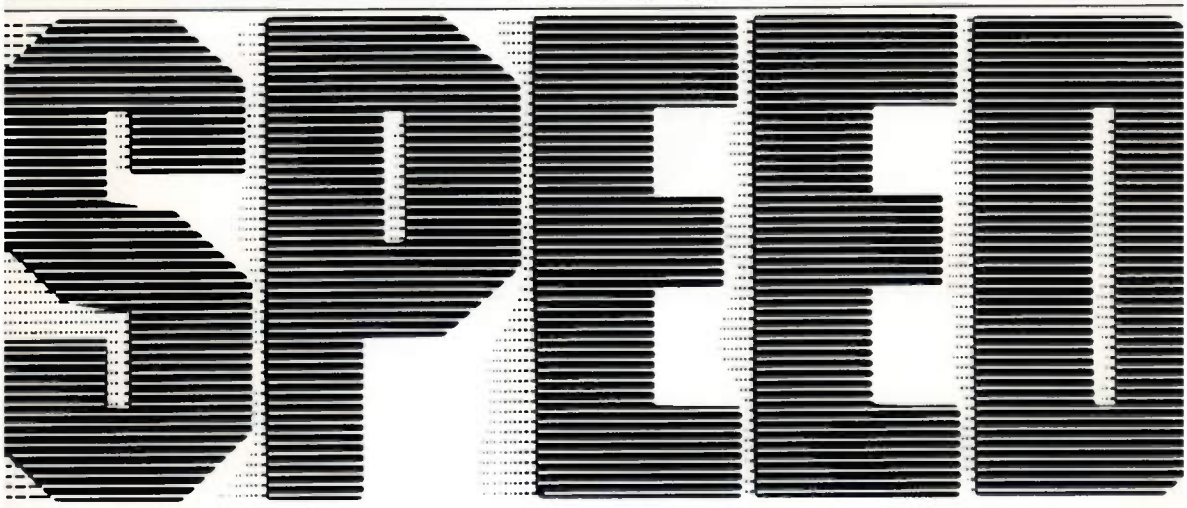
ABC Television Network

COMPLETE NEWS SERVICE FRO
TURNER BROADCASTING SYSTE



In-depth coverage of all the news,
all the time.

CNN



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Confessions of a Media Critic

By JEFF GREENFIELD

Making a speech is, for me, a special kind of challenge, because I spent many years writing speeches for politicians. There's a certain formula which creeps into the process, since speech-writers lack the pure creative spontaneity which drives, say, the people who develop prime-time sit-coms.

The first thing any seasoned speechwriter does is reach for the quotation books. It helps to establish a theme for a speech, and it gives the speech-maker class, to drop in learned phrases from an undeniably high-brow writer. The audience may think the speech-maker is a fool, but who's going to heckle Spinoza—which is, for those of you in daytime programming, not the name of a new game show.

So I got out my copy of "Best Quotations for All Occasions," and looked for wise words about the art of criticism, so that you might think I had come here fresh from a leisurely read through some leather-bound volumes by the fire.

Here's what I found:

Disraeli once said, "Critics are the men who have failed in literature and art."

Here's Shelley: for those of you in night-time programming, that is not the title of a new sit-com starring Ms. Winters:

"As a bankrupt thief turns thief-taker in despair, so an unsuccessful author turns critic."

No, I don't think so!

How about Holmes: "What a blessed thing it is that nature, when she invented, manufactured, and patented her authors, contrived to make critics out of the chips that were left."

Well, so much for the classy quotations . . .

The title of this speech promises some confessions, I intend to keep that promise, though I should note, for the benefit of the *New York Post*, that I never met Margaret Trudeau, Diane Sawyer and I are just good friends, and my affection for leather-bindings refers to books, not more intimate habits.

I suppose the most candid one is that I took to writing about television following the adage of making lemonade out of a lemon. I watch a lot of television, and always have. I watch it in part to develop a keen insight into the modes of popular culture, but also because it is diverting, escapist, easy, and cheap.

There are critics, I think, who watch television in the mode of Ignatius J. Reilly, the hero of *A Confederacy of Dunces*, who attends every romantic movie musical in his neighborhood, so that he can

(continued on page 35)

OUTLET BROADCASTING

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WDBO -TV	Orlando, Fla.
KSAT -TV	San Antonio, Tex.
WCMH -TV	Columbus, Ohio
KOVR -TV	Stockton-Sacramento, Cal.

Radio Station Group	
WSNE - FM	Providence (R.I.)
WDBO -AM	Orlando, Fla.
WTOP -AM	Washington, D.C.
WDBO - FM	Orlando, Fla.
KIQQ - FM	Los Angeles, Cal.
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scream at the movie screen, "oh my God, what degenerate produced this abortion?!" I understand this spirit, I even share it at times, but it really does seem to me a bit of a cheap shot.

Television is mass communication, popular culture. Most such communication, most such culture, is, mostly, terrible. I think most people who watch television know this: in the sense that people who eat twinkies and ring-dings for dinner know they are not getting enough iron and vitamins, in the sense that I knew, as a child, that reading every *Batman* and *Superman* comic that hit the newsstands was not going to get me into the college of my choice.

I have come to believe that the right to junk is part of what it means to live in a free society. William James used to talk of taking "moral holidays," to relieve oneself of the burdens of living on the highest plane. And, to offer you a lowbrow sentiment of a highbrow man, Justice Holmes, who used to attend the burlesque shows in Washington with devoted regularity, once commented to a friend about this habit, "God bless us for our low tastes,"

Most of us work hard during the day, most of us need relief of some kind or other from the responsibilities of money, family, friends, work, and the woes of the world; I am less convinced than I perhaps should be that bad television is the most pressing evil in the world.

□

A related confession: a good measure of the criticism directed at television is, in my view, a product of historical ignorance or half-baked sociology. Because it is so pervasive, so far-reaching, and so accesible, television is sometimes treated, in the title of Tony Schwartz' book, as "A Second God," shaping our entire civilization with forms created by itself.

Well, to a large extent, television has adopted the conventions of popular culture. Before *General Hospital* there was *Ma Perkins*, and before *Ma Perkins* there were the serials in the *Saturday Evening Post*, and before the SatEVEPost there were British monthly magazines filled with cheap romances and melodrama in America. People used to wait at the wharfs for the latest editions to come over from London, and when the heroine of Richardson's novel, *Pamela*, was finally married, church-bells were rung in towns all over England and the United States. So much for the celebration of the wedding of Luke and Laura.

If *Welcome Back, Kotter* was TV's contribution to the punk-as-hero genre, it was the natural heir to Leo Gorcey, Huntz Hall, and the rest of the Dead End Kids. If the bumbling father of *Happy Days* and the *Stu Erwin show* undermines male rodel models, what of Fibber McGee? If television is something of an advertiser's dream, enabling him to combine sights, sounds, mobility, and colors, it is only the latest form of a trade best summed up by Samuel Johnson—"promise,

great promise, is the soul of advertising."

And if the appeals to fear—of bad breath, foot odor, ring around the collar, and other ills strike you as tasteless, go back to the days of the mass magazines, and look at the ads for Listerine or Lysol, or the ads of 60 years ago, pointing out the social and vocational danger of conspicuous nose pores.

In fact, I have even come to the conclusion—surprising, perhaps, for one who spent many years working in the field of political media strategy—that we have placed far too much emphasis on television as an influence in our political life. Conceding that America now gets its political information from the tube, conceding that money can buy recognition for a politician, conceding all of those propositions, I think that old-fashioned political considerations—the state of the economy, the health of the dollar, the level of unredressed grievances, the Presidential capacity for political and moral leadership—all are much more decisive than the mass media.

It would take a book to demonstrate this thesis—and, as luck would have it, such a book will be out in late May. It would, ideally, be called *The Real Campaign*, be published by Summit books, and be written by someone with extensive experience in politics, media, and journalism. So, while we wait eagerly to see if such a fantasy might somehow be fulfilled, let me share some other confessions with you.

□

I confess that I do not understand where some of the language of television people come from. What genius came up with the term, "Daypart"? Why not "time"? I thought it referred to a buckskin jacket worn sometime before 1965. How did "situation" become the all-encompassing phrase of local newscasters—as in "there's a crisis situation in the Middle East, a hostage situation in Brooklyn, and a hot dog situation in Central Park."

I confess to absolute wonderment in the face of some of the programming explanations I have heard from men and women who actually make decisions about what will be on television. Years ago, in my first experience interviewing network officials, a candid NBC vice-president at the time—I believe he was the fellow checking coats upstairs—explained the dominance of character over skilled writing. "Once you've got them hooked on Jim Rockford," he said, "they'll come back like Pavlov's dogs."

An executive at Universal-TV told me how he was going to pitch a new detective show. "'I'll tell them," he said, "it's completely fresh—completely new—and it's just like *Columbo*'."

Or, listening to one of Hollywood's most successful TV producers of the blood-and-guts school of TV, as he said indignantly, "Why are they always complaining about violence? Look at the violence in *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*."

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We send you our best.

I went back to my copies of the plays, and nowhere in either of those plays did I find the line, "Freeze, mother, or you're dead!"

I confess to you confusion over the explanation for the lack of better television, in which network spokesmen say, "What do you want us to put on—Shakespeare and Ballet?"—a linkage as inevitable as sex and violence. I'm beginning to think these people think Shakespeare was a choregrapher.

But what puzzles me about this is why—given the imperative of ratings and profits, which seems to me a perfectly reasonable pursuit most of the time—why don't they learn from what works?

Every time a new, good program fails, they will say, "Ah ha—see?—the audience doesn't want good programming." Every time junk works, they say, "Ah ha—see?—the audience wants junk."

But flip back through the pages of a few years' worth of TV Guides, and ask yourself—what happened to *The Montefuscos, California Fever, Hello, Larry, Sheriff Lobo, The San Pedro Beach Bums, Jessica Novak, Maggie,* and hundreds of others. And then ask about the history of shows which began with critical acclaim and low ratings—but which were given time to find an audience—from *MASH* to *Hill Street Blues.*

Why isn't the other lesson just as appropriate—that there is an audience which will watch good, well-written, well-acted commercially profitable television—but that this audience, conditioned by three decades of unhappy experience, has to be given time to find the prize in the crackjack box.?

□

I want to conclude with three short observations, which I tried to shoehorn in under the rubric of "confessions," but could not—so I decided the hell with it.

First, it's ridiculous to talk about a television critic, because television includes everything—drama, comedy, dance, theatre, news, sports, advertising. My own view of what I do is that the reviewing aspect is the least important, to me and to the audience. Once a year I look at the prime-time schedules for the *Sunday Morning* audience, and once a year I offer viewers a chance to compare the plots of real pilots with those I make up—nobody ever guesses right—but the best I can do is to let the viewers in on the process.

I most enjoy explaining the assumptions behind commercials, what advertisers think of us—what a particular show may tell us about the way programmers think the audience is thinking, about the industry itself, about what the intentions are behind political media campaigns.

If I have anything approaching a mission in this work, it is to break through the insulation surrounding television—to let the audience understand what's going on. That's what journalism is supposed to do about powerful institutions, and TV has to be part of it. And I confess—that CBS has been exemplary in letting me roam at will. People

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WE'VE GOT AN EYE TO THE FUTURE

CBS TELEVISION STATIONS

WCBS-TV NEW YORK KNXT LOS ANGELES
WBBM-TV CHICAGO WCAU-TV PHILADELPHIA
KMOX-TV ST. LOUIS

ask me constantly what I have not been allowed to say. And the answer—as of now—is that apart from obscenity and libel laws, it hasn't happened yet.

Second, whether I am looking at a show, a news program, a schedule, I find myself increasingly asking whether the creator is approaching me as a part of an audience or part of a *market.* Insiders talk about market strategies, target markets, as though a war were going on. I prefer shows which treat audiences as ends, not as means, and I prefer news which understands that information can not always be packaged with flash, zip, warmth and maximum demographic appeal. It may be great market strategy to try, as some ABC executive did, to put Hollywood stars on *Good Morning, America* to explain about how bad they felt that Anwat Sadat was murdered. It is no news.

It may have given some local stations a short-term benefit to have adopted a marketing plan which turned news into what I call "newsum." It's the equivalent of "steakum"—processed, flaked news. It's sort of like news, but if you asked a journalist what it is, he'd say, "Well it's news, um—but . . ."

Third, and last, is the inevitable question about what happens now that broadcasting is not the only way to "do" television. What does it mean? What will the future be like with 100 channels, direct broadcast by satellites, interactive television, home computer terminals, uplinks, downlinks, cufflinks, and the rest.

My last confession: I haven't the vaguest idea . . . Well, okay—vague ideas I have. . . . The network share of the total TV audience is down more than 10 per cent in the last 4 years. A 30 share is no longer the magic number in prime-time competition. Diversity—for those who can afford it—is already here. This morning at home, I could watch a 24-hour news channel, a discussion on sports economics, a stock market ticker, classified ads, and two incredibly boring public access interviews.

But will we have a lot more of mostly the same? Will cable deprive us of the one undeniable advantage of broadcasting? That it is essentially, equally available to rich and poor alike? Will the monopoly aspect of cable hardware, combined with pell-mell deregulation, leave one operator per community with a stranglehold over information? Will the minority tastes shut out of mass market TV really find a foothold, and the sustenance, in the new world?

At these rates, you get questions—not answers.

Jeff Greenfield comments regularly on television for CBS Sunday Morning *and* Morning. *He also has written extensively about television for the* New York Times Magazine, New York Magazine *and the* Columbia Journalism Review. *He does a syndicated column on politics which appears in newspapers across the country. Among his many books are* Television: The First Fifty Years *and the recently-published* The Real Campaign. *This article is from the text of a recent talk by Greenfield at one of the New York Academy's Drop-in luncheons.*

Fine Tuning.

WNEW-TV New York
KTTV Los Angeles
WTTG Washington, DC
KRIV-TV Houston
WTCN-TV Minneapolis/St. Paul
WXIX-TV Cincinnati
KMBC-TV Kansas City

METROMEDIA TELEVISION

The Case for Political Consultants and Their Commercials

By THOMAS E. PATTERSON

Is there a bigger menace to American democracy than professional consultants and their political commercials? David Chagall thinks not. In his recent book, *The New Kingmakers*, he claims that the ad-makers have gained "unparalleled" and "unaccountable" power, and threaten the integrity of the electoral process. Advertising executive Robert Spero makes similar allegations. His *Duping of the American Voter* (1980) is a diatribe against alleged dishonesty and deception in the creation of televised political ads. He contends that image-makers lie and deceive viewers on their way to gaining victory for their candidate clients.

Chagall and Spero merely lead the latest round of attacks on political consultants. From the early 1950s, when political commercials made their first television appearance, they and their makers have been favored whipping boys.

Their lot is undeserved, at least in the context of what is normal for politics and communication. I will make the case on their behalf, beginning with an argument in favor of political commercials and ending with an argument in favor of professional consultants as their makers.

Some critics have suggested that televised political commercials be banned in American election campaigns, a change that would force candidates to do their communicating through political parties and the news media.

The parties, however, are unreliable. For every location that has a dependable party organization, there are, as Frank Sorauf notes, "hundreds of party organizations that . . . are inactive and ineffective." To depend on the party is to run a high risk of not having a campaign. Moreover, although myopic observers have made the claim, a ban on televised ads will not revitalize the parties. Long before television came along, parties began their steep decline, victimized by disabling legislation and declining levels of patronage and immigration.

Though less apparent perhaps, the news media are also undependable. Except in presidential races, the press rarely provides a candidate with enough coverage to sustain the campaign. What can a typical candidate for the U.S. Senate, for example, expect from the me-

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The most honored series in television.

Hallmark Hall of Fame

A presentation of Hallmark Cards, Inc.

dia? "Longshots" typically go for weeks without mention in the news. More importantly, even serious contenders usually receive only token coverage in newspapers and on radio and television newscasts. No matter how many press releases or staged appearances they arrange, candidates find they usually cannot compete with the other things vying for the attention of reporters and editors.

The only clear exceptions to this are the especially prominent candidate and the one who makes a fool of himself. In bidding for the 1982 Republican Senate nomination in New York, Representative Bruce Caputo gained a lot of support from party leaders (enough to be thought a shoo-in for the nomination), but was more or less ignored by the press until it was learned that he had lied about being a Vietnam combat veteran. This startling fact won him two weeks of headlines and enough criticism to force his withdrawal from the race.

Moreover, even politicians who make the news regularly may not, by this exposure alone, make a strong impression on the electorate. Opinion polls show, for instance, that half of all Americans cannot recall the name of their congressman! And how many adults can recall the name of a challenging congressional nominee? In most districts, a third or less of eligible voters have this information.

Even if political commercials worked only to create name recognition—and this *is* their main effect—they would be an important addition to American campaigns. Communicating a candidate's name is only the first step in persuasion, but it is an important one. Research has proven that even though people may literally "see" a candidate in the news, such exposures are meaningless unless people "recognize" the candidate beforehand. Once they know the candidate's name, then other information begins to accumulate.

□

Televised political ads cut through public indifference as does no other channel available to the candidate. Repetitious, simple, and sometimes clever, political commercials are memorable. Further, people pay fairly close attention to political ads, at least in comparison with other commercials. In *The Unseeing Eye,* Robert McClure and I provided evidence that television viewers are about twice as attentive to candidate ads as they are to product ads.

That political commercials go in and out of season is one reason why their appearance on television screens attracts attention. A second reason is that people take their political decisions seriously enough to try to learn something from the candidate ads that flash across their screens. A study of political advertising conducted in the 1970s found that viewers were particularly attentive to the information contained in political ads. By contrast, they watched product ads primar-

ily for the entertainment they offered.

Another special feature of political commercials is that they reach the difficult-to-reach voter. To get information regularly from the news media, people must make an effort. They must regularly watch the evening news or read their daily newspaper's political pages. Televised ads, however, require no such commitment. As people sit in front of their televisions, political commercials intrude on their entertainment programs.

The audiences for these programs include a lot of people who normally do not follow the newspaper or television news closely. But when they watch entertainment programs, these citizens are exposed. The political ad is sandwiched in the middle of a program, and it takes more effort to avoid the commercial than to watch it. So these citizens watch. And they learn. Our 1972 study found that advertising's information effects were particularly evident among citizens who did not follow the news closely.

Moreover, Americans either vote or stay home on election day for reasons other than what they see on their television screens. Angus Campbell and others have demonstrated that television exposure does not stimulate turnout. Thus, while political commercials do not incite non-regular news users to vote, they do add to the information possessed by those who happen to go to the polls.

□

Perhaps the most frequent criticism of political ads is that they are too short to be worthwhile. What message of value could possibly be communicated in the span of 60 seconds?

The fact is, however, that political information usually flows, as Walter Lippmann described it, "in bits and pieces." This is most apparent on the evening newscasts, where news items usually are dispatched in less than a minute. And when the transmitter does not limit the message, the receiver typically does. When reading a newspaper, most people simply glance at the headlines and a lead sentence or two, settling for a full reading of a story only when it catches their attention, as routine campaign stories seldom do.

Moreover, in a limited way, the content of political ads compares very favorably with what voters get through the news media. In its coverage of campaigns, the press tends to concentrate on the strategic game being played by the candidates. Heavily emphasized are the simple mechanics of campaigning—the candidates' travels here and there, their organizational efforts, their strategies—as well as polls and other indicators of how well the candidates are doing.

The news is not devoted to a discussion of the policy and leadership tendencies of the candidates. Their issue positions, policy proposals, political records, personal backgrounds, and similar matters have been shown by several studies to account for much less than half of all campaign news.

On the other hand, issue and leadership topics provide the basis for most, though hardly all, political commercials. Candidates tend to use ads to drive home the policy and leadership themes that define their campaigns. Indeed, scholarly research suggests that, in a minute-by-minute comparison, televised ads contain twice as much issue material as television news stories.

The substance of news and advertising differs in another significant way. The press has a liking for what Colin Seymour-Ure has labeled "clear-cut issues." These are issues that, above all, neatly divide the candidates. Preferably, they also produce disagreement and argument among the candidates; rest on principle rather than complex details; and can be stated in simple terms, usually by reference to a short-hand label such as busing.

The press' bias toward such issues owes partly to their conflictual nature, which makes for colorful copy. But the major reason for the press' preference for these divisive issues is the reporter's eye for contrasts. "The reporter's raw material is differences," says James David Barber.

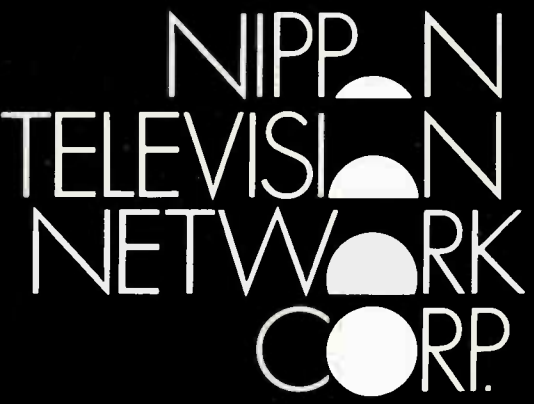
"Campaign issues" also receive preferred treatment from the news media. These are issues that arise during a campaign and have relevance largely in an election context. A prominent example is Carter's *Playboy* interview during the 1976 presidential election. Campaign issues have a special appeal to the press largely because they conform with traditional news values—they are unexpected, colorful, and unique.

In contrast, candidates' ads tend to emphasize what can be called "diffuse issues." These include appeals directed at those interests that already lean toward a candidate and his party. Most of these coalition appeals involve assurances of continued support or distributive benefits for a specific group, assurances that do not clash with those of the opposing candidate because he is appealing to other groups. Diffuse issues also include broad policy proposals where the candidates' appeals differ mostly in style and emphasis. While every candidate will be against both inflation and unemployment, one candidate may emphasize unemployment while the other emphasizes inflation.

In *The Mass Media Election* published in 1980 I provided evidence of the magnitude of this difference in news and advertising. Over 60 percent of televised political advertising was given to diffuse issues, while only 35 percent of all news coverage was given to such issues. In general, diffuse issues simply lack the qualities prized in news stories; they are usually too imprecise to permit easy use and too colorless to make for good news.

The fact is, candidates cannot rely on the press to present their candidacies accurately. Advertising is the best vehicle available to candidates for laying out the policy and leadership considerations that will guide their time in office.

(continued on page 49)


NIPPON
TELEVISION
NETWORK
CORP.

Without denying the value of the new media's perspective on candidates, it seems unarguably true that candidates too need a mass forum for their perspective. After all, they and not the news organizations are accountable for what happens in office once the election is decided. With the political parties now unable to be so, televised political advertising is the candidates' channel to the people.

□

The makers of political ads would appear more bothersome to a lot of critics than the ads themselves. As far as I know, no author has written a book attacking professional advertising firms for producing political commercials, even though such firms produce most of the ads used in American election campaigns. By comparison, there are a dozen or more books that assail the political professionals—the David Garths, Robert Squiers, John Deardourffs, etc.

Why this discrimination? One thing is certain, it is not justified by the superiority of ads produced by advertising firms. Accustomed to selling products, advertising firms frequently take the same approach to packaging candidates, thus overdoing the visuals and jingles. Whenever one encounters a production ad that is thin on substance, a good bet is that it was created by an advertising firm.

Professional imagemakers know that political persuasion requires messages of a different order. In his *The Rise of Political Consultants* (1981), Larry Sabato tells the story of the consultants who created some product-like ads for President Ford's 1976 campaign, only to have the test audience snicker when they appeared on the screen. Most professionals do not even bother with such experiments. The strength of their ads is that the messages are almost always politically sound.

Most consultants are interested in politics first and television secondly, and understand political coalitions and strategies. And since most of them work only for candidates with compatible beliefs, they approach their task as would experienced partisans, had they the technical production skills.

The essence of politics has not changed because of consultants. To be sure, these experts are practiced in the ways of political imagery and know how to manipulate symbols. But so did the old party bosses. "Honest Abe" was no modern imagemaker's inspiration. And just as plainly, today's professional understands the importance of issues, partisanship, and leadership skills in the persuasion process. The influence of consultants is the prime reason that the substance of politics dominates advertising content.

At base, the attacks on professional ad-makers may stem from a fear that they are too good at what they do: that they, and not the voters and candidates, determine the outcome of American elections. This notion fills Chagall and Spero's books. They repeatedly suggest that campaigns are decided by the alignment of consultants.

(continued on page 51)

SFP
1980
HIGHLIGHTS

THESE PROGRAMMES HAVE BEEN
PRODUCED WITH SFP'S CREWS AND FACILITIES

VIDEO

GRAND PRIX DE MONACO	- A.B.C.
TOUR DE FRANCE	- TF1 - C.B.S
24 H DU MANS	- TF1 -
TENNIS FRENCH OPEN	- TF1 - C.B.S
NUMBER ONE	- TF1 - P.B.S
WORLD CUP SKI	- A2 - C.B.S

FILM

LE DERNIER METRO	FRANCOIS TRUFFAUT (10 out of 12 CESARS)
LA BANQUIERE	FRANCIS GIROD
UN MAUVAIS FILS	CLAUDE SAUTET (1 CESAR)
THE BUNKER	GEORGE SCHAEFER three hours C.B.S. special)

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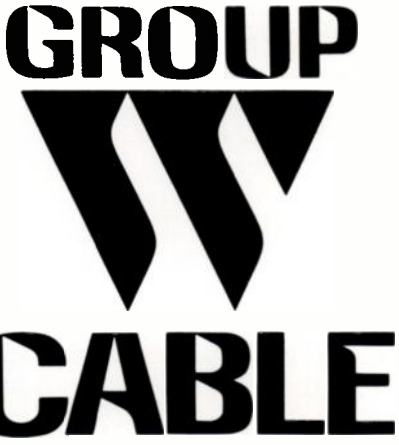
If such were the case, their influence would be intolerable. The thesis is weak, however. There are, to be sure, instances where consultants have made a large difference. When examined, however, these situations are characterized by a lack of constraining influences.

Consultants shine when there are no critical issues, when the candidates are nobodies, when voters are unanchored, when party leadership is absent, when nomination and not election is at stake. Change any of these conditions, however, and consultants are just one of many influences on voting, none of which is decisive. And that describes the large majority of American elections.

Admittedly, the leading consultants have good batting averages, but this results largely because they are in a position to choose their clients, and naturally prefer those who are likely to win anyway. Every major consultant also has lost a significant number of campaigns, including ones that should have been won, such as Elizabeth Holtzman's 1980 Senate bid.

Nevertheless, professional consultants are the best in the business of producing political commercials. They wind up serving both their clients and the electorate. This fact will not win them many plaudits, however, for they start out with two strikes. They are salesmen in a nation that, however much it depends on merchandising, cannot bring itself to honor the practitioners, whether their specialty be goods, services, or candidates. And they are political-types in a nation that distrusts politics. An American politician's popularity is rarely higher than it is on the first days in office. Pity then the poor consultants. They cannot even pretend to be amateurs.

Thomas E. Patterson is Chairman of the Political Science Department of Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship. He has written numerous articles on the news media's impact on American politics. He is also the author of two books on the subject: The Unseeing Eye *and* Mass Media Election.



WESTINGHOUSE BROADCASTING AND CABLE, INC.

Notes of a Cable Watcher

By HARRIET VAN HORNE

In the beginning, they called it CATV. That stood for Community Antenna Television, and its sole purpose was to improve reception in remote areas, far from big city transmitters.

Today it's known simply as cable television, and it's a major program service, bringing scores of new channels into the home and drawing viewers away from the three major networks. Cable TV is beguiling millions with entertainment hardly dreamed of 20 years ago.

If you are "on the cable," as the phrase goes, you are privy to channels given over entirely to culture, to sports, to news and, in some areas, to X-rated films.

If you are on the cable you pay a monthly fee to your local franchiser, plus extra fees to the Pay-TV services such as Home Box Office (for moderately new films) or to Escapade, for "adult entertainment" provided by Playboy Enterprises.

In some households, the cable TV bill may run to thirty or forty dollars a month. ("We save by not going out to the movies," is a common rationale). What's heartening is that your original flat fee, the one that hooks you into the cable and bills you for $10 or so a month thereafter, sharpens your picture to a razor edge and adds a dozen new channels—or more—to your TV set.

For some of us, the arrival of cable permanently restructures our viewing habits. No longer are we the captive audience of the networks, watching the evening news, followed by a made-for-TV movie, followed by the late news, a bit of Johnny Carson . . . and so to bed. We are free agents now, adventurous dialers, always discovering some small sound in the night at the nether ends of the ether.

Other factors may be involved, but the proliferation of cable TV would seem to be the likeliest explanation for the decline in network audiences. In February, always a peak viewing month, network ratings dropped by seven per cent. Both Nielsen and Arbitron confirmed this decline.

The public rapture over cable also accounts for the recent arrival of CBS and ABC—to be joined shortly by NBC—in the cable lineup.

Indeed, the growth of cablecasting has exceeded all expectations. In 1971 there were 2600 cable systems with 5.3 million subscribers. Penetration was estimated at 8.7 per cent of all households.

Today there are 4300 cable systems (perhaps more since these words went to press) linking up 28

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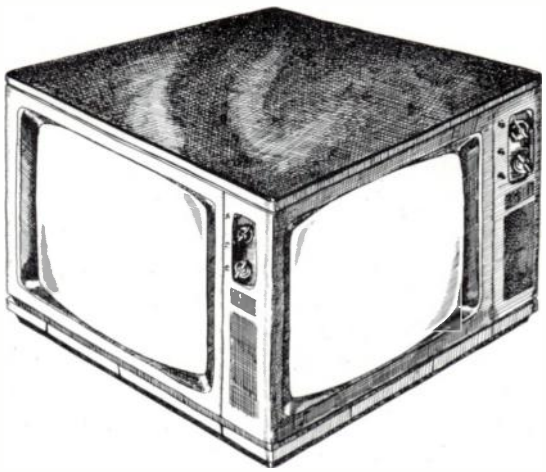
AT RKO, TELEVISION IS A TWO WAY MEDIUM.



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KHJ-TV
LOS ANGELES

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BOSTON

WHBQ-TV
MEMPHIS

million homes. Penetration is 28 per cent. By 1990, it is expected that 60 million homes will be wired for cable, most of them with two-way capability.

We hear a great deal about cable's effect on the old established networks. What is not considered, in any significant way, is cable's effect on the average subscriber.

To a friend who asked, "Will it enrich my life?", I had to reply, "Definitely." Hers was a mind attuned to—and hungry for—cultural entertainment.

The enrichment is guaranteed by cable's heavy investment in opera, ballet, quality drama and serious music. Enrichment of another sort will come via CNN, the Cable News Network. This is a 24-hour service which extends, amplifies and deepens the stories featured on the network's evening news.

To be sure, not every cable subscriber is starved for cultural enrichment. There are minds not ready for Japanese art films or *Swan Lake* from Covent Garden. Cable—like all pioneers in mass media—is not yet sure of its audience. It is trying, therefore, to be all things to all subscribers.

For the sports addict, there is a cable service, ESPN, offering sports around the clock. Insomniacs report, "I turned on a cable channel at 4 A.M. and got a lacrosse game." Or a swimming meet or a golf tournament. Some of these events took place months ago, but sports fans have their own sense of history.

Naturally, there's a children's channel, *Nickelodeon*, and there are five channels devoted to religious programming. Add to all these, three "super-stations," on the cable by grace of satellites, and the 24-hour schedule takes on added variety. The super-stations—WTBS in Atlanta, WGN in Chicago and New York's WOR—operate 24 hours a day with old movies and syndicated off-network series filling the long night.

"Television is a desert in which we sit happily sunbathing," the distinguished biographer, Michael Holroyd recently wrote in the London *Observer*. "And as we sit there the desert spreads."

Critics who regard all of television as a wasteland are obliged to concede that the desert has begun to flower in the realm of cable.

Consider the cable service known as ARTS. That is, Alpha Repertory Television Service. It is a joint venture of ABC and the Hearst Corporation. Its programming is all "upscale," aimed at the educated middle and upper class. ARTS has 6.4 million subscribers on 1600 cable systems. A rigid repeat schedule helps to reduce overhead, and the presence of Mobil as a major sponsor further eases the burden. Sunday, Monday and Tuesday programs are repeated on Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings. Wednesday night offers a *Mobil Showcase*, often a drama from British television. ARTS is on the air only three hours a night, from 9 to midnight.

During the Spring ARTS viewers have seen some superb entertainment, including: a documentary on the life and work of Carvaggio, a Abbey Theatre pro-

duction of *The Plough and the Stars,* a three-hour production of Verdi's opera, *Luisa Miller* from the Royal Opera House at Covent Garden, docu-dramas on Tennessee Williams, Lotte Lenya and the painters Degas and Turner.

A weekly art series originates at Sotheby-Parke-Bernet in New York. A series *Women in Jazz* features the pianist Marian McPartland. Noel Coward's *Present Laughter* was presented in April along with several one-act plays. Two short plays by Frank South were directed by Robert Altman.

Ballet has emerged as perhaps the most popular art form on the cultural cable. The Alvin Ailey Dancers in recital and a lengthy production of the classic *Giselle,* featuring interviews with all the 20th century ballerinas who have danced the title role, have been much talked-about.

The public's "first fine careless rapture" over cable brings back memories of television's early, coltish days. In the early 1950s, before there was a TV set in every den, kitchen and boudoir, prosperous folk who owned a set would invite the neighbors in for special programs. Now that custom has been revived by cable.

It is no coincidence that both ABC and CBS chose to enter the cable field via cultural programming. Opera, ballet and classic drama, the networks sensed, would have the least impact on the audience that regularly tunes in *Three's Company* or *The Dukes of Hazzard.*

□

On CBS Cable the quality is high, but the repeats are more insidious. A South African play, *Sizwe Banzi Is Dead* is aired, one viewer swears, three times every night. One also sees and hears, over and over, the same "promos," the house ads that fill the spots commercials ought to fill. This is the more regrettable, in the case of CBS, because the promos tend to be ungrammatical and mispronounced—over and over again.

CBS Cable is on the air nine hours a day, starting at 4:30 P.M Each three hour bloc is repeated many times during the week. An agreeable *compère,* Patrick Watson, presides, always in a dinner suit, always informative and agreeable.

Some of the more impressive CBS Cable offerings have been: A cycle of Ibsen plays starring such luminaries as Liv Ullman and Diana Rigg; a nine part series, *Napoleon and Love* with Ian Holm and Billie Whitelaw; a notable English film, *The Death of Adolf Hitler,* followed each time by a candid and painful interview—by Watson—with Albert Speer. Also: *Romeo and Juliet* by the Bolshoi Ballet, *Threepenny Opera* in German and an impressive list of award-winning films from Italy, Japan and France.

CBS Cable alternates light programming with the cultural blockbusters. *The Quiz Kids,* a radio favorite of a generation ago, is back with producer Norman Lear as quiz master. *The Song Writers* is a like-

(continued on page 59)

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able series featuring composers of Broadway shows performing their own works. A cabaret series has offered informal concerts by Karen Morrow and Nancy Dessault, Margaret Whiting and Eileen Farrell. Other popular entertainers who have appeared—and will be appearing again and again—include Count Basie, Tony Bennett, Jack Guilford, and Betty Carter.

"We're trying to make culture accessible to the people," says program director Jack Willis. But the culture, CBS believes, must be leavened by the familiar, the popular. And so Tony Bennett sings as Count Basie plays.

Interestingly, it's the high culture people seem to find most rewarding on CBS Cable. I never tire of hearing the Munich Bach Orchestra performing the Brandenburg Concerto No. 6 but I am usually delighted to snap off an afternoon novelty called *Mixed Bag*. As the name implies, this is a pot-luck blend of interviews, short films, idle chatter.

A nightly interview show, *Signature* has created a stir for two reasons. First, the questions are unusually blunt and, second, the interviewer is never seen. Since he has a course voice and a rather offensive manner I've never found his corporeal absence distressing.

The cameras on *Signature* inflict cruel and unusual punishment. The closeups are obscenely, remorselessly tight. The viewer sees every wart and wen, every clogged pore, every chipped front tooth. Under the lights, the interviewee sweats profusely, causing makeup to run and patience, at times, to wear thin.

If pressed to name my favorite diversions on CBS Cable I'd list Twyla Tharp's dance recital, a series of plays based on Henry James' stories, Pat Carroll in *Gertrude Stein, Gertrude Stein, Piano Players*, all about three generations of New Orleans jazz, and a musical tour of Vienna with the Vienna Philharmonic. I expect to add to this list the five Gilbert and Sullivan operas scheduled for late this spring.

□

Most cable services raise the curtain in the early evening. Not so the ABC Video Service which recently inaugurated a new series for women, called *Daytime*. Its mixture of good talk, sensible advice and womanish humor reaches four million women each afternoon from 1 o'clock to 5.

Daytime, according to the program director, Mary Alice Dwyer, is aimed at the woman who is "intelligent and anxious to learn." Roughly 45 segments are aired each week and they are unorthodox in at least one respect. Some run five minutes, some run 40. Comedienne Phyllis Diller appears in the shorter spots, usually discoursing on the perils of growing old.

Daytime brings Julia Child into your kitchen with a cooking lesson, but it also grapples with the sorrow and pain faced by many women. A two hour session on breast cancer brought worried women face to face with three cancer specialists. After that, three

husbands of women who have undergone mastectomies discussed their response to the trauma their wives experienced. In an epilogue, a husband and wife, interviewed in their home, spoke frankly of the problems posed by breast surgery. It was all highly emotional but practical, too. Here were all the details you'd always wanted to know but were too shy to ask.

Interviews and group discussions are the backbone of *Daytime* and they're well above average for this genre.

Most evenings from 8 to 10 my cable dial is set at Channel N, Ted Turner's all-news network. Though only a year old, CNN is already a formidable operation. *Prime Time News*, the 8 to 10 feature, provides the best all-round coverage of the day's events anywhere on the dial. Correspondents in London, Rome, Tel Aviv and cities across the U.S. fill us in on details the network evening news often scants under pressure of time.

Somehow, there's more immediacy, more urgency in CNN reports. A four alarm fire in Chicago? You are there, fighting the smoke, watching a fireman carry an infant down a ladder to safety.

A flood in Indiana? You are in the boats. Street fighting in El Salvador? You hear the bullets, see the blood and hear, from correspondent Peter Arnett, the most lucid, concise account of the troubles besetting that unhappy country.

CNN is marvelously good at covering trials. We were in the courtroom, day after day, as a jury weighed the fate of Klaus von Bulow, charged with the attempted murder of his rich wife. The Wayne Williams case in Atlanta was covered almost too thoroughly, the names of the victims being repeated ad infinitum.

Like CBS Cable, CNN is obliged to repeat its prime time news show during the dog watch hours. Hearing spot news again is sometimes tiresome but the features on medicine, fashion, and the economy stand up well the second time around. Sometimes the mind picks up details not heard the first time.

Essentially, Cable News Network is a youth-dominated operation. The anchor-woman for *Prime Time News* is a striking beauty, Kathleen Sullivan. All the sports announcers appear to be in their 20s.

That brings me to a serious flaw in the CNN schedule: there is far too much emphasis on sports. We know that Ted Turner owns a baseball team and a racing yacht, but that doesn't excuse the heavy weighting of the schedule with sports talk. Women tend to tune out sports reports, and once tuned out they may not drift back to CNN.

Another irksome CNN habit is more easily corrected. The news copy prepared by correspondents—with a few exceptions—cries out for editing. In their syntax and pronunciation the young reporters betray the sorry decline in the teaching of English over the past twenty years.

CNN has a healthy quota of commericals, but Ted Turner is said to have lost twenty million

(continued on page 63)

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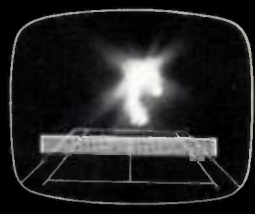
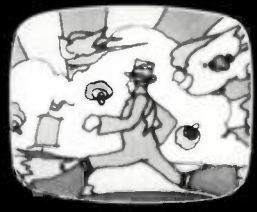


U.S. Open Tennis

COMMERCIALS

Datsun

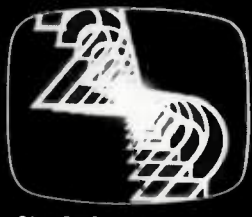
Americana Hotels



The World's Fair

PROGRAM TITLES

The Late Show



Six O'Clock News

Stanley Siegel

VIDEO DESIGN & LOGOS

CBS Sports

Clairol Crown

KMOX-TV

Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer

ARS GRATIA ARTIS

Television

dollars during the first year of operation. CBS Cable and ARTS also expect to lose money. Indeed, the profits seem to lie with cable's Pay-TV systems. Home Box Office has eight million subscribers, generating revenues of nearly four hundred million dollars a year. That's six million more than the rival system, Showtime, takes in.

Moving into this area is another system called Bravo, which specializes in foreign films. Each film is presented in both a dubbed and a captioned version on different evenings. Opera, ballet and jazz concerts are also offered.

Bravo's sister service is called Escapade. Twenty three feature films are offered paying customers each month, most of them raunchy and simple-minded. Some sample titles: *Young Lady Chatterly, Hot Times, Le Sex Shop,* and *The History of Lingerie.*

This catalog of sex films brings us to a serious problem, one nonexistent until cable. These programs are definitely not for children. But children are watching them. In some households it appears that there is no firm bedtime, no house rules and small regard for a child's innocence.

□

Psychologists say that children can be permanently warped and morally damaged by early exposure to pornography. Still, an executive of Warner-Amex was quoted recently, "If there's a community that says, 'We want X-rated programming,' I don't see why the cable system should be the arbiter of taste."

To their credit, a few cities try to insure that pornographic films are confined to adult-only audiences. In Allentown, Pa., for example, explicit sex shows are aired three times a day, seven days a week. More than 3000 subscribers pay three dollars and fifty cents per film. With a matinee each day at one o'clock, Allentown took pains to insure that no home receives a "porno flick" by accident. Each X-rated fim must be ordered in advance by telephone, with the subscriber stating his credit card number and the title of the film he'd like to see.

But in too many cities, hard and soft core "porn" is simply offered as regular fare after eleven o'clock. In New York, on cable Channel J, late evening sex programs offer frontal nudity and demonstrations of such quirky exercises as bondage. A program called *Talking Dirty* lives up to its name and is clearly meant for low-IQ viewers.

These late evening sex shows are often sponsored. Not surprisingly, the sponsors are massage parlors, makers of sex equipment and carefully disguised brothels. A sensuous female voice invites viewers to "share a group experience in a beautiful Manhattan town house." The massage parlor promises "a discreet appointment with a socially talented companion." Sometimes the socially talented companion is shown at work, caressing a client who murmurs appreciatively.

In trying to account for the popularity of these sex shows one expert has suggested that the sexual revolution "left a widespread sense of inadequacy." It has also created a serious problem for cable TV, one that may lead to a righteous crusade for censorship.

One more problem spawned by cable TV concerns equity, the distribution of privilege in this depressed land. Millions of impoverished Americans are never going to see cable TV at any price. Even $10 a month for the basic service is beyond their means. Also deprived will be those Americans living in sparsely populated regions, or in blighted urban areas like the South Bronx or Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant. In the interests of fair play, some cable programming must find its way into regular channels. But owners of cable systems might fiercely resist such a plan. Cable is a rich and exciting medium, full of hope and promise, however tacky some of its current offerings. It ought not to belong exclusively to the affluent.

Harriet Van Horne, television critic and syndicated columnist, is contributing editor of Television Quarterly.

QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

"In 1972 the FCC adopted the *Children's Television Report and Policy Statement,* which emphasizes that 'broadcasters have a special obligation to serve children (and) to develop and present programming which will serve the unique needs of the child audience.'"

"Although many broadcasters seem to have forgotten it, this 1974 policy statement is in effect today; nothing that the current FCC has said or done negates its validity. And the important systems created to ensure broadcaster accountability to the public still exist. Program logs, open to the public by law, are one of the mechanisms guaranteeing the public's right to know. By inspecting stations' logs, citizens are exercising their rights as owners of the airwaves to hold each licensee responsible for service to the community."

—Peggy Charren, President of Action for Childrens' Television, at N.A.T.P.E. 1982 Conference.

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Filming in China and Zambia—and Other Adventures of *Big Blue Marble*

By TOM HURWITZ

Shooting for the international children's TV series *Big Blue Marble*, I've had the opportunity to travel much of the world in pursuit of a fascinating subject—children's lives. Wherever we've gone—Bahrain, South Africa, Texas or, most recently, China—we've found adventure and a number of human and technical obstacles to overcome.

In 1978, on an island off the coast of Iceland, our crew joined a family in a harvest of sea gull eggs, an annual tradition where millions of birds migrate each year to roost in the high black volcanic cliffs. Getting there was not half the fun.

There's only one place you can get on this island. You travel there in a fishing boat, then transfer to a dinghy. Now the waves are swelling five to six feet against the cliff; as the waves reach just the right height, you have to jump up and grab this rope that's tied to the cliff and pull yourself up.

I went first, with a camera strapped to my back, to film the rest of the crew landing. The group then climbed a 100-foot cliff to reach a hut. The rest of the equipment was brought up by pulley from a cove.

We were never more than 50 feet from the edge of a cliff. With this in mind, my assistant camera man and I took rock climbing lessons. To film the egg sequences, I was lowered by rope over the cliffs, some 300 feet above the sea. One of our subjects, a totally fearless 14-year-old girl, climbed down the rockface with a similar rope tied to her waist.

Meanwhile, I'm trying not to look down, trying to get the shot and suddenly I'm 10 inches lower. I yelled, "What's going on?" and the people holding my rope said, "Oh nothing, it's okay." Later I found that the rope had begun to slip, and they had to call over five people to keep my rope from going over the edge.

□

Our film crews don't usually risk their lives in creating segments for *Big Blue Marble*. At any given time, two to five production teams roam the globe without incident. Executive Producer/Director Bob Weimer occasionally goes on location with Producer/Director Rick Berman. But most of the time, they remain in New York to write and

(continued on page 69)

HOW TELEVISION IS SOLVING A PROBLEM THAT'S BEEN KILLING US FOR YEARS.

Heart attack. Smoke inhalation. Shock. Thousands of people are given up for dead every year, lives that might have been saved with CPR administered in the first few minutes after breathing and heartbeat stop.

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edit the programs, and rely on a battery of freelance directors and cameramen for foreign shoots. Besides American crews, we have foreign "regulars" in Britain, France and the Soviet Union.

We make a habit of using the same people over and over again. By experience they know what things cost in various places around the world and can work within a loose budget.

A typical shoot takes from a week to ten days on location. We usually spend about four or five days in on-the-scene preparation, and about another five days on actual filming, shooting a film ratio of about fifteen-to-one.

Our usual crew is a director-cameraman, a sound man, and an assistant cameraman. The director-cameraman usually serves as the field producer, but occasionally a unit will be supplemented by a fourth member from New York, a producer.

Film stock? We use Kodak 7247 color negative, although recently we have been testing some of the newer, faster film. Lighting is usually simple, using natural light on location as much as possible. I use the Aaton, a new French 16 mm. camera which is very small and quiet. Our crews have also used the Eclair NPR and the Arriflex SR.

Since we travel with our gear, one of our biggest problems in logistics is getting permission to film and to bring film crews and equipment into certain countries. If you bring $100,000 worth of film equipment into the country, they fear you may sell it. So, often you'll have to post a bond. Fortunately, most Western countries honor an international document called *carnet* that allows movie and television crews to enter customs with a minimum of fuss. Local permission to shoot, however, may entail a diplomatic note from the U.S. embassy and days of red tape.

□

Getting to China was another story entirely. When Rick Berman approached the Chinese for permission to shoot two weeks in Tianjin and Inner Mongolia—out of the tourist paths that up to that time (1981) had not been touched by foreign film crews—he was already a veteran of negotiating documentaries in various countries including Bhutan, Zambia and Dubai. But as he sat down to work out the details for the trip, he wasn't prepared for the economic hectoring that the country's officials would bring to the table.

At the outset of negotiations, the Chinese asked for significantly more money than what we would have incurred in direct costs. They wanted to make sure that they would not take a loss on our being there. In contrast, the Soviet Union gave us better rates for the same services.

The negotiations began in earnest in March, 1981 when Berman, through a Chinese-American associate, was introduced to officials of the Tianjin Radio and Televi-

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sion Service Corporation, one of many Chinese governmental agencies recently set up to deal with the influx of foreign broadcasters wanting to film every societal gesture.

Tianjin is a backwater metropolis 60 miles east of—and overshadowed by—Peking; it is perhaps the biggest city in the world that nobody has heard of. And openly proud of being chosen as *Marble's* broadcasting conduit, the city's television service corporation chiefs laid out an elaborate menu of provisions for the show's crew—translators, assistants, transportation, all internal arrangements taken care of, and room and board. Then they dropped the money shoe.

Berman reminded the Chinese that his was a non-profit children's group. They answered that they would have charged any profit-making corporation twice as much.

"I smiled my way through the rest of my stay there, nodding my head a lot and feeling sure that we would never be able to afford to film in China," Berman says. In the end, though, after telegrams and telexes criss-crossed between China and the United States—and after the Chinese were convinced that the filming would not take place at their price—the service corporation officials relented and lowered their price substantially—still high, but affordable.

□

We left for China in early July knowing that we would soon be making television history. *Big Blue Marble* was going to be the first children's TV show to film in that country.

China's populous cities are usually rivers of pedestrians; the problem in this case, though, was compounded by the contagious curiosity modern technology inspires there. Anytime a scene rolled, the surrounding area rapidly turned into a human gridlock of hundreds of background faces mesmerized by the camera. In the end, we had to use inventive methods to film the children to make them appear to be in candid street settings. The *Big Blue Marble* filmmakers would have done the Keystone Kops proud.

What we did was develop a synchronized quasi-military approach to filming. First we set up the shot without the kids and let the crowds gather around us. Then we ran back into the van, where the people couldn't see us, and waited for the crowds to get bored and thin out.

Then at an appointed time, with the street crowds off guard, we ran out of the van to our cameras. Fifteen seconds later the kids were deposited on the street. We rolled the scene, and before the crowds had a chance to grow again we ran back to the van and took off.

The sequences shot in Tianjin were of a day in the life of five Chinese children—three girls and two boys—and their work in a school kite-making club. The segment includes shots of the children's homes as they prepare for school, views of their classroom, club, streets of Tianjin and the

(continued on page 73)

CBS CABLE

A CELEBRATION OF THE LIVING ARTS AND THE ARTS OF LIVING

work of a master kite craftsman at a local factory—a panorama of an old city, its buildings and cultural movements.

In retrospect, one scene set the tone. It was when I first met them two days before the first day of shooting—the five children stood lined up carefully, waiting politely to meet us. Dressed identically in white shirts, blue shorts, and red silky bandanas they seemed tense and unable to relax. But when they stepped forward, one at a time, to sing songs of play, the mood abruptly shifted. The children suddenly seemed charged with each other's success. They supported and goaded each other—encouraged each other to a simple uncomplicated performance.

All of a sudden I realized that this group was going to be the most special group of children I ever recorded. They became a joy to work with, completely cooperative and so intent on pleasing. But even more fascinating was that there was no competition among the kids—just mutual enhancement. They were much different from other kids I'd worked with.

I'll admit that I was skeptical about the way the children acted; at first I wondered whether they had been programmed by their teachers to behave before the cameras as the Chinese leaders would want them to be seen by American audiences. But after I watched them for hours in private moments going through the same type of behavior, my directorial instincts—which usually warn me when a performance will appear affected on the television screen—were finally calmed.

In our society, the individual performer child is a very special person who craves and loves the gratification and applause his performance brings. But in China they were performing not for the individual praise, but because it was one of the things that children do—like eating an ice cream cone over here. There just wasn't that kind of intense personal need for praise you see elsewhere.

By contrast, the children of Inner Mongolia appeared more diffident and serious in an individualistic way. The land itself, 300 miles northeast of Tianjin, was different, too—wide-open prairies and winding rivers. The people are still wandering herders, moving around on horseback, restricted by the boundaries of their communes. Another change spawned by the revolution is the appearance of towns with central trading spots, schools, medical dispensaries, granaries and general stores.

The *Big Blue Marble* crew moved into the yurt—a domelike tent—of 15-year-old Hablskhalto and his parents and sisters. The family's seasonal residence, about 14 feet in diameter, had a central space where eating and sleeping took place. On the yurt's walls were photographs of the boy winning many of the various riding and herding competitions held near his home, and plaques given by the commune honoring his father for being an exemplary worker.

Incidentally, we ran into a curious translation problem in Mongolia. None of the Mongolians

spoke English, so a double-translation system had to be devised: I gave directions in English, which one of our hard-working Chinese assistants translated into Chinese which was then re-translated by another Chinese into Mongolian. Slowed us down a bit, but it worked!

Much of modern Chinese thought, which aggressively debunks the Asian traditions of caste-like sexual distinctions, has never reached Inner Mongolia. For example, the rituals around the feast given the *Marble* crew on their arrival were a throwback to the times when the nomads were serfs in the fields of the warlords.

We sat down around a table and the women served us. When they were finished serving they could sit down. But as soon as we were finished, they had to get up again and clear our places.

The feast of joints of mutton was eaten without any utensils except a knife to peel the meat off the bone. And when the meal was finished the women sang.

They sang songs that sounded like the Mongolian prairie looks—songs so beautiful and so haunting, strangely close to an Appalachian mountain hymn.

We spent four days shooting young Hablskhalto going through his cowboy skills: herding and milking sheep, wrestling and racing horses. And while the boy appeared at ease before the cameras and noticeably lacking in affectation, he obviously differed from his peers in Tianjin.

Hablskhalto, whose name means revolution, was more individualistic, strong and silent, reflecting his having to spend all his non-school hours working on the land. Probably because of their work ethic the Mongolians really only tolerated us. We were a curiosity that after a while got boring. What they really wanted to do was ride their horses.

□

Whether *Big Blue Marble* is rolling in Inner Mongolia or back home in the States, you've always got to be prepared for the unexpected. Although sometimes an advance man will go ahead of the crew to scout the location, especially when we film abroad, most of the research is done in the program's New York office. Local people on the scene will do some of the advance preparation for us, and when the team arrives they usually have lined up a selection of youngsters for the story we plan to shoot. We arrive with a story outline, ready to amend it or alter it—or in some cases toss it away.

When we went to Zambia to do a piece on some rural youngsters who were reported to make some extraordinary wire sculpture, we discovered that there was no way we could film that story: true, the kids did turn out lovely art, but they lived in a small village so impoverished, that these unfortunate children were unusually depressed and uncommunicative.

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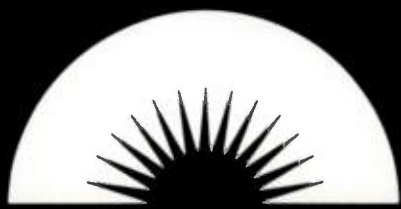

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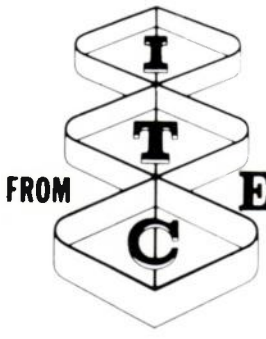

FROM ITC ENTERTAINMENT

AN ACC COMPANY

What to do? The pressures of time and budget were intense. We had to move fast. As usual, I had with me a list of local people who might be helpful in suggesting ideas and themes. A couple of them were at the University. As I strolled across the campus on the way to their offices, I got lucky; in the parking lot, I suddenly came across a splendid sight—a group of boys and girls in colorful costumes who were dancing. These youngsters were beautiful, and so were their dances.

It turned out that I had stumbled across a bunch of Zambian kids who had recently organized their own little dance group, and with wondrous skill and charm, they danced the folk dances of their country, as well as improvising new ones.

That chance encounter quickly led us to developing and filming one of our best *Blue Marble* shows. When we left a week later, we didn't have the film about Zambia children and sculpture we had expected to make, but instead we had a lovely one about dance. And we were happy we still were able to reflect the culture of the young people of Zambia.

□

Sometimes *Blue Marble* filmmakers get lucky when they are filming in their own country, and the unexpected provides unplanned moments of insight and beauty. One of those times was in Alabama a couple of years ago when another crew was filming country western star Wendy Holcomb, who was visiting a home for the aged near her hometown of Alabaster. There, Wendy met and sang to a 103-year-old woman. At the conclusion of her song, the old lady asked Wendy, "Do you love me?"

"Yes ma'm," answered Wendy.

". . . Then tell me what to do," the old lady asked. "Please tell me what to do."

Understandably, Wendy broke into tears. Joe Consentino, the director-producer, faced a major problem—how to fit this poignant footage into the context of the segment without losing the upbeat quality of the rest of the episode. For days he pondered what to do—handling it with narration seemed so intrusive. The old lady's words, "tell me what to do . . ." came to mind and a song was born:

tell me what to do
must childhood pass so soon
I am growing older
tell me what to do

could it slip away
will dreams of yesterday
be lost forever in the crowd
or will tomorrow bring

the carousel's brass ring
will I do my friends and family
proud.

That song, sung by Wendy, became the segue into the rest of the episode.

□

My best advice for travelling film-makers is to stay loose: you have to understand as quickly as

possible the environment you're working in, whether it's a neighborhood, a city, or a foreign land. You've got to relate to these people, young and old, even though their culture may be totally different from your own.

It's important to blend in gracefully with the environment. By so doing, you'll improve your chances of getting relaxed and realistic footage. You've got to respect their way of life, their attitudes and their hospitality, even when they offer the crew food and drink that may be very strange. I must admit though I did manage to turn down grilled worms, when that dish was offered to me on a jungle location.

Tom Hurwitz is a director-cameraman for Big Blue Marble, *the childrens' documentary series which has won ten Emmys. The series, which is funded and produced by ITT, is carried by several hundred stations and cable outlets in the United States. It is also broadcast in seventy seven countries overseas. Hurwitz was cameraman for* Harlan County USA, *an Academy Award winner for feature-length documentaries in theatrical release.*

QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

American TV and China

"The professional ethos of foreign broadcasters also explains their admiration of American programming, even when it is dissonant with the host culture. After all, the settings are expensive, the stunts and violence impressive and the acting at least more credible than any movie production . . . the well-made TV program is a capsule lesson in tight editing, striking visuals, emotional intimacy and action."

"A Chinese teacher rationalized her country's obsession with American TV as a stage that China, and any TV-developing nation with have to go through. 'The American TV shows we have seen have helped improve our own TV. They have shown the importance of exciting plots, realistic dialogue and using the mass media to discuss controversial issues. Now more of our own media are beginning to take on these characteristics. In the end, this will be the most important thing—to have Chinese television that is as good as the American from the point of view of form and style, but that speaks about the realities of China.'"

—*Michael A. DeSousa, in* Public Communications Review.

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Five Myths of the Television Age.

By HERBERT LONDON

There are several truths influencing our cultural life, whose vitality remains intact, despite the fact they are challenged by television programs every day of the week. These are pedestrian truths we accept as indisputable until we realize that television makes a mockery of them.

For example, it is often said that *seeing is believing* or its variant: my eyes don't lie. Yet television suggests eyes do lie and it is more likely that belief creates sight rather than vice versa. No matter how many times the Kennedy assassination scene is replayed I—and so many others—see a different series of events each time. Certainly what I see hasn't changed, but my perception of the event has very definitely been altered over time.

Consider that what we observe creates a mind set about what we should observe. I once had the experience of being a cop who was asked to respond to a burglary in the Bronx. After writing down the facts about the case, the resident of the apartment said to me, "You're not a real cop." Somewhat startled, I asked why she said that. Her comment was very revealing. "Why a real cop would have taken fingerprints. I've seen them do that on *Police Story.*" In this instance, what is real is what one observes on a television program. I simply couldn't convince her that taking fingerprints would serve any useful function at all.

Another example of this condition is the size we attribute to television personalities. As a youth I watched every cowboy hero on television from the Lone Ranger to Hopalong and Palladin. Each was magnified in my mind into figures bigger than life, mythological characters who can strike down evil foes with one swing of their right hand. Despite my better judgement, this perception persisted, until I had the opportunity to meet Richard Boone of Palladin fame. I was shattered. This man was considerably smaller than my 6' 5" height and 200 pound frame. It didn't make any sense; my fantasy converged with reality and was defeated.

Certainly this didn't lessen Mr. Boone's talent as an actor. In fact it may have enhanced it, but it did affect my appreciation of the *Have Gun Will Travel* series. I couldn't watch these programs anymore, even though they had once given me so much pleasure. In this in-

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GOOD IDEAS

SHOULD NOT BE CONFINED

BY

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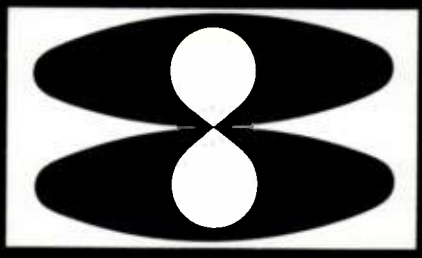

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LOS ANGELES

stance, a face-to-face meeting undermined my convictions which were a function of television viewing. I lost a hero and gained an insight.

□

Very much related to this, is the assumption that *a picture is worth a thousand words,* that one dramatic scene caught in a still photograph has an existential reality detached from the past. When memorable still photos appear on television news, they have a distinct unreality, because there is usually no accompanying narration.

I recall with vivid detail the photograph of a South Vietnamese officer who is seen shooting a prisoner in cold blood. This wanton act confirmed the view of so many who wanted to believe South Vietnam should not be defended. But without either supporting or denouncing this political position, it is worth asking if that photograph tells a story with antecedents, whether its reality is identified with a sequence of events. To see the photograph on TV is not the same as reading a thousand words, perhaps not as vivid as reading ten words. And this truth is reinforced by the powerful and very often misguided format of relying far too often on pictures and film in a television news segment to tell a whole story.

Advertisements rely almost completely on this kind of imagery. A McDonald's hamburger always looks succulent, a Coke is always consumed when you're happy, Jordache jeans are always worn when out with a girlfriend. The picture creates a world of one-dimensional images that conspire against the truth of dried-out beef, syrupy sweet soft drinks and jeans that accentuate one's bulges. It isn't that these hamburgers, soft drinks and jeans can't be good, it's the intrinsic deceit imposed by a photograph divorced from reality that I find disorienting.

What I consider the third myth is the widely accepted belief that *facts are the basis of knowledge.* Many television news accounts unwittingly challenge this notion as if Mark Twain were the script writer.

Consider this question by Dan Rather to a Yugoslavian worker during a *Sixty Minutes* segment on life in Yugoslavia: "Do you believe conditions in this factory are comparable to the conditions encountered by Detroit laborers?" The response was exactly what you'd expect: "Uh huh" or some similar grunt. In *fact* this person agrees with Rather's implication or so it seems. But what is not asked is, of course, most important: Have you ever been to Detroit?; On what basis do you believe a comparison can be made, e.g. working conditions, salaries; And what qualifies you to make a comparison?

In a 1981 CBS special on national defense a similar misappropriation of the facts occurs. With extraordinary clarity the CBS news team identified the growth in national defense expenditures and pointed out the astronomical price tag on each new weapon, illustrating in graphic detail the duplica-

tion of some defense systems. Although I am not an expert on the subject, I am confident the facts were presented unerringly. But after observing how these weapons are deployed and learning how much they cost, what are we as viewers supposed to think?

Is the cost too high? Too high compared to what standard? Can a tank be compared to a university education? Are we supposed to believe the new weapons are superfluous? On what basis is superfluity determined? In other words, the CBS reporters may have a point worth pursuing. Yet that can't be determined from the facts.

On a recent *20/20* program, the commentators considered the condition of Arabs living in the West Bank. A research team compiled reams of statistics on per capita income, the number of residents in each town, ownership arrangements, etc. Every effort was made to be thorough. There were interviews with residents of Hebron, Nablus and Bethlehem who expressed their dissatisfaction with the Israeli occupiers. But what was omitted in this "factual" account were the factors that might permit a dispassionate analysis.

For example, if economic conditions are not agreeable—as was suggested—by what standard is this opinion made? Is it more agreeable than the period before 1967, preoccupation? If there are limits on political freedom is this more or less than the limits imposed on Jews in Arab states? In other words, do the facts tell the story or do the omissions reveal the truth?

The montage technique of pictures and carefully assembled statistics is part of the dreamlike effect television induces. The seduction is irresistible. Without pointing a finger—since there are so many guilty parties—it is worth asking: How does one distinguish between facts that guarantee a carefully manipulated conclusion and facts that are carefully presented to illuminate an issue? The latter may be difficult to achieve; the former—which is a recurring news story—reinforces my belief that facts on television undermine knowledge.

□

A fourth myth is the Voltairean assumption that *from an exchange of views, truth emerges.* The supposition, learned by every school child, is that a fair, open debate will enhance the search for truth. Now, this theory has special poignancy in a democracy, but its application to television talk shows and/or talk-variety, is specious, whether the talker-entertainer is Merv Griffin, Johnny Carson or Mike Douglas.

I believe this is so for two reasons: the limits of time and my suspicion that the business of television is—and can only be—show business.

Time limits intrude on serious discussion. While it is true, as George Steiner has noted, that unlimited discussion is ultimately fatuous, it is also true that the artificial limits such as ten-minute discussions can only result in naive speculation.

(continued on page 87)

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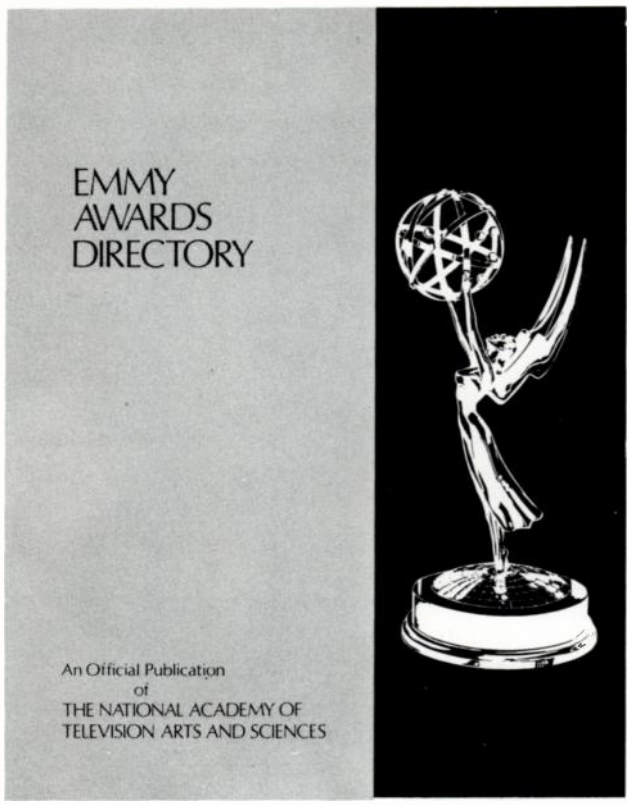

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"Tell me," Johnny Carson often asks his guests, "how would you summarize the main points in your book?" Now this book—if it has value—probably can't be summarized very easily. But because Carson has to break for a commercial, a summary is all that is possible. Can you imagine Carson asking Kant, better yet, Wittgenstein for a summary of his work? The very scenario has possibilities for a Woody Allen sketch.

Television seems to elicit show business attitudes even when the speaker isn't in show business, especially on those weekend forums, roundtables, debates and other variants of serious discussion which clutter up the weekend program schedules ("If there's a pro-and-con program on the air—it must be Sunday!")

Since these programs rarely have a live audience, the speaker is trying to reach some unseen viewer in any way that will keep him from turning the dial. Under these circumstances there is a natural temptation to say what is extreme, to make all argumentation excessive. The guest speaker or debater invariably says, in the only way he knows how, "watch me rather than my counterpart on another channel and you won't be sorry."

In a recent debate on nuclear weapons the proponents of a freeze argued that the weapons race will automatically lead to their use. Evidence was marshalled from the World War I experience as the speaker spoke of imminent disaster unless we—and presumably the Russians—mend our ways. On the other side were what the moderator called the "hawks." The hawks citing examples from pre-World War II history argued that military strength is a deterrent to war; arms aren't automatically deployed unless there is disparity of power and one side senses an easy victory. It is precisely this weak position—it was claimed—in which we now find ourselves.

Although this was a reasonably open debate the airing of views didn't illuminate the issue. In fact, there was a lot of thunder and little lightning because the terms of debate are so complex. What is meant by a freeze? How many nuclear weapons can survive a first strike? When do weapons deter? When do they incite? For a while it appeared to this viewer as if these mutually exclusive positions were both right.

What is one supposed to make of debate that is frank, factual and ultimately incapable of proof? In this case, as in so many others, the free exchange of ideas in a television forum that depends on entertainment, the limits of time and partial explanations can lead only to confusion. Surely Voltaire is turning in his grave, but he had no way of knowing the idiosyncratic demands of television discussion.

□

My last myth is that *satisfaction is its own reward.* The belief which existed for a while in the pre-Vince Lombardi age was based on the acceptance of hard work—personal

(continued on page 89)

satisfaction—psychic rewards. It had something to do with an amateur tradition in which people sought personal goals without recognition and acclaim. Television has unquestionably changed that.

In the post-Lombardi era there is *only* the professional athlete. Even the so-called amateur competes for scholarships given in his name to the college he attends. Every Olympic medal has a price tag attached to it in the form of commercial sponsorship and a future television career. Normally self-effacing athletes cannot escape the glare of the television cameras. If you've been successful in everything from catching passes to hitting jump shots, you can be sure a television interviewer will be there with a microphone and camera.

There is no such thing as a really good athlete who remains anonymous. In the spotlight, recognition is what counts, even though there are still athletes who give lip service to inner satisfaction.

The question most often asked by commentators is, "when will you turn pro?" For pros the question is "how much will you ask for in your next contract?" In the television age the statistics generated by sports—statistics that made performance palpable—must take a back seat to contract negotiations.

Some of those truths we hold dear may not be able to stand up to the test of television's intrinsic nature. Nelson Goodman once argued "worlds are made not only by what is said literally but also by what is said metaphorically." That may be the only enduring truth in a television age.

Herbert London is Dean of the Gallatin Division of New York University, which is devoted to experimental education. He is the author of two recent books, Myths That Rule America *and* The Overheated Decade, *and a frequent contributor to the* New York Times, New York Magazine, *the* Washington Post *and other publications. In 1978 he spent a year in uniform riding a patrol car with the Bronx Task Force of the New York City police, as part of an Endowment for the Humanities program in which various university scholars researched the policeman's lot the hard way.*

QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

"Over-the-air broadcasting and each of the new technologies are only delivery systems. But people don't watch delivery systems; they watch, or not, the *programs* that the systems deliver. What counts is what programs they deliver, and how the public will respond to those programs, and none of us can be sure on those two scores."

—Richard S. Salant, Press-Enterprise Lecture, at the University of California-Riverside.

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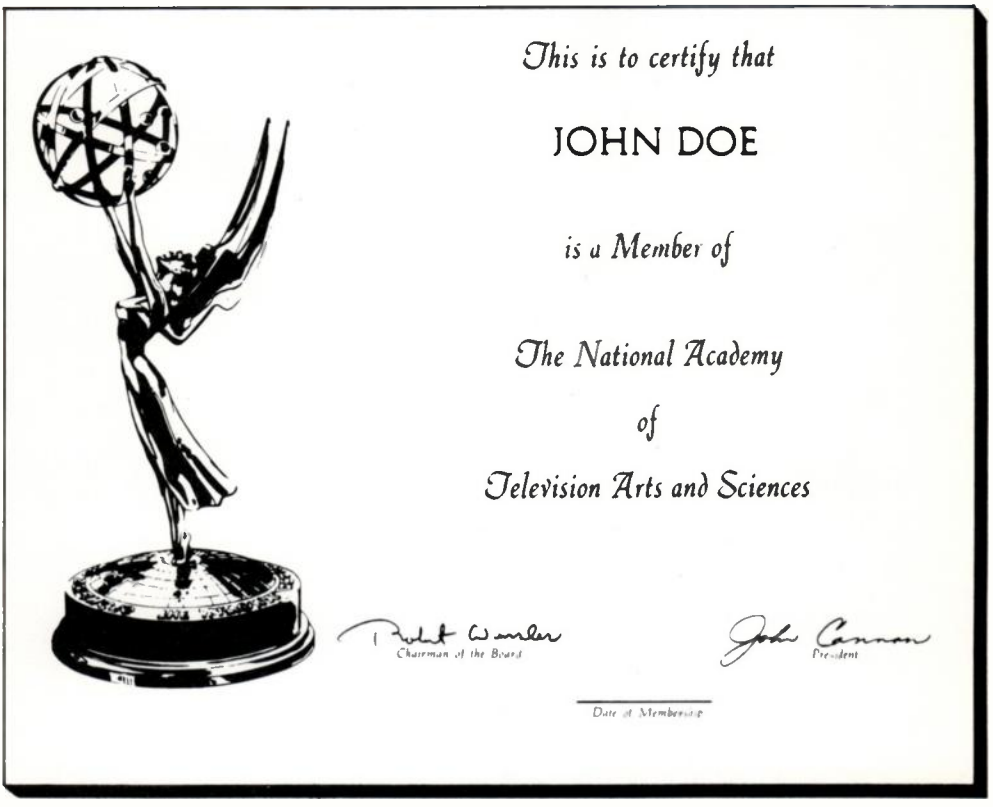

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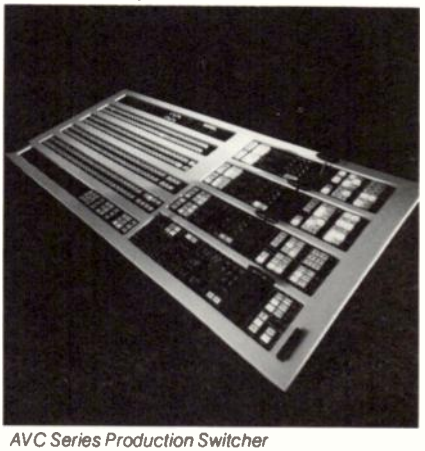

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