

REMARKS OF SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

BROADCASTERS PROMOTION ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL SEMINAR

Washington, D. C.

June 16, 1976

In this Bicentennial year, many people are going to be talking about the American character. I may do some of that myself. But it would be somewhat unusual to talk to you on that subject, since the American character is determined -- to an increasingly large extent -- by television.

It is embarrassing for a politician to admit it, but television is the single most powerful force in American life. Whereas fully half the American people have never read a hardbound or paperback book since high school, and the rest spend less than ten hours a year reading books, the average American spends 1,200 hours each year watching television.

Because of the medium's broad influence, and the major role it seems destined to play in our culture, it is likely that television will prove susceptible to the same social pressures which are presently being placed on big business in general and the federal government in particular. That is, when the public perceives problems in our society, they understandably respond by turning to the largest and most powerful institutions.

And history has shown that the more responsive our institutions are to public concerns, the longer they endure in their original form.

I want to take this opportunity to identify four areas in which the broadcast industry is likely to be held accountable in the public eye, and to which the industry ought to give the greatest amount of thought in the years to come. They are:

1. The problem of public information and understanding;
2. The educational competence of our students;
3. The incidence of violent behavior in our society; and
4. Consumer confidence in advertising.

Issues and Understanding

Although America has more publications and information sources than any nation on earth, the now-famous Roper survey of 1971 showed that 60 percent of the American people get most of their information from the television news, and 31 percent get all of it there.

This means, in essence, that how the American public perceives political and social issues is almost entirely in the hands of television.

This is an awesome responsibility, and one which television is not well-suited to take on. No one doubts that television journalism has become increasingly sophisticated over the years. But good as it is, there is simply very little of it.

The average network news program carries only 22 minutes of news content. And if you print out the text of that 22 minutes, it barely covers one half of the first page of the New York Times, masthead and weather report included.

No one knows, of course, what the "right amount" of news coverage is. But we do know that the major issues of our time have grown enormously complex.

We can no longer speak of inflation meaningfully without a discussion of whether it is cost-push or demand-pull or is induced by scarcities. And that, in turn, requires a large amount of explanatory material -- and that takes time to present.

Unfortunately, there is scarcely a serious issue facing the country this year which is not similarly complex -- and scarcely a problem which is not, at bottom, an economic one. Yet the present news format has no way to address those major issues.

And the need for understanding has never been greater. In fact, so great is that need that a recent Gallup Poll found that a majority of American college students don't fully understand the U.S. economic system.

At least, that's what Phillips Petroleum makes of the results. In fact, Phillips is so disturbed that they are launching a major ad campaign to "sell" the free enterprise system back to the American people. And they are even willing to supply pre-tested television commercials to other companies at cost to achieve that end.

Phillips' concern is understandable. And I am certain that they, and hundreds of other businesses, would welcome a documentary series on understanding the economy at this critical time in its history.

And yet, no one knows better than this audience what the likelihood of that is -- virtually none. In fact, you are probably imagining to yourselves right now what the Nielsen ratings would be for an hour-long documentary on the Phillips Curve.

Yet it is no laughing matter. We are faced with a very unhappy dilemma; namely, that in order to really educate the public on major issues, the networks would have to lose money. And conversely, by continuing programming as usual, they are allowing public information and understanding to decay.

Furthermore, the increasing emphasis on the "entertainment" aspect of the news makes it even harder to increase public awareness. Indeed, the June 3 Associated Press poll, which showed that more than one-half of voters committed to a candidate have no idea at all of how he stands on the issues, may be a case in point: Is it the result of candidates hedging on the issues, or of the medium's inherent difficulty in presenting issues?

These are questions which the networks will have to face as they come to grips with their new role as the principal conveyor of public information and news of the day.

Educational Competence: Why Can't Johnny Read?

Another area in which public attention has been turned to the television industry is the declining ability of young Americans to show a satisfactory grasp of basic skills like reading and mathematics.

Educators, anxious to explain this alarming drop in abilities, look to television as a possible influence. And the statistics seem plausible: by the age of 18, the average American child has spent 11,000 hours in school. But he has spent 15,000 hours in front of the television set -- time which, supposedly, he would have spent in other, more educational, pursuits.

Furthermore, psychologists are concerned that the social effects of saturation exposure to television may ultimately be harmful -- not only to a child's educational capacity, but to his social capacity as well. They are worried that time spent in solitary or group viewing of television takes time from active play -- the traditional vehicle by which children learn pro-social behavior and how to interact constructively with other human beings.

Of course, educators have a vested interest in finding something at fault outside the world of education, and psychologists have their pick of literally hundreds of variables at work on any given child.

But the fact still remains that the only notable success in the use of mass-market television for educational purposes is Sesame Street, which is shown on public broadcasting. And that program is remarkable largely by comparison to the virtual absence of similar programming on either the public or private networks.

So long as that remains the case, the public -- disturbed by their children's low scores and abilities -- will continue to wonder what televisions could do if the networks made a serious commitment to some kind of educational programming. Admittedly, the potential benefits of new, innovative educational programming are exciting to contemplate.

Violence

Nothing has shocked the average citizen so much in recent years as the alarming increase in the rate of violent crime, especially among young people -- whom we have come to call the "television generation."

Again, it is not surprising that television should be the target for public scrutiny. And it is true that despite the industry's self-imposed restrictions in the so-called Family Hour, there is still a great deal of violence on television.

It is estimated that the average child witnesses in the neighborhood of 11,000 televised homicides by the time he graduates from high school, in addition to a wide array of other violent and brutal behavior.

Whether or not our children are influenced by what they see is still uncertain. The Surgeon General himself has said that the networks should "be put on notice," and that "no action in this social area is a form of action." But no definitive connection has yet been made between violence on television and aggressive behavior in young people.

However, much of the evidence points to a causal relation of some kind. And there is little doubt that a steady diet of violence in programming is having an effect on our children, especially in the "modelling" phenomenon, in which children develop role-models and pattern their own behavior after fictional heroes or favorite characters.

Furthermore, the public's attitude is not made more congenial when certain spectacular crimes in society seem to be patterned directly from television models, or when a program like the well-known NBC film, Doomsday Flight, causes a rash of airline bomb threats in every market in which it is shown.

In a society where even our 3 and 4 year-olds watch more than 30 hours of television a week, the simple creation of a "family hour" may not be enough to satisfy public sentiment for less violent programming. And broadcasters should be aware that no amount of complaint about censorship can stand up to citizen pressure on an industry which is, after all, licensed on the public air waves and dependent on the public suffrance for its existence.

Nor will the common-sense reply that no one is forced to watch television have much weight when there is strong adverse public sentiment. After all, no one is forced to drive a car, either -- and yet we apply strict standards of safety and reliability to automobiles. And while we can recall a faulty car, there is no way to "recall" a program after the damage, if any, is already done.

So the broadcast industry should attempt the most searching kind of self-examination and self-restraint in anticipation of the public mood. The degree to which it does so will be the degree to which it is able to retain the maximum of control over the integrity and scope of its programming decisions.

Consumer Confidence

Finally, in the years to come, the broadcast industry must ultimately take account of the rising consumer movement. Obviously, that confrontation has already begun, but the recent mutual decisions between the industry and various regulatory agencies addressed to consumer concerns have been encouraging for the industry and consumers alike.

It seems very likely that some citizen pressure will be exerted on the advertising wing of the networks. The figures show that the public has become increasingly cynical about the contents and claims of television advertisements -- or at least perceive themselves to be so.

But the exposure to those ads has not ceased to be an important part of our lives -- and especially our children's lives.

The child watching Saturday morning television sees an average of one commercial for every 2.8 minutes of program time. And many parents and consumer groups feel that the products advertised, and the manner in which the ads are presented, may not be in the best interests of children.

Specifically, they are concerned that this kind of saturation advertising many instill in the child a near obsession with the worst aspects of materialism -- that they may be teaching him that happiness and fulfillment are the direct result of the immediate gratification of desire for some material possession.

And the statistics they bring to the argument are impressive: The average child, by the age of 16, has seen approximately 640,000 television commercials. At 30 seconds apiece, that is the equivalent of three working years' time -- and that is only by age 16.

This situation provides the networks with an excellent opportunity for acting in the public interest, and soliciting the views of a large share of those interested in television's effect on children. If they take advantage of that opportunity, the networks will have provided a reassuring display of responsibility to both the regulators of the industry and the American people at large.

Conclusion

These, it seems to me, are the four principal challenges which the broadcast industry faces in the near future. And I am certain that the industry will meet those challenges, just as it has constructively addressed so many problems in the past.

Television has revolutionized the nature of American society. It has provided us with the only form of mass culture which we have, cutting across social barriers of race and class, and it has already provided us with the virtual equivalent of McLuhan's "global village," at least on a national scale.

Television, quite simply, has made more people aware of more things than any other human accomplishment in the history of mankind. And it promises to increase that influence in the future.

It has provided the American public with information which is impossible to receive in any other way -- such as the coverage of the moon landing and, closer to home, the gavel-to-gavel coverage of the Senate Watergate and House impeachment committees. And in doing so, it has transformed the attitude of the American people toward one Administration -- and perhaps toward government in general.

Moreover, despite the limitations of the medium, television has provided excellent coverage of our most important political events, and in particular the two party conventions and the general elections. And in doing so, the news organizations have displayed a healthy and encouraging tendency to self-criticism and improvement.

It remains to be seen whether the industry as a whole can exercise the same kind of introspection, and do it in a timely and responsible fashion.

The American people are increasingly concerned about the role that television plays in their lives and the lives of their children.

Sociologists are questioning how we allowed the principal creator and shaper of our culture, the broadcast industry, to be entrusted with so much influence when its ultimate and continuing aim is nothing more public-spirited than to attract the largest possible audience at the lowest possible cost.

The public is going to ask a great deal of an institution which occupies a full one-sixth of our children's lives from birth to age 18.

I am sure that the industry will meet that responsibility, with the kind of creative thinking which it has shown in the past 25 years. And I am sure that this great institution in American life will continue to serve the American people, as it has so well in the past, into our third century as a nation.

#

President - Mr Tom Cousins (WCCO-TV)
Past President - Kenneth Mills -

asked me for Banquet fee note - Sony

REMARKS OF SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

- Gene Davis - Seminor
chr

BROADCASTERS PROMOTION ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL SEMINAR

WASHINGTON, D. C.

JUNE 16, 1976

L IN THIS BICENTENNIAL YEAR, MANY PEOPLE ARE GOING TO BE
TALKING ABOUT THE AMERICAN CHARACTER I MAY DO SOME OF THAT

MYSELF. L BUT IT ~~WAS~~ ^{IS} SOMEWHAT UNUSUAL TO TALK TO YOU

ON THAT SUBJECT, SINCE THE AMERICAN CHARACTER IS DETERMINED --

TO AN INCREASINGLY LARGE EXTENT -- BY TELEVISION *and other media.*

L IT IS EMBARRASSING FOR A POLITICIAN TO ADMIT IT, BUT
TELEVISION IS THE SINGLE MOST POWERFUL FORCE IN AMERICAN

LIFE. L WHEREAS FULLY HALF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE HAVE NEVER

READ A HARDBOUND OR PAPERBACK BOOK SINCE HIGH SCHOOL, AND

THE REST SPEND LESS THAN TEN HOURS A YEAR READING BOOKS,

THE AVERAGE AMERICAN SPENDS 1,200 HOURS EACH YEAR WATCHING

TELEVISION.

L BECAUSE OF THE ^{T.V.s} ~~INDUSTRY~~'S BROAD INFLUENCE, AND THE MAJOR ROLE
IT SEEMS DESTINED TO PLAY IN OUR CULTURE, IT IS LIKELY THAT
TELEVISION WILL PROVE SUSCEPTIBLE TO THE SAME SOCIAL PRESSURES
WHICH ARE PRESENTLY BEING PLACED ON BIG BUSINESS IN GENERAL AND
THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IN PARTICULAR. THAT IS, WHEN THE PUBLIC
PERCEIVES PROBLEMS IN OUR SOCIETY, THEY UNDERSTANDABLY RESPOND BY
TURNING TO THE LARGEST AND MOST POWERFUL INSTITUTIONS.

L AND HISTORY HAS SHOWN THAT THE MORE RESPONSIVE OUR INSTITUTIONS
ARE TO PUBLIC CONCERNS, THE LONGER THEY ENDURE IN THEIR ORIGINAL FORM.

L I WANT TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO IDENTIFY FOUR AREAS IN
WHICH THE BROADCAST INDUSTRY IS LIKELY TO BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE IN
THE PUBLIC EYE, AND TO WHICH THE INDUSTRY OUGHT TO GIVE THE GREATEST
AMOUNT OF THOUGHT IN THE YEARS TO COME. THEY ARE:

1. THE PROBLEM OF PUBLIC INFORMATION AND UNDERSTANDING;
2. THE EDUCATIONAL COMPETENCE OF OUR STUDENTS;
3. THE INCIDENCE OF VIOLENT BEHAVIOR IN OUR SOCIETY; AND
4. CONSUMER CONFIDENCE IN ADVERTISING.

ISSUES AND UNDERSTANDING

ALTHOUGH AMERICA HAS MORE PUBLICATIONS AND INFORMATION SOURCES THAN ANY NATION ON EARTH, THE NOW-FAMOUS ROPER SURVEY OF 1971 SHOWED THAT 60 PERCENT OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE GET MOST OF THEIR INFORMATION FROM THE TELEVISION NEWS, AND 31 PERCENT GET ALL OF IT THERE.

THIS MEANS, IN ESSENCE, THAT HOW THE AMERICAN PUBLIC PERCEIVES POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES IS ALMOST ENTIRELY IN THE HANDS OF TELEVISION.

THIS IS AN AWESOME RESPONSIBILITY, ~~AND ONE WHICH TELEVISION~~
~~IS NOT WELL SUITED TO TAKE ON,~~

NO ONE DOUBTS THAT TELEVISION
JOURNALISM HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY SOPHISTICATED OVER THE YEARS,
BUT GOOD AS IT IS, THERE IS SIMPLY ~~VERY~~ ^{all too} LITTLE OF IT.

THE AVERAGE NETWORK NEWS PROGRAM CARRIES ONLY 22 MINUTES OF
NEWS CONTENT. AND IF YOU PRINT OUT THE TEXT OF THAT 22 MINUTES,
IT BARELY COVERS ONE HALF OF THE FIRST PAGE OF THE NEW YORK TIMES,
MASTHEAD AND WEATHER REPORT INCLUDED.

NO ONE KNOWS, OF COURSE, WHAT THE "RIGHT AMOUNT" OF NEWS
COVERAGE IS, BUT WE DO KNOW THAT THE MAJOR ISSUES OF OUR TIME
HAVE GROWN ENORMOUSLY COMPLEX.

WE CAN NO LONGER SPEAK OF INFLATION MEANINGFULLY WITHOUT A
DISCUSSION OF WHETHER IT IS COST-PUSH OR DEMAND-PULL OR IS

INDUCED BY SCARCITIES — *administered prices, monopoly,*
cartels, or embargos

AND THAT, IN TURN, REQUIRES A LARGE AMOUNT OF EXPLANATORY

MATERIAL -- AND THAT TAKES TIME TO PRESENT.

L UNFORTUNATELY, THERE IS SCARCELY A SERIOUS ISSUE FACING THE
COUNTRY THIS YEAR WHICH IS NOT SIMILARLY COMPLEX -- AND SCARCELY
A PROBLEM WHICH IS NOT, AT BOTTOM, AN ECONOMIC ONE. YET THE
PRESENT NEWS FORMAT HAS NO WAY TO ADDRESS THOSE MAJOR ISSUES.

L AND THE NEED FOR UNDERSTANDING HAS NEVER BEEN GREATER. IN
FACT, SO GREAT IS THAT NEED THAT A RECENT GALLUP POLL FOUND THAT
A MAJORITY OF AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS DON'T FULLY UNDERSTAND
THE U.S. ECONOMIC SYSTEM. *its basic structure and operation.*

L AT LEAST, THAT'S WHAT PHILLIPS PETROLEUM MAKES OF THE RESULTS.

L IN FACT, PHILLIPS IS SO DISTURBED THAT THEY ARE LAUNCHING A
MAJOR AD CAMPAIGN TO "SELL" THE FREE ENTERPRISE SYSTEM BACK TO THE
AMERICAN PEOPLE.

AND THEY ARE EVEN WILLING TO SUPPLY PRE-TESTED TELEVISION

COMMERCIALS TO OTHER COMPANIES AT COST TO ACHIEVE THAT END.

PHILLIPS' CONCERN IS UNDERSTANDABLE. AND I AM CERTAIN THAT
THEY, AND HUNDREDS OF OTHER BUSINESSES, WOULD WELCOME A DOCUMENTARY
SERIES ON UNDERSTANDING THE ECONOMY AT THIS CRITICAL TIME IN ITS
HISTORY.

AND YET, NO ONE KNOWS BETTER THAN THIS AUDIENCE WHAT THE
LIKELIHOOD OF THAT IS -- VIRTUALLY NONE. IN FACT, YOU ARE PROBABLY
IMAGINING TO YOURSELVES RIGHT NOW WHAT THE NIELSEN RATINGS
WOULD BE FOR AN HOURLONG DOCUMENTARY ON THE PHILLIPS CURVE.

YET IT IS NO LAUGHING MATTER. WE ARE FACED WITH A VERY UNHAPPY
DILEMMA; NAMELY, THAT IN ORDER TO REALLY EDUCATE THE PUBLIC ON
MAJOR ISSUES, THE NETWORKS WOULD HAVE TO LOSE MONEY.

AND CONVERSELY, BY CONTINUING PROGRAMMING AS USUAL, THEY ARE
ALLOWING PUBLIC INFORMATION AND UNDERSTANDING TO DECAY.

FURTHERMORE, THE INCREASING EMPHASIS ON THE "ENTERTAINMENT"
ASPECT OF THE NEWS MAKES IT EVEN HARDER TO INCREASE PUBLIC

AWARENESS | INDEED, THE JUNE 3 ASSOCIATED PRESS POLL, WHICH SHOWED
THAT MORE THAN ONE-HALF OF VOTERS COMMITTED TO A CANDIDATE HAVE

NO IDEA AT ALL OF HOW HE STANDS ON THE ISSUES, MAY BE A CASE IN
POINT? IS IT THE RESULT OF CANDIDATES HEDGING ON THE ISSUES, OR
OF THE MEDIUM'S INHERENT DIFFICULTY IN PRESENTING ISSUES?

THESE ARE QUESTIONS WHICH THE NETWORKS WILL HAVE TO FACE AS
THEY COME TO GRIPS WITH THEIR NEW ROLE AS THE PRINCIPAL CONVEYOR
OF PUBLIC INFORMATION AND NEWS OF THE DAY.

EDUCATIONAL COMPETENCE: WHY CAN'T JOHNNY READ?

ANOTHER AREA IN WHICH PUBLIC ATTENTION HAS BEEN TURNED TO THE TELEVISION INDUSTRY IS THE DECLINING ABILITY OF YOUNG AMERICANS TO SHOW A SATISFACTORY GRASP OF BASIC SKILLS LIKE READING AND MATHEMATICS.

EDUCATORS, ANXIOUS TO EXPLAIN THIS ALARMING DROP IN ABILITIES, LOOK TO TELEVISION AS A POSSIBLE INFLUENCE. AND THE STATISTICS SEEM PLAUSIBLE? BY THE AGE OF 18, THE AVERAGE AMERICAN CHILD HAS SPENT 11,000 HOURS IN SCHOOL. BUT HE HAS SPENT 15,000 HOURS IN FRONT OF THE TELEVISION SET -- TIME WHICH, SUPPOSEDLY, HE WOULD HAVE SPENT IN OTHER, MORE EDUCATIONAL, PURSUITS. ?

FURTHERMORE, PSYCHOLOGISTS ARE CONCERNED THAT THE SOCIAL EFFECTS OF SATURATION EXPOSURE TO TELEVISION MAY ULTIMATELY BE HARMFUL -- NOT ONLY TO A CHILD'S EDUCATIONAL CAPACITY, BUT TO HIS SOCIAL CAPACITY AS WELL.

↳ THEY ARE WORRIED THAT TIME SPENT IN SOLITARY OR GROUP VIEWING
OF TELEVISION TAKES TIME FROM ACTIVE PLAY -- THE TRADITIONAL VEHICLE
BY WHICH CHILDREN LEARN PRO-SOCIAL BEHAVIOR AND HOW TO INTERACT
CONSTRUCTIVELY WITH OTHER HUMAN BEINGS.

↳ OF COURSE, EDUCATORS HAVE A VESTED INTEREST IN FINDING SOMETHING
AT FAULT OUTSIDE THE WORLD OF EDUCATION, AND PSYCHOLOGISTS HAVE
THEIR PICK OF LITERALLY HUNDREDS OF VARIABLES AT WORK ON ANY GIVEN
CHILD.

↳ BUT THE FACT STILL REMAINS THAT THE ONLY NOTABLE SUCCESS IN
THE USE OF MASS-MARKET TELEVISION FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES IS
SESAME STREET, WHICH IS SHOWN ON PUBLIC BROADCASTING. ↳ AND THAT
PROGRAM IS REMARKABLE LARGELY BY COMPARISON TO THE VIRTUAL ABSENCE
OF SIMILAR PROGRAMMING ON EITHER THE PUBLIC OR PRIVATE NETWORKS.

↳ SO LONG AS THAT REMAINS THE CASE, THE PUBLIC -- DISTURBED
BY THEIR CHILDREN'S LOW SCORES AND ABILITIES -- WILL CONTINUE TO
WONDER WHAT TELEVISIONS COULD DO IF THE NETWORKS MADE A SERIOUS
COMMITMENT TO SOME KIND OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING. ↳ ADMITTEDLY,
THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF NEW, INNOVATIVE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING
ARE EXCITING TO CONTEMPLATE.

VIOLENCE

↳ NOTHING HAS SHOCKED THE AVERAGE CITIZEN SO MUCH IN RECENT YEARS
AS THE ALARMING INCREASE IN THE RATE OF VIOLENT CRIME, ESPECIALLY
AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE -- WHOM WE HAVE COME TO CALL THE "TELEVISION
GENERATION."

↳ AGAIN, IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT TELEVISION SHOULD BE THE
TARGET FOR PUBLIC SCRUTINY.

L AND IT IS TRUE THAT DESPITE THE INDUSTRY'S SELF-IMPOSED RESTRICTIONS
IN THE SO-CALLED FAMILY HOUR, THERE IS STILL A GREAT DEAL OF
VIOLENCE ON TELEVISION.

L IT IS ESTIMATED THAT THE AVERAGE CHILD WITNESSES IN THE
NEIGHBORHOOD OF 11,000 TELEVISED HOMICIDES BY THE TIME HE
GRADUATES FROM HIGH SCHOOL, IN ADDITION TO A WIDE ARRAY OF OTHER
VIOLENT AND BRUTAL BEHAVIOR.

L WHETHER OR NOT OUR CHILDREN ARE INFLUENCED BY WHAT THEY SEE
IS STILL UNCERTAIN. / THE SURGEON GENERAL HIMSELF HAS SAID THAT
THE NETWORKS SHOULD "BE PUT ON NOTICE," AND THAT "NO ACTION
IN THIS SOCIAL AREA IS A FORM OF ACTION." / BUT NO DEFINITIVE
CONNECTION HAS YET BEEN MADE BETWEEN VIOLENCE ON TELEVISION AND
AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR IN YOUNG PEOPLE.

↳ HOWEVER, MUCH OF THE EVIDENCE POINTS TO A CAUSAL RELATION OF
SOME KIND, AND THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT A STEADY DIET OF
VIOLENCE IN PROGRAMMING IS HAVING AN EFFECT ON OUR CHILDREN,
ESPECIALLY IN THE "MODELLING" PHENOMENON, IN WHICH CHILDREN
DEVELOP ROLE-MODELS AND PATTERN THEIR OWN BEHAVIOR AFTER FICTIONAL
HEROES OR FAVORITE CHARACTERS,

↳ FURTHERMORE, THE PUBLIC'S ATTITUDE IS NOT MADE MORE
CONGENIAL WHEN CERTAIN SPECTACULAR CRIMES IN SOCIETY SEEM TO
BE PATTERNED DIRECTLY FROM TELEVISION MODELS, OR WHEN A PROGRAM
LIKE THE WELL-KNOWN NBC FILM, DOOMSDAY FLIGHT, CAUSES A RASH
OF AIRLINE BOMB THREATS IN EVERY MARKET IN WHICH IT IS SHOWN.

IN A SOCIETY WHERE EVEN OUR 3 AND 4 YEAR-OLDS WATCH MORE THAN 30 HOURS OF TELEVISION A WEEK, THE SIMPLE CREATION OF A "FAMILY HOUR" MAY NOT BE ENOUGH TO SATISFY PUBLIC SENTIMENT FOR LESS VIOLENT PROGRAMMING. AND BROADCASTERS SHOULD BE AWARE THAT NO AMOUNT OF COMPLAINT ABOUT CENSORSHIP CAN STAND UP TO CITIZEN PRESSURE ON AN INDUSTRY WHICH IS, AFTER ALL, LICENSED ON THE PUBLIC AIR WAVES AND DEPENDENT ON THE PUBLIC SUFFRANCE FOR ITS EXISTENCE.

NOR WILL THE COMMON-SENSE REPLY THAT NO ONE IS FORCED TO WATCH TELEVISION HAVE MUCH WEIGHT WHEN THERE IS STRONG ADVERSE PUBLIC SENTIMENT. AFTER ALL, NO ONE IS FORCED TO DRIVE A CAR, EITHER -- AND YET WE APPLY STRICT STANDARDS OF SAFETY AND RELIABILITY TO AUTOMOBILES. AND WHILE WE CAN RECALL A FAULTY CAR, THERE IS NO WAY TO "RECALL" A PROGRAM AFTER THE DAMAGE, IF ANY, IS ALREADY DONE.

Parental Responsibility - Father + mother both at work

SO THE BROADCAST INDUSTRY SHOULD ATTEMPT THE MOST SEARCHING
KIND OF SELF-EXAMINATION AND SELF-RESTRAINT IN ANTICIPATION OF
THE PUBLIC MOOD. THE DEGREE TO WHICH IT DOES SO WILL BE THE DEGREE
TO WHICH IT IS ABLE TO RETAIN THE MAXIMUM OF CONTROL OVER THE
INTEGRITY AND SCOPE OF ITS PROGRAMMING DECISIONS.

CONSUMER CONFIDENCE

h FINALLY, IN THE YEARS TO COME, THE BROADCAST INDUSTRY MUST
ULTIMATELY TAKE ACCOUNT OF THE RIISING CONSUMER MOVEMENT. OBVIOUSLY,
THAT CONFRONTATION HAS ALREADY BEGUN, THE RECENT MUTUAL DECISIONS
BETWEEN THE INDUSTRY AND VARIOUS REGULATORY AGENCIES ADDRESSED TO
CONSUMER CONCERNS HAVE BEEN ENCOURAGING FOR THE INDUSTRY AND
CONSUMERS ALIKE.

h IT SEEMS VERY LIKELY THAT SOME CITIZEN PRESSURE WILL
BE EXERTED ON THE ADVERTISING WING OF THE NETWORKS.

↳ THE FIGURES SHOW THAT THE PUBLIC HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY

CYNICAL ABOUT THE CONTENTS AND CLAIMS OF TELEVISION ADVERTISEMENTS --

OR AT LEAST PERCEIVE THEMSELVES TO BE SO,

↳ BUT THE EXPOSURE TO THOSE ADS HAS NOT CEASED TO BE AN IMPORTANT PART OF OUR LIVES -- AND ESPECIALLY OUR CHILDREN'S LIVES,

↳ THE CHILD WATCHING SATURDAY MORNING TELEVISION SEES AN AVERAGE OF ONE COMMERCIAL FOR EVERY 2.8 MINUTES OF PROGRAM TIME. (AND MANY

PARENTS AND CONSUMER GROUPS FEEL THAT THE PRODUCTS ADVERTISED, AND

THE MANNER IN WHICH THE ADS ARE PRESENTED, MAY NOT BE IN THE BEST

INTERESTS OF CHILDREN.

↳ SPECIFICALLY, THEY ARE CONCERNED THAT THIS KIND OF SATURATION ADVERTISING MANY INSTILL IN THE CHILD A NEAR OBSESSION WITH THE

WORST ASPECTS OF MATERIALISM -- THAT THEY MAY BE TEACHING HIM

THAT HAPPINESS AND FULFILLMENT ARE THE DIRECT RESULT OF THE

IMMEDIATE GRATIFICATION OF DESIRE FOR SOME MATERIAL POSSESSION

↳ AND THE STATISTICS THEY BRING TO THE ARGUMENT ARE IMPRESSIVE!

↳ THE AVERAGE CHILD, BY THE AGE OF 16, HAS SEEN APPROXIMATELY 640,000

TELEVISION COMMERCIALS. ↳ AT 30 SECONDS APIECE, THAT IS THE

EQUIVALENT OF THREE WORKING YEARS' TIME -- AND THAT IS ONLY BY

AGE 16.

↳ THIS SITUATION PROVIDES THE NETWORKS ^{+ Stations} WITH AN EXCELLENT

OPPORTUNITY FOR ACTING IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST, AND SOLICITING THE

VIEWS OF A LARGE SHARE OF THOSE INTERESTED IN TELEVISION'S EFFECT

ON CHILDREN. ↳ IF THEY TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THAT OPPORTUNITY, THE

NETWORKS WILL HAVE PROVIDED A REASSURING DISPLAY OF RESPONSIBILITY

TO BOTH THE REGULATORS OF THE INDUSTRY AND THE AMERICAN PEOPLE. ~~AT~~

~~LARGE~~

CONCLUSION

↳ THESE, IT SEEMS TO ME, ARE THE FOUR PRINCIPAL CHALLENGES WHICH
THE BROADCAST INDUSTRY FACES IN THE NEAR FUTURE. AND I AM CERTAIN
THAT THE INDUSTRY WILL MEET THOSE CHALLENGES, JUST AS IT HAS

CONSTRUCTIVELY ADDRESSED SO MANY PROBLEMS IN THE PAST. *None for*

the Good News
↳ TELEVISION HAS REVOLUTIONIZED THE NATURE OF AMERICAN SOCIETY.

↳ IT HAS PROVIDED US WITH THE ONLY FORM OF MASS CULTURE WHICH WE
HAVE, CUTTING ACROSS SOCIAL BARRIERS OF RACE AND CLASS, AND IT HAS
ALREADY PROVIDED US WITH THE VIRTUAL EQUIVALENT OF McLUHAN'S
"GLOBAL VILLAGE," AT LEAST ON A NATIONAL SCALE.

↳ TELEVISION, QUITE SIMPLY, HAS MADE MORE PEOPLE AWARE OF MORE
THINGS THAN ANY OTHER HUMAN ACCOMPLISHMENT IN THE HISTORY OF

sh MANKIND. AND IT PROMISES TO INCREASE THAT INFLUENCE IN THE FUTURE.

*Has acquainted Americans with the
World - broadened our horizons +
increased our interests*

IT HAS PROVIDED THE AMERICAN PUBLIC WITH INFORMATION WHICH IS

IMPOSSIBLE TO RECEIVE IN ANY OTHER WAY -- SUCH AS THE COVERAGE OF

THE MOON LANDING AND, ~~THE~~ ME, THE GAVEL-TO-GAVEL COVERAGE

Proceedings of Congress
OF THE SENATE WATERGATE AND HOUSE IMPEACHMENT COMMITTEES. AND IN

DOING SO, IT HAS TRANSFORMED THE ATTITUDE OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

TOWARD ONE ADMINISTRATION -- AND PERHAPS TOWARD GOVERNMENT IN GENERAL.

L MOREOVER, DESPITE THE LIMITATIONS OF THE MEDIUM, TELEVISION

HAS PROVIDED EXCELLENT COVERAGE OF OUR MOST IMPORTANT POLITICAL

EVENTS, AND IN PARTICULAR THE TWO PARTY CONVENTIONS AND THE GENERAL

ELECTIONS. AND IN DOING SO, THE NEWS ORGANIZATIONS HAVE DISPLAYED

A HEALTHY AND ENCOURAGING TENDENCY TO SELF-CRITICISM AND IMPROVEMENT.

L IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER THE INDUSTRY AS A WHOLE CAN

EXERCISE THE SAME KIND OF INTROSPECTION, AND DO IT IN A TIMELY

AND RESPONSIBLE FASHION.

↳ THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ARE INCREASINGLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE
ROLE THAT TELEVISION PLAYS IN THEIR LIVES AND THE LIVES OF THEIR
CHILDREN.

↳ SOCIOLOGISTS ARE QUESTIONING HOW WE ALLOWED THE PRINCIPAL
CREATOR AND SHAPER OF OUR CULTURE, THE BROADCAST INDUSTRY, TO BE
ENTRUSTED WITH SO MUCH INFLUENCE WHEN ITS ULTIMATE AND CONTINUING
AIM IS ~~NOTHING~~ ^{NO} MORE PUBLIC-SPIRITED THAN TO ATTRACT THE LARGEST
POSSIBLE AUDIENCE AT THE LOWEST POSSIBLE COST.

↳ THE PUBLIC IS GOING TO ASK A GREAT DEAL OF AN INSTITUTION
WHICH OCCUPIES A FULL ONE-SIXTH OF OUR CHILDREN'S LIVES FROM
BIRTH TO AGE 18.

↳ I AM SURE THAT THE INDUSTRY WILL MEET THAT RESPONSIBILITY,
WITH THE KIND OF CREATIVE THINKING WHICH IT HAS SHOWN IN
THE PAST 25 YEARS.

AND I AM SURE THAT THIS GREAT INSTITUTION IN AMERICAN LIFE

WILL CONTINUE TO SERVE THE AMERICAN PEOPLE, AS IT HAS SO WELL

IN THE PAST, INTO OUR THIRD CENTURY AS A NATION.

#



Minnesota Historical Society

Copyright in this digital version belongs to the Minnesota Historical Society and its content may not be copied without the copyright holder's express written permission. Users may print, download, link to, or email content, however, for individual use.

To request permission for commercial or educational use, please contact the Minnesota Historical Society.



www.mnhs.org