

# TELEVISION

VOLUME X

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WINTER, 1973

# QUARTERLY

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THE JOURNAL OF THE  
NATIONAL ACADEMY OF  
TELEVISION ARTS  
AND SCIENCES

RICHARD AVERSON • ROBERT BENARD • BURTON BENJAMIN  
EDWARD JAY EPSTEIN • REUVEN FRANK  
EARL HAMNER, JR. • HARRY REASONER  
DR. FRANK STANTON • ROBERT STEIN

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*If it's really  
"Special,"  
it's on NBC*

*In February and March:*

*You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown (February 9)*

*Jack Lemmon: Get Happy (February 18)*

*NBC Reports: Human Guinea Pigs (February 20)*

*Peter Pan (March 2)*

*Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (March 7)*

*The Red Pony (March 18)*

*NCAA Basketball Finals (March 26)*

*The Academy Awards (March 27)*

*National Broadcasting Company*

THE JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF  
TELEVISION ARTS AND SCIENCES

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THE SIGN OF GOOD TELEVISION

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## AN EDITORIAL

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Anyone actively engaged in television must be aware that never before in its brief history has the industry faced so much antagonism.

Television has become a national issue of many dimensions, although in its infancy it was ignored and in its adolescence scorned. Today it is being attacked for alleged biased news reporting, for the exploitation of children in its moppet programming, for significantly contributing to juvenile delinquency, drug abuse and the proliferation of violence. It is being charged with having too much control and too little concern for the public interest. In short, television is under siege from all sides.

A friend, who is also a stalwart member of the Academy, has advised me that it was either prodigally foolish or recklessly courageous to have resumed publication of TELEVISION QUARTERLY in these perilous times. Not only is the industry passing through a rough sea, publishing is now a risky business, with some magazines going out of business, and others barely hanging on. My friend wonders not only why we did it but how.

There are many good reasons. When TVQ made its first appearance more than 10 years ago, it marked the realization of another major step toward the fulfillment of the Academy's stated purpose to advance the arts and sciences of television. As the premiere editorial pointed out, TVQ was designed to fill a unique need to publish a journal that would provide a penetrating, provocative and continuing examination of television as an art, a science, an industry and a social force while remaining both independent and critical.

That need was never greater than today.

TVQ suspended publication almost two years ago because of unrelenting economic pressures. Considering all else the Academy has to do with its small staff and limited resources, one would expect it to welcome the respite provided by TVQ's demise. On the contrary, from the moment the Academy's Board reluctantly approved its suspension, plans were afoot to start over again. The hazards were considerable.

Our number one priority was to interest 10 advertisers in committing four full pages annually over a three-year period to insure against our having to operate on a day-to-day basis. That this campaign had to begin at a time when the economy was still suffering from a prolonged recession was unfortunate, but to wait for better times might have meant a fatal loss of momentum, thus making our goal even more difficult to reach at some later date.

The first solicitation was made in the form of a personal letter to one of television's most venerable and respected sponsors. The approach was simple. We asked them to share with us our deep concern for television's future, and to support our conviction that through the pages of TVQ we could stimulate thought and generate new ideas that might contribute to its welfare.

The response was almost immediate—and affirmative. Other letters followed. Within 90 days we had six in the fold; by the Fall of 1972 we had another 10.

In these troubled times it's a rare occasion when tribute is paid to advertisers. Accolades are usually confined to their agencies and other direct beneficiaries of their spending. Along with television, advertising is tarred with the brush of villainy.

In the two dozen letters that were written, TELEVISION QUARTERLY offered no panaceas, no highly competitive cost-per-thousand readers, no mass circulation. Neither did it offer to serve as an industry handmaiden or apologist. Yet, 16 companies committed themselves by return mail even before TVQ's reappearance was assured.

To my friend who asked how we were able to resume publication, the answer is: with the continued interest of our Editorial Board and the contributing authors, of course, but especially with the generous support and encouragement of the companies whose messages appear in these pages. To them and to those others who will surely join us in time, the Academy says, "Thank you for caring enough. Without you we would not have survived."

ROBERT F. LEWINE,  
President  
National Academy of Television  
Arts & Sciences





# Vi·a·com

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“The Wonderful World of Disney”

(NBC-TV)

“The Mouse Factory”

(IN SYNDICATION)

FROM

Walt Disney Productions

# THE VALUES OF NEWSMEN

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BY EDWARD JAY EPSTEIN

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Since the perspectives of society that emerge on network news are, in the final analysis, selected and reconstructed by a small group of newsmen, it is commonly assumed that any particular slant that these news pictures appear to have can be best explained by examining the personal values of the newsmen involved in the selection process.

Exemplifying this view, Frank J. Shakespeare, the director of the United States Information Agency and a former vice-president of CBS, asserted in a speech that television news is "clearly liberally oriented" because the "overwhelming number of people who go into the creative . . . and . . . news side of television tend by their instinct to be liberally oriented."

Precisely the same logic can be found in Vice-President Agnew's public denunciation of network news, in which he argued that it was heavily influenced by the personal ideologies of a small "fraternity of newsmen with similar outlooks."

And in a much more sophisticated form, the same approach can also be found in the analyses of social scientists who argue that news is largely predetermined by newsmen's economic and social class, or what Marx called a "sociology of knowledge."

At different levels, then, a considerable portion of the research about the news media has been focused on the values and social situation of the reporter.

The trouble with this approach is that it tacitly assumes that newsmen have a stable set of values or ideologies to which they are inextricably attached and which they carry with them to the news organization they work for. At the same time this theory neglects the converse possibility that newsmen take their opinions from the news organization, altering them whenever organizational needs change. The question the first assumption begs is: Which way do values run in a large organization?

While undoubtedly there is some connection between what a newsman values and what elements of an event he chooses to emphasize or ignore, these values may come from the requisites of the news organization, rather than being deep-seated individual beliefs or ideologies. Just as students of organizational behavior have found what they call an identification of values, whereby employees substitute corporate for personal preferences, newsmen may be expected to identify their news program. Thus, Sander Vanocur wrote in *Esquire*, after resigning from NBC News as a correspondent and anchorman:

NBC is a very paternalistic company . . . Corporately, the image projected—at least to me—was that not of Big Brother but rather Big Mother . . . She feeds you (rather more than you need for your own good), she rewards you, and she punishes you in the sense that for years during the period of prolonged adolescence you tend to feel that you must not do anything or say anything which she will not approve. You may find more and more that your journalistic behavior pattern tends more and more to be shaped towards an expression not of what you believe but rather towards what Big Mother will find acceptable.

The result was that “the commentators became subordinate to the producers, who in turn were being continually second-guessed by management.”

In most cases, the process is not as subtle or Orwellian as Vanocur describes it. But newsmen are supposed to conform to a certain image of news reporting, even if it means modifying their own values. Consider the situation of Chet Huntley, when he was co-anchorman, with David Brinkley, of the NBC Evening News in 1969.

The format of the program, then called “the Huntley-Brinkley Report,” was intentionally designed to differentiate the style of the two anchormen, who presented the news contrapuntally from Washington and New York, according to the creator of the program, Reuven Frank.

The idea of contrasting the styles of Huntley and Brinkley as sharply as possible, Frank explained, was to install “built-in tension.” Brinkley took on the role of “an antiestablishment maverick,” and Huntley the role of a more conservative “defender of the status quo.” No doubt both men felt comfortable in their roles to begin with, but as the program became successful it became important to maintain and accentuate the differences.

Finally, even on topics in which newsmen maintain strong personal views on a subject, the influence of these values in shaping the news is limited by their ability to inject them into a newscast. More than perhaps other news media,

television is a "group effort," in Reuven Frank's words, and producers—and ultimately executives—retain a measure of control over the final script. It will be recalled that as an NBC anchorman, Robert MacNeil, narrated a revised conclusion to a program on gun control with which he profoundly disagreed and even considered to be dishonest, because he recognized the right of executives to revise his script in accordance with organizational needs.

There are also fairly strict guidelines and policies imposed by executives to which correspondents must conform, and these can be quite explicit. For example, on the subject of riots, Julian Goodman, the president of NBC, pointed out to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence that NBC reporters are instructed to "describe a disturbance as a 'riot' or as 'racial' only after it has been officially designated as such; . . . to check all rumors of estimates of damage and crowd size with the proper authorities; to avoid reports about 'crowd gathering' in possible trouble spots; to avoid any mention of how homemade weapons are constructed; to avoid persons or groups making an obvious play for attention; and to report as early and as completely as possible the background of the disturbance."

Furthermore, they specifically "instructed to avoid interviews with 'self-appointed leaders,' and not to label as 'leader' individuals who may be 'militants' or 'activists' operating on their own. " 'renewed outbreaks are feared. . . . " 'the city was rocked . . . ' " are not permitted at NBC News.

Lastly, most correspondents maintained that even if no controls or restrictions were imposed on them, they themselves would resist injecting personal views into newscasts, since it violated their concept of "objective reporting."

While skeptical observers may doubt the effectiveness of this concept, it is relentlessly cited by executives and producers as a goal of good reporting.

In examining the values of newsmen, the first question is: how deep and durable are their preferences and commitments?

## CORRESPONDENTS

Most network correspondents are what sociologists call upwardly mobile. The typical correspondent was born in the Depression of the 1930s in a small Midwestern city, attended a non-Ivy League college, concentrating on speech, drama or English, then worked for a local television or radio station, moved East and rapidly ascended the ladder of success, surpassing the income and educational level reached by his parents. (Older correspondents, recruited in the days of radio, followed a more varied path.)

Most of the thirty-two correspondents I interviewed at length suggested in one way or another that they had severed their ties to the past when they moved to network news. More than three fourths of them were divorced or separated from their first wives, whom most of them had married early in their careers. None still reside or claim to maintain any connection with the place where they grew up, most now own their own home in the suburbs of New York City, Washington, D.C., or Los Angeles.

While all attended liberal arts college, correspondents generally considered their formal education inadequate, or even "useless," as one put it, and suggested that they acquired most of their useful knowledge as working journalists. Few maintained any long-standing connections with political or social organizations. More than two thirds denied ever having registered as a member of a political party, and, with only two exceptions, they had never worked in a political campaign, belonged to a political club or actively participated in a political cause. Indeed, except for voting, correspondents claimed to be almost totally nonpolitical in their pre-network careers.

According to senior executives, this claim is very much in line with the recruitment policies of all three networks. A former CBS News vice-president explained that new recruits were thoroughly screened by senior executives before being hired as correspondents.

According to this former executive, the presumption at CBS was that the qualities of being "committed," "politically involved," "a true believer," "dogmatic" or an "advocate" were mutually exclusive with those of a "professional, objective newsman."

"It is simply not in our enlightened self-interest," another senior executive commented, "to employ reporters with too firmly fixed ideas on how the world ought to be."

The same logic also applies at ABC. Since it was created only in 1941 out of a group of former NBC stations and lacked the long tradition of radio news that existed at the other two networks, ABC recruited a relatively large number of already established newsmen, mainly from CBS and local stations. Even so, a senior executive of the news division explained, a sustained effort was made to weed out correspondents who were not completely objective, which he defined as "being able to present facts uncolored by personal opinions."

Even if networks are reasonably successful in recruiting correspondents without fixed ideas, can they remain uncommitted to ideas in an occupation devoted to political issues and arguments?

The notion that network correspondents are inevitably *politicized* by their constant contact with newsmakers and other newsmen does not take into account the peripatetic nature of their job. Quite literally, the network newsman is an itinerant. Unlike his counterpart on a newspaper, who covers a specific

beat or locality, most network correspondents spend a large part of their time traveling from one varied assignment to another. They can be dispatched almost anywhere in the world on a few hours notice and frequently log tens of thousands of miles a month in jet planes shuttling between stories.

Quite often, especially at NBC, field producers do the basic research on stories—at times even roughing out scripts and filming interviews—before the correspondents arrive on the scene, and the segment may still be incomplete when the correspondent departs for yet another assignment.

Most correspondents also find the opportunity for sustaining personal relations with politicians and news makers severely limited by their travel requisites. One reason the networks avoid developing “beats” and “specialities,” it will be recalled, is because they want correspondents to remain “outsiders,” as Reuven Frank put it. For the same reason, networks commonly rotate correspondents on extended stories, such as election campaigns, and generally avoid assigning correspondents to candidates who are personal friends.

According to correspondents, these policies are effective: only six of the thirty-two correspondents interviewed claimed to have become friends with news makers they interviewed for television, and these were mainly from the older group of newsmen. Most correspondents said that they rarely saw news makers outside of their work.

Despite the limitations imposed on them by their job and employers at any given time, newsmen generally express a clear set of preferences in private. Most of the correspondents I interviewed in 1968-69 were against the war in Vietnam, against the election of Richard Nixon, and against pollution and approved of the Black Power movement. On the surface, such preferences are not uncommonly classified under the rubric of “liberal attitudes”; however, if the surface is scratched, they become somewhat more difficult to define, at least as systematically ordered opinions.

For example, when asked what should be done about the war in Vietnam, all the correspondents answered that the United States should “get out,” or gave a response to that effect. Most claimed to be doves on the war. But in late 1968 and early 1969, the disengagement of America from Vietnam was virtually a consensus position, espoused by politicians on opposite sides of the spectrum, from George Wallace to Richard Nixon to Hubert Humphrey and President Johnson. Indeed, during the 1968 campaign, it was hard to find any political figure openly supporting an indefinite continuation of the war. Thus, opposition to the war in 1968 was not a particularly liberal position. (Indeed, according to one poll conducted by the American Political Science Association, a larger proportion of the political right was against the war than the political left.)

The strong opinions correspondents voiced against pollution and hunger in 1969 (in my 1968 interviews, little interest was expressed in either subject) can be viewed as an attempt to avoid rather than to participate in partisan politics. An NBC public relations executive explained that after the criticisms of television news generated by its coverage of the Democratic convention in 1968 and the election, correspondents were encouraged in their public appearances to speak out "on nondivisive subjects like pollution." He added, "Who could be *for* pollution?"

The same logic, of course, applies to hunger. When correspondents were further asked whether they thought pollution should be alleviated by decreasing employment or production, most answered negatively, suggesting that the problem should be solved through "technology"—which, like the term "negotiations," is essentially a nonpolitical approach.

Approval of the Black Power movement also turned out in the case of most correspondents to be more nominal than substantive. Almost two thirds of those interviewed said that they thought the Black Power movement was on balance helpful to blacks, but of those who favored it, almost all defined Black Power as a psychological concept which meant only that blacks should have pride in their race and traditions: "Black is Beautiful" was the most common way of summing up this concept. (Most of the reporters who opposed Black Power defined it, however, as control of the governing institutions by blacks.) But when the correspondents who approved of Black Power were asked if they approved of Black Power leaders Stokely Carmichael and H. Rap Brown, all but two answered "No."

In an interview with *Variety* Walter Cronkite said that he was a liberal, which he went on to define as one "not bound by doctrines or committed to a point of view in advance." Only in this nonpolitical sense of not holding deep-seater positions on issues can most network correspondents be classified as "liberals," according to my interviews.

But even though the views of most correspondents cannot be neatly fitted into any readily identifiable mold or ideology, certain common perspectives on politics emerged from the interviews.

*The Disparaging View of Politicians* Almost all the newsmen interviewed held politicians and public-office holders in low esteem, especially the older, more familiar ones; the only exceptions were a few new faces in national politics, such as Julian Bond and Edmund Muskie. The working hypothesis almost universally shared among correspondents in that politicians are suspect; their public images probably false, their public statements disingenuous, their moral pronouncements hypocritical, their motives self-serving, and their promises



ephemeral. Correspondents thus see their jobs to be to expose politicians by unmasking their disguises, debunking their claims and piercing their rhetoric.

In short, until proved otherwise, political figures of any party or persuasion are presumed to be deceptive opponents. This generalized cynicism toward politicians—who are often called “frauds,” “phonies” or “liars” in the newsroom—may account for a substantial share of the on-the-air derogation, rather than any partisan politics of the correspondents.

While this suspicion of politicians and officeholders may derive partly from a long-standing journalistic tradition, the particular vehemence most network correspondents expressed in their interviews with me may also come in part from their special vantage point. Television newsmen are usually in a position to observe closely the difference between a subject's behavior on and off camera. Since political figures constantly try to put on their best face before the camera, by primping their appearance, suggesting and rephrasing questions, and altering their answers in retakes to achieve the best effect, they tend to appear insincere in the eyes of those interviewing them.

One NBC correspondent asked rhetorically, “How can we respect people who change their answers with every retake?” It is a common belief among correspondents that politicians evade their questions in television interviews and instead attempt to patronize or deceive the public. The very fact that television permits the news maker direct access to the audience he is interested in reaching further strains the relationship with the correspondent.

When a politician is interviewed by a newspaperman, he presumably tries to impress the reporter with the logic of his position so that he will write a favorable story, but rather than attempting to impress the reporter when he is interviewed on television, he can address the audience directly, appealing to their emotions or talking down to their level, as he sees fit. One of the most frequent specific complaints of correspondents, in fact, was that politicians “used” them in this way—which, of course, only adds to the antipathy.

Finally, the itinerant schedule most correspondents follow leaves them little opportunity to temper their contentious image of politicians.

*The Electoral Explanation.* In my interviews, almost any governmental act was generally ultimately attributed by correspondents in interviews to a single motive: winning elections. In this view, politics is seen as a game plan for defeating determined opponents rather than as a process for distributing values or resolving conflicts between interested parties. Economic programs, government reorganizations, Supreme Court appointments and foreign policy were commonly explained in terms of an office-holder's attempt to attract potential voters to his side. Neither ideology nor personal commitment to substantive goals were considered to be realistic explanations for such acts.

This preoccupation with electoral pragmatics, which is by no means confined to television journalists, is closely connected to the disparaging view of politicians. The logic expressed by several network newsmen runs something like this: politicians can never be accepted at face value; therefore a self-serving motive must be sought to explain the actions they characteristically justify with the public—regarding rhetoric: the motive that can be assumed common to all politicians is the desire to acquire or retain power. In the case of network television; elections take on special importance to correspondents. As one suggested, "Elections are what we do best."

Since network executives prefer to give approximately equal time to the major candidates (to satisfy affiliates as well as the Federal Communications Commission), a large proportion of air time is spent on election and primary coverage. This heavy emphasis can hardly fail to reinforce the correspondents' belief in the singular importance of getting elected.

*The Egocentric View of Politics.* Privately almost all network correspondents expressed a strong belief in their ability to effect change in public policy through their work, if not as individuals, then certainly as a group. Some considered their self-perceived political powers "frightening" and "awesome," while others merely depicted them as a necessary part of the political process.

In this view, government officials are presumed to continue in their inertial rut until confronted with the glare of public exposure; only then, to placate the public and avoid a loss of electoral support, do they take action. Needed change is thus seen as depending not on politicians or bureaucrats, but on the fourth estate, the national press.

While network correspondents differed in degree about their importance in this role—opinions varied as to whether they were merely a contributing factor or decisive in bringing about reforms—they generally agreed that they had, willy-nilly, become a force in national politics.

For example, almost two thirds of the newsmen interviewed gave direct credit to network news for the enactment of civil right laws in the 1960s.

In a typical explanation, one NBC correspondent stated, "Before television, the American public had no idea of the abuses blacks suffered in the South. We showed them what was happening; the brutality, the police dogs, the miserable conditions they were forced to live in. We made it possible for Congress not to act." One CBS commentator said, "I guess you could say we were partly responsible for the civil rights revolution. Certainly the conditions were already there, but no one knew it until fifty million Americans began seeing it on their television screens."

Similarly, correspondents commonly held that American opinion on the war in Vietnam was decisively changed through television's coverage of it—which in turn resulted in a change of policies—and Presidents. In all cases, correspondents claimed to exert control over events, not through inside information or informal contacts with government officials but by exposing to the public the visually shocking moments and dramatic contradictions of the news. In other words, their self-perceived importance in politics derives from their power to dramatically shock and alter public opinion; and politicians presumably react to this. Hence, correspondents believed both that they were outsiders and at the same time highly effective forces in politics.

While these perspectives are necessarily impressionistic and oversimplified, they seem to account for a large share of the views on politics that correspondents expressed both in interviews and news room discussions. They do not, however, completely determine the final news product, if only because correspondents are not entirely free to shape the news from their own perspective.

They must depend on technicians to reproduce the sound and pictures in their story, and they must work under the close supervision and control of producers and news editors. Neither of these groups fully shares the values, experiences or perspectives of the correspondents.

## THE TECHNICIANS

Typically, technicians went to technical schools, or had experience in film editing in the military service, and then served as apprentices to film editors for a number of years before graduating to their present positions. Their average income was between \$20,000 and \$30,000 a year, which is nearly as much as many correspondents earn. Almost all had families and owned their own home; all belonged to trade unions and considered themselves skilled craftsmen.

Politically, most technicians identified themselves as Democrats or Independents, but their political views were far to the right of the correspondents. More than three quarters were enthusiastic supporters of Hubert Humphrey, but one said he was for George Wallace. Almost every technician opposed Black Power, and many of them deprecated black militant leaders. Most took hard line on Vietnam, advocating the continued bombing of North Vietnam and the preservation of South Vietnam as an independent entity. Not one identified himself as a dove. They also expressed almost unanimous contempt for student demonstrators and hippies. The majority felt that their work had made them more conservative; a good number were critical of network news for slanting events that they themselves had witnessed.

Politics rhetoric or policy statements were generally viewed by the technicians as dull or meaningless, as they put it.

Basically they saw their task as finding the few exciting moments in a political happening. Cameramen and sound men claimed to be able to predict within a few minutes when the actual violence or highlight would happen solely on the basis of their past experience; "They all follow the same script," one NBC cameraman suggested.

## PRODUCERS

Network producers and news editors have a different set of responsibilities than do correspondents or technicians. They are directly accountable to executives in their respective news division for every minute of news shown on the air, as well as for the resources expended to produce it.

Their primary job, almost all producers agreed, is to enforce the standards of the organization for which they work. In overseeing the news operation, from the initial selection of stories to their final presentation, producers closely parallel the work of correspondents—and at times find themselves at cross-purposes. Whereas the correspondent concerns himself mainly with the particular content of an event and attempts to find the most effective way of dramatizing it or at least making it into an interesting story, the producer concerns himself with fitting individual events into a general format in a way which both fulfills the requisites of the program and avoids any violations of the network's policies. As one ABC producer put it, producers must be more attuned to the rules of the game than correspondents. Not surprisingly, then, producers are drawn from somewhat different backgrounds than their on-the-air counterparts.

Most network producers and news editors come from what might best be described as a cosmopolitan environment.

Of the thirty-six producers and news editors interviewed, twenty-four came from either New York City or Chicago, and most of the balance came from other large metropolitan areas. A majority came from middle-or upper-class families, in which the father usually was a businessman. Twenty-one were of Jewish descent; none were black or came from lower-class backgrounds. almost all went to public high school and then to college. Nearly two-thirds attended such competitive city colleges as CCNY, NYU, Chicago, Northwestern and Columbia. One third continued their studies in graduate school, and half of these attended the School of Journalism at Northwestern University.

Producers and news editors tended to have a less excited and more tempered view of the world than correspondents. Although with few exceptions they identified themselves politically as Democrats, Independents, moderates and liberals—in that order—most said that their work in network news had made them more conservative, if anything.

With few exceptions, they opposed the Black Power movement on the grounds that they believed an integrated society is the best alternative for blacks. In keeping with this view, they consistently opposed black control of schools, housing projects, and police precincts in the ghetto areas. In discussing social problems, they generally favored education as a solution rather than any more drastic political alternative.

Although all opposed continuation of the war in Vietnam, none of the producers and news editors suggested any sort of unilateral withdrawal immediately. Although opinions varied considerably, the dominant view among them was that the United States should attempt to negotiate a cease-fire, followed by a political settlement based on the present military status quo in Vietnam. In the presidential election of 1968, more than two-thirds of them favored Humphrey and opposed Nixon, but many said that they would have preferred Robert F. Kennedy or Nelson Rockefeller. In newsroom discussions and critiques of correspondents' reports, producers and news editors usually took moderate—and consistent—positions.

Nor did they share the correspondents' perspectives on politics. Producers and news editors generally looked at news events from the point of view of the needs of the program—that is, from what might be described as a functional perspective. Whereas correspondents commonly evaluated politicians and officeholders in moral terms (“liars,” “phonies” and “frauds”), producers and editors judged them in terms of their on-camera performance, depicting them as “dull,” “gabby,” “beautiful,” “crafty,” “Kennedy-like,” “hot-headed,” or other such terms associated with their performance.

Although producers and news editors are no less skeptical than correspondents of the actions of political figures, they are less prone to accept the electoral motive as a near-universal explanation. Unlike correspondents, most producers and news editors refused to attribute Nixon's appointments and the bombing halt in 1968 to a desire to enhance his electoral chances; instead, when asked for reasons, they commonly answered that they had no idea.

In sum, network news is not simply determined by the personal opinions of newsmen. The picture of events that correspondents and commentators present is constantly questioned, modified and shaped by technicians, news editors, producers and executives with quite disparate values and objectives. This inevitably creates some tension. From the executives' point of view, it would be

best for the organization—and the least trouble for them personally—if newsmen had no values whatsoever. But since this is recognized as an impossible demand, the news operation is organized so as to limit the opportunities for newsmen to impose their personal views on sensitive issues for any prolonged period of time.

The real question is one of control: How effective are the networks in preventing newsmen from slanting their reports in accordance with their personal values, and under what circumstances can newsmen consistently evade network controls?

In most cases, producers have adequate tools to enforce standards: scripts can be checked and corrected before a piece is filmed; films and stories can be screened in advanced; audio portions can be re-edited and, if necessary, redone; and even at the last moment, stories can be dropped from the program. Correspondents who repeatedly manifest strong personal values or improper attitudes on the air can be “blacklisted,” or at least not assigned controversial stories.

If the version of the news presented on network television is fixed to a large extent by organizational requirements, the prognosis for change is severely limited. The systematic distortions of events which journalistic critics, conservatives, radicals and social scientists point to will not be remedied by more enlightened executives, the education of journalists, different personnel, the politicization of recruitment—which, ironically, both conservative and radical critics advocate—or the availability of data from the academic world.

Public television, if it is allowed to develop into a news media, has very different audience maintenance requirements from commercial television, and can be expected to produce a journalistic product less dependent on visual appeal.

The point is not to change news, but to understand its limitations. Like map making, news cannot realistically hope to produce a model which perfectly represents all the contours and elevations of reality, but at least the basic distortions in any given mode of projection can be clarified.



*Edward Jay Epstein is a New Yorker, born in 1935, who won wide acclaim for his book, "Inquest: The Warren Commission and the Establishment of Truth", published in 1966. He holds B.A. and M.A. degrees from Cornell University. The preceding article is drawn from Mr. Epstein's new book, "News from Nowhere: the Selection of Reality in Television News Programs". The book, to be published by Random House in March, 1973, represents 12 years of research. The study began as Mr. Epstein's doctoral dissertation at Harvard in 1960.*



# this season on universal television



1 MARTIN MILNER 2 KENT McCORD "ADAM 12" 3 BEN MURPHY 4 ROGER DAVIS "ALIAS SMITH AND JONES"  
 5 E. G. MARSHALL 6 DAVID HARTMAN 7 ROBERT WALDEN "THE BOLD ONES" 8 ROBERT FULLER 9 JULIE  
 LONDON 10 BCBY TROUP 11 RANDOPH MANTOOTH 12 KEVIN TIGHE "EMERGENCY!" 13 FAYMOND BURR  
 14 DON GALLOWAY 15 DON MITCHELL 16 ELIZABETH BAUR "IRONSIDE" 17 JAMES WAINWRIGHT "JIGSAW"  
 18 ROBERT YOUNG 19 JAMES BROLIN 20 ELENA VERDUGO "MARCUS WELBY, M.D." 21 PETER FALK "COLUMBO"  
 22 RICHARD BOONE 23 RICK LENZ "HEC RAMSEY" 24 DENNIS WEAVER 25 J. D. CANNON "McCLOUD"  
 26 ROCK HUDSON 27 SUSAN SAINT JAMES "McMILLAN & WIFE" NBC SUNDAY MYSTERY MOVIE 28 GEORGE  
 PEPPARD "BANACEK" 29 JAMES FARENTINO "COOL MILLION" 30 RICHARD WIDMARK "MADIGAN" NBC  
 WEDNESDAY MYSTERY MOVIE 31 ROD SERLING "NIGHT GALLERY" 32 ARTHUR HILL 33 LEE MAJORS  
 34 JOAN DARLING "OWEN MARSHALL, COUNSELOR AT LAW" 35 GARY COLLINS "THE SIXTH SENSE"



# DETOUR IN BURBANK

BY EARL HAMNER, JR.

I go home each night. Not to the hillside house in Studio City, California, where I live with my wife and children, but to my home as a youngster, some 40 years and 3,000 miles away in the misted blue hills and valleys of Virginia's Blue Ridge Country.

My journey begins as I leave my office at The Burbank Studio where I work as story editor on *THE WALTONS*. The fading light of day still tints the California gloaming. I drive through curious landscapes: A Mexican settlement where water sprinkles in a deserted fountain; a Tibetan village where fake cherry blossoms cling to the tips of stage trees; a Midwestern landscape where a silent bandstand echoes lost and forgotten tunes; the darkened Western street where ghosts of gunslingers and cowboys seem to linger in the gathering dusk.

I come finally to a country lane, unpaved, bordered with real green trees. I cross a mud puddle, follow the turning road and I am home again.

The house is a stage set, a shell, but a replica of the house I lived in as a child. It is two-storied, white, built of clapboard and rests in a wood.

Evening winds fan white curtains at the windows and shadows loom in non-existent rooms behind the facade. A porch extends the length of the house. Friendly wicker rockers, a porch swing and hanging baskets of flowers give the illusion of occupancy. I stop the car, turn off the engine and listen to those creatures astir at that darkening hour. I hear the wooden slap of the screen door opening and the voice of my mother calling to her children:

"It's dark, children, come home."

A stranger, distant, watching, I see myself and the children we were, drift across the damp grass and go in that house. We were eight, all red-headed and I was the oldest. Standing together we made stairsteps, a row of lean, small-boned children who were living through the depression, but never knew what it was to be depressed. We knew we were loved because my mother and father loved each other and passed love on to each of us. This is the family we are recreating each week on "*The Waltons*"—my brothers and sisters, my mother and father, my grandparents—as we were during the Depression years of the '30s. And sometimes, watching a scene, the memory of childhood will return with such force and clarity that I have to turn away.

This is not a new experience with me, this visiting a stage set at sundown. In the early '60s I published a novel which was almost totally autobiographical. It told a modest story of a family's sacrifice to send their eldest son to college. The novel was on the Best Seller Lists for a few weeks, had a decent sale, was reprinted by the Reader's Digest Condensed Book Club and was finally made into a motion picture.

I was working on another picture at the studio where my novel was being filmed, and at night, after the actors and the director and the crew had gone home, I would make my furtive way onto the stage, and commune with the art director's version of my home and early life.

It was not home, not the home I had written. The locale had been changed from the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia to the Grand Tetons of Wyoming; my gentle Appalachian folk had become rowdy Westerners, my modest farm folk had been turned into ranchers.

Casting of the picture had been equally distracting from the original material. Everybody was a Super Star, and most outlandish of all, *I* had become a sex symbol!

There was a lot of explaining to do the next time I went back to Virginia.

In 1970, Random House published my short novel "The Homecoming." The book had a modest sale, was sold to the Reader's Digest Condensed Book Club.

"The Homecoming" was an intensely personal novel. It related the events of Christmas, 1933, when my father was late returning home from his job in a distant town. In the book, the eldest son goes searching for his father, encounters the local sheriff, a store keeper, a Robin Hood bandit of the Blue Ridge, an engaging Black minister and his congregation and two ladies of genteel birth who, following their late father's recipe, concoct something they believe to be a cordial, but is in reality, high powered moonshine.

Primarily, though, it is a family story concerned with a wife's anguish for an overdue husband, the explosive feelings of a girl in agony of being a teenager and the secret yearnings of a boy who more than anything craves to be a writer.

A friend, Malcolm Stuart, brought the book to the attention of Lee Rich, President of Lorimar Productions. Lee envisioned the book as a two-hour Christmas Special for television and interested Phil Capice, Vice-President of Specials for the Columbia Broadcasting System.

Contracts were signed. I was hired to write a screenplay which I delivered. Then I began to have qualms. If a film company had turned the people of my earlier novel into ranchers, what would television do to them?

I was reassured when I met Producer Robert L. Jacks and Associate Producer Neil T. Maffeo. They are both men of extensive experience in films and television, but more important to me, they were determined to keep the spirit of the original material of "The Homecoming." Then Lorimar hired the gifted director, Fielder Cook, a former Virginian with a deep allegiance to our part of the country. CBS Director of Casting, Ethel Winant, sent a copy of the script to Patricia Neal in England and almost by return mail, Miss Neal agreed to play the role of the mother. I was equally incredulous when I learned that the superb young actor, Richard Thomas, had agreed to play the role of the eldest son—me.

Subsequent casting was equally inspired. Ethel Winant and Casting Director Pam Polifroni performed some kind of magic with the end result that Edgar Bergen agreed to play the Grandfather, Ellen Corby the Grandmother and Andrew Duggan the Father. In cameo roles were such distinguished players as Dorothy Stickney, Josephine Hutchinson, William Windom, Woodrow Palfrey, David Huddleston, Cleavon Little and Sally Chamberlain.

On Monday, September 11th, we started shooting on Stage 13 at CBS Cinema Center. I am a hardened old campaigner, well past the flush of youth which might excuse such sentiment, but I will never forget our initial read-through when I sat and marveled at the fact that Patricia Neal, Richard Thomas, Cleavon Little, et al, were reading words I had written!

Fielder Cook is a genius and he imparts that quality to those involved in a production. Under his direction the play began to take shape and something remarkable began to happen on Stage 13. Actors became a family and the family began to resemble my family as I had recorded them in the book.

Interior filming finished, we flew to Jackson Hole, Wyoming—the only location which offered the possibility of the snow we needed for our exteriors. We selected locations, shooting in the opposite direction of the Grand Tetons which works quite well as Blue Ridge Country, and there when Fielder Cook would look Heavenward and beseech, "Now, please Sir!", snow would fall.

The story is related by the eldest son, who aspired to be a writer, who has now grown to manhood. A professional actor was hired to do the narration, but when we heard his recorded narration, it was *too* good. What was needed was a narrator with an untutored, countrified voice. Fielder Cook suggested, and I thought he was joking, "I wonder what our author would sound like?" I was thrust before a microphone, protesting that I needed rehearsal, that I felt faint, that I barely spoke English. In my terror before the microphone, my voice sounded so authentically countrified that it seemed to suit the material and was used.

I had written a preface to "The Homecoming" which said in part: "We should keep in mind that this play will be seen on television during the Christmas season and Christmas has become a nightmare for most people. The packed stores, the enraged crowds, the stalled traffic, the money worries that are common to our audience for the most part, produce a national insanity. Yet underneath there is a pathetic wish that they could really experience something, maybe 'The Christmas Spirit,' something that no other time of year provides. If we succeed, I think we will bring to our audience that ineffable thing they are seeking at Christmas—the simple love and pride and wonder and reverence that is the true meaning of Christmas."

"The Homecoming—A Christmas Story" was telecast on December 19th, 1971. The critical acclaim was stunning and gratifying. Cecil Smith called it "A modern 'Christmas Carol'" and predicted that it will become a perennial. *Variety* called it a "magnificent achievement," and nearly all the reviewers called it "a Christmas classic." But the critics whose reviews I awaited most anxiously were the members of my own family. How would they respond to seeing themselves as characters in a television drama?

My sister Nancy's letter articulated what each of them expressed: "Thank you for letting us relive the happiness of our childhood."

At this writing we are shooting our sixteenth episode of "The Waltons." Many of "The Homecoming" cast and crew and production staff are still with us, notably Richard Thomas, Ellen Corby and all the same younger brothers and sisters. They have been joined by the distinguished actress from the theater, (Miss) Michael Learned, in the role of the mother, the talented film actor, Ralph Waite, in the role of the father and the venerable and universally respected actor, Will Geer, as the grandfather.

The series is filmed on the back lot of The Burbank Studios, which passes credibly for the Blue Ridge when matched with our location in Frazier National Forest. The stage house is a startlingly exact replica of the house in which my brothers and sisters and I grew up in Schuyler, Virginia. My mother visited the set recently and declared it looked just like home.

There's a lot of love on "The Waltons" set. Perhaps some of it comes from the warmth and truth of the material, but most of it comes from a group of highly talented people dedicated to creating each week an hour of quality television for the family audience.

Whatever else "The Waltons" has accomplished, it has given me a chance to relive, in my sister Nancy's words, "the happiness of our childhood." I collect that reward at the end of the working day when I drive to the back lot and visit "home."

There was a ritual we observed. At night, when the lights were out, we would call goodnight to each other. I hear it now: A chorus of goodnights, sounding in the flowing darkness that will not cease until each person in the house has been bade goodnight.

And then there comes across the years the loveliest and most mystical sound I know—the night cry of a Bob White quail. Back in those Depression days, in the evening after the chores were done, when it was time to rest, we used to sit on the front porch. Quietly, my father would imitate the whistle of a Bob White. In the distance, a covey would answer. And then his beguiling whistle would call them to the very edge of the porch. We thought him possessed of some magic, and probably he was.

He is lost to us now, but long ago I was able to find a pair of Bob White quail, and I keep them in a pen near my home. Each night when I arrive home, I whistle to them and they answer.

Darkness falls, and once again, a stranger before the facade of a building, I hear the closing of the screen door, the children all safe inside to do homework, to listen to Edgar and Charlie and prepare for bed. Their voices fade into time and memory. I am alone and I am comforted.

I ease the car away, past the sleeping Mexican square, the Tibetan village, the Midwestern landscape, toward the California hillside where my wife and children wait for me and where the Bob White quail will make their plaintive and mysterious call.



*Earl Hamner is a writer whose credits cover the full range of radio, television, films and novels. His major work, "Spencer's Mountain" was a best-seller, a motion picture and one of President Kennedy's favorite books. Translated into 12 languages, "Spencer's Mountain" was included in the collection of 100 Books from America presented to heads of state around the world during the Kennedy Administration.*

*"The Homecoming", a notable CBS Christmas special of 1971, was based on "Spencer's Mountain". It is also the basis of Mr. Hamner's current CBS series, "The Waltons".*



# TV MOVIES: An Interview with Richard Levinson and William Link

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BY RICHARD AVERSON

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*In dealing with homosexuality, "That Certain Summer" is a breakthrough for network TV-movies. What are the pressures, if any, that influence the choice of subject matter in TV-movies? Were there any such pressures exerted on "That Certain Summer"?*

The greatest pressure is what Paddy Chayevsky used to call "pre-censorship"—particularly damaging because the writer himself (usually because he's gun-shy after too many rejections) becomes the willing ally of the networks by submitting only those ideas that he thinks will be approved. He gets into the unfortunate habit of screening his own material, filtering out in advance the premise that is too risky, too political, or even too gentle. He knows that the vast majority of television films are in the action-adventure category, and if he wants to get his story on the air he'd better come up with something flashy and fast-paced: a caper, a mystery, a Gothic horror tale. He tends to set aside ideas that may be more stimulating and collaborate, in a sense, with the very system that keeps him from doing his best work.

Fortunately, there are occasional exceptions. When we submitted the idea for "That Certain Summer" to Barry Diller, then in charge of ABC's movies, we prefaced the meeting by telling him there wasn't the slightest chance he'd put it on the air. He surprised us by giving us a firm commitment to write the teleplay. Even then we kept looking back suspiciously over our shoulders. And at every step, from first draft, to the actual filming, to dubbing and answer print, we waited—with the TV writer's well-honed paranoia—for the axe to fall, for the inevitable meeting when someone would say, "Fellas, this is terrific. A powerhouse. In fact, it's so good it doesn't need all this homosexual stuff. Now if you could just cut the part about the two guys being lovers. . . ."

The meeting never came. It would be dishonest to say that there weren't pressures. There were. The network was nervous about airing a story featuring homosexuals, especially homosexuals who were not members of some remote subculture; who were, in fact, comfortably middle-class and quite content with their lives. And we were strongly urged to introduce new characters who would condemn homosexuality as sick and deviant behavior, and thus serve as surrogates for the majority of Americans who presumably would be threatened by a program of this nature.

Nevertheless, we were not forced at any time to make changes with which we couldn't responsibly (and creatively) agree. This was mainly due to Diller's support, as well as our frequently stated intention to pull the teleplay and forget the whole thing if we felt we were being maneuvered into a position of compromise.

A final pressure should be mentioned, one that hasn't received much attention. It has nothing to do with script, except indirectly, but it's particularly annoying to television producers—and this is the matter of the casting of leading roles.

In their race for better ratings the networks look for insurance wherever they can find it, and all too often they attempt to "shoehorn" a celebrated actor into a leading role, regardless of his qualifications. They count on recognition of the name to draw audiences.

Ironically, many of the people who are acceptable to NBC are greeted without enthusiasm by ABC and CBS. And it's an open question as to whether or not these actors (some of them quite good, others the bearers of faded movie names) can really attract viewers. A case in point was "Brian's Song," one of the highest-rated films ever made for television. It had no so-called "names" in its cast, but the audience tuned in because it was well-promoted and had appealing subject matter.

*Given the increasing freedom of theatrical features, would you have preferred making "That Certain Summer" for showing in theatres instead of on television?*

We wanted "That Certain Summer" to go on television from the beginning. The main reason was that we hoped for the widest possible exposure.

The average theatrical release will play a first-run house for a week or two, if it's lucky, and then it disappears. Unless it's one of the few major successes that come along each year, a "Godfather" or a "French Connection," relatively few people will see it compared to the tens of millions who would watch it on TV. Also, the ordinary motion picture has very little impact. But even the mildly exciting TV film becomes an event. (Admittedly by default at times—the cynical might suggest that in the country of the blind the one-eyed man is a king.)

"My Sweet Charlie" was discussed and written about for months, as was "Brian's Song." They both had their scripts published, something that seldom happens to a feature film, and both were shown in theatres after their TV debut. "The Duel," a 90-minute Movie of the Weekend, had scenes added and was shown in theatres in Europe. And many of these films have still another life because of re-runs. The first TV movie that we wrote, "Prescription: Murder," has been on the air for five years, popping up almost monthly in syndication.

Another reason why we wanted "Summer" on television was that we were attempting a very quiet, very intimate piece, and TV is particularly well-suited to that kind of drama. The classics of the Golden Age, such as "Marty" and "Twelve Angry Men," achieved much of their power from their small scale. The human face, rather than sprawling vistas and "War and Peace" battle scenes, is the proper province for the TV camera. It's the difference between the novel and the short story.

Finally, we were curious to see the response our film would get from the average American; the man or woman who would never see it in a movie house, but who just might catch it on television. "Bloody Sunday" was an excellent film, with much the same subject matter, but we suspect the people who went to see it were primarily urban and sophisticated—the art-house patron. Had it been a television show it would have attracted a much wider, much less homogenous audience, and we think their reactions would have been far more interesting.

*Like your "My Sweet Charlie," "That Certain Summer" might be termed a "message" film in that it draws attention to a social problem. As writers and producers are you intentionally "socially conscious"? To what extent, do you feel, can the TV-movie combine entertainment with propaganda and persuasion?*



Actually, we've done only four or five films that might be termed "socially conscious," or "message pictures." During this past year, in fact, we've spent most of our time writing and producing the first season of "Columbo," a show that could hardly be called relevant, and that had as its sole intention the desire to entertain.

Some time ago we did "The Whole World Is Watching," which was probably the first television or motion picture treatment of campus unrest, but in our view it wasn't very successful. It was a pilot, the basis of the Lawyers segments of "The Bold Ones," and the story of the students had to take second place to pilot considerations—unfortunately, the social drama and the series material simply didn't mix.

Also, in the late '50s, we wrote a "Dr. Kildare" condemning funeral practices. The show was heavily—perhaps too heavily—weighted with propaganda, so much so that the Funeral Directors Association petitioned the FCC for equal time. It's interesting to note that the segment, unlike most "Kildares," has never been re-run in the United States. But as to whether it helped even one individual avoid exploitation at a time of bereavement, we couldn't say.

In our view no one can really measure how much power television has to teach and persuade. Obviously it can be enormously effective in the case of "Sesame Street," news programming, or a series of documentaries such as "Civilization." And Lord knows TV advertising literally lifts people from their chairs and sends them out to make purchases.

But we wonder if a television drama of a polemical nature has any effect whatsoever on those who watch it. Does a "My Sweet Charlie" or even a string of "My Sweet Charlies" make it any easier for the races to live together?

Does "All in the Family" cause even one bigot to re-examine his prejudices? These are impossible questions to answer. Edward Albee, for example, must ask himself on occasion if "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?," which is one of the most harrowing examinations of marital discord in the American theatre, has any influence, even to the smallest degree, on those married couples who have seen it. We in dramatic television would be flattering ourselves out of all proportion if we began to feel that even at our most artful we could actually change social and political views. All we can realistically hope for is to touch people aesthetically every now and then and possibly, over a period of years, add an infinitesimal something to the prevailing climate of opinion.

*You are also the creators of "Mannix," "Columbo" and "The Psychiatrist." As writers-producers which is more creatively satisfying — the series or the TV-movie?*

The TV movie, beyond question. It's a one-shot situation, an individual project, and it can be nursed along, step by step, with a great deal of care. The average series, on the other hand, is a continuum—one segment after another must be written, filmed, scored, and rushed out to meet an air date.

The producer of a series finds that he is forced to concentrate on four or five shows at once. He grows harried and overworked, and most of his creative decisions are made on the spur of the moment. Toward the end of the shooting schedule everyone—actors, crew, editors, etc.—is so exhausted by the Mack Sennet pace that a movie is a throwback to the anthology of television's early days, when Chayevsky, Gore Vidal, Serling, Reginald Rose and others were writing teleplays unhampered by series leads or inhibiting format material. Obviously this gives the writer more creative freedom. And he has the added advantage today of 90-minute or two-hour programs, which give him more time to develop his plot and characters.

In recent years, in our opinion, the best dramatic works on television have been TV movies, such as "The Neon Ceiling," "Duel," "The Glass House," "Brian's Song," "My Sweet Charlie," "Silent Night, Lonely Night," "The Snow Goose," and others.



*Richard Levinson and William Link are the writers and producers of "That Certain Summer," a TV-movie that was broadcast on ABC on November 7, 1972. Collaborators since their student days at the University of Pennsylvania, they were film critics for the university newspaper, contributed to the literary magazine, and wrote the books and lyrics for four "Mask and Wig" musicals which toured the East Coast. In addition to writing dramas for various television series, they have written fiction for such publications as Playboy and University Review as well as co-authoring the novel Fineman (1972). For their TV-movie My Sweet Charlie they received an Emmy Award in 1970.*





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# AN ADDRESS

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BY REUVEN FRANK

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*President, NBC NEWS  
prepared for delivery at the  
Conference on Electronic Journalism,  
Herbert Hoover Presidential Library Association,  
Airlie House, Warrenton, Virginia  
June 22, 1972*

**T**HERE is too much detailed discussion these days about the regulations which govern television reporting, and not enough general discussion about the principles which underline them.

Thus we wonder how the Fairness Doctrine applies to letting this candidate speak so many times, and that one not so many. To which news programs does the legislated requirement of equal time apply, and how does a journalist on deadline pick his way among the distinctions? What is the proper role of the legislature in protecting the audience from news presentation which is not totally factual? How much must an audience be told about what went into a piece of news before it was put together, and about how it was put together?

These are all specific recent considerations governing the details of laws affecting how news is presented on television and how those laws are administered, and whether there are too many such laws or too few. The number of such areas of involvement in television reporting is approaching the dozens, and the individual instances of suggestions for new regulations is into the hundreds. And rising.

The least of these, were it applied to a newspaper, would be thrown out of any American court as a violation of the Constitution, as a direct contravention of the Bill of Rights.

I submit that as a simple fact.

Whether Section 315 of the Federal Communications Act—equal time—is being applied the way those who wrote it intended, whether the doctrine called Fairness requires presenting views no one seems to want to hear: No one even discusses such matters with respect to a newspaper. It is widely understood that the First Amendment forbids legislating changes, even improvements, in newspapers and how they do what they do.

The two media are governed differently because of the physical differences between them. That is the accepted wisdom. It is honestly believed by most people who concern themselves with such matters that the physical properties and conditions of broadcasting make regulation of them inescapable.

**T**HERE is no reference in such discussion to what the First Amendment was intended to achieve. It is my understanding that the purpose of the First Amendment was not to achieve freedom of print; that was its method. Its purpose was to keep all government out of all news.

If I am right, then the purpose of the First Amendment, the first clause of the American Bill of Rights, is being violated thousands of times a day, including today. We who are employed in television justify and defend and explain what we do to people who either have no right to ask or ought to have no right to ask.

Matters have come so far that this simple position sounds like an extreme position. But is it?

Not very often, but sometimes, newspaper people are asked the sort of question we are asked. The essence of their answer tends to be "none of your business". Their language may be politer than that, but that is what they mean. And it is indeed none of your business, if you are a judge, or an elected legislator, or an appointed official. The First Amendment says it is none of your business whether a newspaper is fair, or presents candidates equally, or displays bias. Nor does anyone assume that when a newspaperman tells a legislator or a judge these actions of his are none of their business that he is tacitly admitting unfairness or bias or inequity.

On the contrary, he is seen as exercising his right, indeed his duty, under the First Amendment. As I put the proposition it sounds harsh because the First Amendment freedoms of newspapers are so widely taken for granted that I venture no one in this room has thought about them in this sense for years.

Ask yourself: When is the last time you read a newspaper report you thought unfair? Or an incident of which you had personal knowledge was described in a way you considered incomplete? Or biased? There must have been some such recent occasion. You may have written sharply to the editor, or thought about it for a moment or two. And given up the thought, because what's the use?

But, even for an instant, did it occur to you there ought to be a law? Or a hearing by a committee of Congress? After eighteen decades of life under the Constitution, the impulses and brain paths for such thoughts do not exist in the American mind. We do not challenge the rights of newspapers to be newspapers, even those newspapers we dislike or hold in contempt. Any such thoughts are unthinkable thoughts.

Think them. The Constitution is, after all, not an immutable document. It has changed. It will change. You can change it. Wouldn't you like to change the First Amendment? Shouldn't newspapers be obliged to be fair? Shouldn't wise and impartial men, the public weal uppermost in their minds, set standards for such fairness? Standards we may all refer to, publishers and readers alike? Doesn't the American public deserve the fairest and best? Is there a lawyer in the house? Is there a Constitutional lawyer in the house? Is George III in the house?

**I** PUT it to you that you think I am making my point by reducing it to an absurdity, that your thought processes are so conditioned that a Constitutional amendment to allow regulating newspapers strikes you as absurd.

What makes it absurd?

It is not considered absurd in most of the countries of the world. It has not been thought absurd in the United States, if it is news we are talking about rather than newspapers. At that time of our history when all news was printed news, all news was free of Government control, regulation and intrusion. Now that only a part of news is printed news, most news is subject to Government control, regulation and intrusion.

We discuss the doctrine of legislated fairness which is applied to television and whether it goes too far or not far enough. We do not discuss whether it is a violation of the purposes of the Bill of Rights and the almost religious belief of most Americans in those purposes that such a doctrine should exist at all.

There are, it is true, current discussions of the First Amendment as it applies to newspapers. It has over the year been extended far beyond keeping the Government out of publishing the news to keeping it out of the process of gathering the news. Now the Supreme Court is considering whether making a reporter enter a grand jury room violates the First Amendment. But I am not talking about these expansions of First Amendment rights. I am talking about its simplest, smallest, original frame.

**I**F the First Amendment does not apply to news on television in the same way that it applies to news in print this year in this country it does not apply to most news. That is a fact. It can be expressed in statistics. If you do not believe it ought to apply to news on television, you do not believe that it is an absolute need that news be free of Government regulation and intrusion. You merely think you do. You believe there is nothing wrong with Government intrusion if the news is not printed. That is not the way you express your belief, but that is what you believe.

This belief, to go back, is said to be based on the physical difference between print and broadcasting, between wood pulp and radio waves, not between what they carry. The rationalizations supporting this are a Tower of Babel ascending to the sky. But the First Amendment applies only to the products of pine trees. It is not a belief about free human beings at all. The airwaves belong to somebody up in Canada.

**F**IRST of all, the branches of Government cannot make people listen equally, and eyes and ears are as important to access and the spread of ideas as are the various media. Second, there was never a time when some media did not have more impact than others, some organs did not reach more people than others. The same reasoning which denies the full meaning of the First Amendment to television could have been used in that recently past time—when there were only newspapers—to deny it to all newspapers with more than 50,000 circulation.

**S**O I am not convinced by the argument about the difference between media. I cannot see how anyone can be convinced by it. The biggest difference between newspapers and television which I can see is that newspapers existed at a time when adventurous men with faith in their fellow-citizens laid down principles for a new society to live by. Television exists in a frightened time when this faith is honored either by lip-service or by a frantic determination that freedom must be considered enforced. I think if Benjamin Franklin had invented television its informing functions would have been included in the First Amendment.

Too often I am oppressed by the feeling that there are those among us who regret that there were foolish men in the Eighteenth Century who forbade well-meaning officers from imposing rules of constructive and ethical behavior on publishers. And they dread lest the same mistake be made about television.

So far they have succeeded. Television news has been held not to fall within the protections of the First Amendment. If this were not so, we should not be here today; there would be nothing for us to talk about. There could be no Fairness Doctrine within the First Amendment. As it is, representatives of all three branches of Government intrude into the news most Americans get, television news.

Congress shall make no law prohibiting the free exercise of some religions; or abridging the freedom of some speech, or of some of the press; or the right of some of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of some grievances. Do we dare admit that is what we really believe?

I consider it so self-evident that the First Amendment deals with the Constitution and not with the Government and one news medium that I hesitate to support my position with reciting specific events. A principle is a principle. But one event so recent and so well-publicized that everyone in this room has heard about it can serve as a strong and useful illustration of what happens because television news is not free of Government intrusion. You may consider this in the light of simple, general principles of our law and what can happen if one of them is abandoned. Or, if you prefer, you might think of this incident in terms of your own private views of what the public wants and needs, in this case the voting public of one state and of the entire country.

In the middle of May, in the presence of television newsfilm cameras, Senator Humphrey challenged Senator McGovern to meet him on television to debate. At that time whatever information was available, and there was a lot—polls, the observations of reporters, and the off-the-record judgments of the staff members of these and other candidates—indicated that only these two men had a reasonable chance of winning the Democratic Party's presidential primary in California.

**N**OW there is a lot of law about candidates appearing on television. Most of it hinges on Section 315 of the Federal Communications Act which used to mean that if a station sold or gave time for a political message to a candidate for elective office it might not refuse his opponent the same opportunity. It has since been interpreted and amended and it now means a great deal more than that. Among other things it means that no television station may present a debate between two candidates if it does not do about as much for other candidates running in the same election. In practical fact it means there can be no television debates.

As in most such nice legal situations, one could postulate conditions where there might be debates, but for most of them one could not postulate why anyone should listen. People watch what they care about. If we had proved that the voters of California cared only about Humphrey and McGovern, it would have been absolutely beside the point. This would have been what is called in my business a news judgment and there are no news judgments without a First Amendment.

But the original Section 315 has been amended, to exempt regular news programs and regular interview programs. Each major network has such a regular interview program. So the three major networks invited Humphrey and McGovern to be interviewed on these programs, CBS nine days before the California primary election day, NBC seven days before, and ABC the preceding Sunday, June 4, two days before election day. I speak now only for NBC; our arrangements were made after the other two were announced; we dealt only with the candidates and their representatives; we did not deviate one iota from the established format of "Meet the Press." The candidates had no say in the questions, the format, or the participants.

A true debate on that date would have made us vulnerable under the law. This law applied to newspapers would be unconstitutional. Those who hold the First Amendment does not cover television say among other things that they are promoting more political discussion for the benefit of more citizens. On at least that day, May 30, they did the opposite.



**O**N the first of these pseudo-debates, the CBS one, May 28, the two men were allowed to contradict each other a little bit, which was a little different from the usual practice of that program—although I don't know how you make a United States Senator speak only when spoken to while on live television. But that may have triggered the ludicrous sequence which was to follow.

Two other candidates, Congresswoman Chisholm and Mayor Yorty, petitioned the Federal Communications Commission for equal access to the networks before the California primary June 6. The polls were showing Mrs. Chisholm at two per cent of the vote, and at that she was ahead of Mayor Yorty. Both had already been on television often and neither seriously claimed to be able to win. But that is the way a newspaper is allowed to think; not a television network. The FCC told the two petitioners the networks were acting legally under the amended Section 315. So Mrs. Chisholm went to Federal Court.

In an "interim" judgment, the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ordered ABC to include her in its program and CBS to give her time to make up for her absence from its program. (She did not move against NBC because we had already scheduled her for Monday morning.) The court's decision came Friday evening, two days before the ABC program, four days before the primary election. The court ordered action by Monday.

**O**N Sunday, the ABC program was hastily changed so three reporters could interview four candidates—Humphrey, McGovern, Chisholm and Yorty—and a representative of Governor Wallace, five people. CBS gave Mrs. Chisholm a half-hour to fill however she pleased, and she recruited three reporters to interview her. NBC presented Mrs. Chisholm speaking into the camera for 15 minutes. (We were not under court order, but we thought we might prevent one.) Mrs. Chisholm and Yorty also appeared, separately, on the "Today" program Monday morning. Minutes after the "Today" program was shown in California, Yorty announced he was withdrawing from the race and asked his supporters to vote for Humphrey. Mrs. Chisholm got twice as many votes as the polls said she would, four per cent.

This has nothing to do with what I or anyone else in television thinks of the ideas or candidacy of any of the protagonists. Nor do I mean to imply criticism of Mrs. Chisholm in going to court. Anyone who fails to take advantage of a foolish law is himself foolish. But, after all, what was accomplished? Was the American voter, for whose benefit this charade was supposed to be taking place, enlightened? Is it hard to help them decide between Humphrey and McGovern? Were they not in fact coerced into watching people they didn't care about?

Whenever we leave the Bill of Rights, for even the noblest of motives, we embark upon the lexicography of coercion. On that very ABC program one of the reporters asked the two main candidates what they thought of this

arrangement whereby five appeared where they had expected two. And Senator Humphrey spoke those words I have learned to dread, words I caution you against. Mrs. Chisholm, he said, had a right to be heard. There is no right to be heard. There is only a right to speak. If there is a right to be heard, it must by definition be a right to force someone to listen. But we say things like "right to be heard" because they sound as though they ought to mean something. They have that ring to them.

**T**HERE is the argument that without the court-ordered arrangements of June 4 minority candidates would be stifled. I think I have answered that, but if my answer has been insufficient or too abstract, I beg leave to point out that Senator McGovern and his staff were making the same argument less than a year ago. The media were ignoring him and thereby ignoring their law-specified responsibilities. We heard a lot of that.

The media were in fact reporting what our best though fallible judgments told us interested people. A few weeks before the New Hampshire primary our reporters said the McGovern campaign was more interesting to the voters than it had been—not more interesting than we had said it had been; more interesting than it had been. So we reported it more. Now there are those who say McGovern profited from that original lack of attention. There may even be somebody out there preparing to accuse us of ignoring him so he might succeed. All we do, in our single-minded way, is to try to proceed according to our news judgment, the judgment which needs protection by the First Amendment.

I am not a lawyer. Long ago I decided not to be a lawyer. I have never regretted that decision. To me the Fairness Doctrine, and equal time, and the right of reply, and the Commissioners and judges, the good ones and hostile ones, the conservative ones and the liberal ones, the Congressmen and their new bills, the executive assistants and their new schemes, are all one lump. They are the Government in news, the Government in my business. I began on a newspaper. There I learned the Government had no business in my business. I am still in the same business, but now it's O.K. for the Government to interfere. It is not easy to understand or to follow.

If the Government should not be in news, it should not be in television news. If for one reason or another now is a tactless time to bring this up, this is the best time to bring it up.

*A journalist for more than 25 years, Reuven Frank has been President of NBC News since 1968. He's the man who paired Huntley and Brinkley, producing the first news show that swept the field in awards as well as ratings.*

*Mr. Frank has produced NBC's coverage of all national political conventions since 1956. He also produced a notable documentary, "The Tunnel," which won a 1962 Emmy Award as Program of the Year.*

*A native of Montreal, Mr. Frank attended the University of Toronto and the School of Journalism, Columbia University.*

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# IN DEFENSE OF TALKING HEADS

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BY BURTON BENJAMIN

---

Let us now praise talking heads.

Let us now praise Walter Lippmann, Eric Hoffer, Dwight David Eisenhower, Lyndon Baines Johnson, Hugo Black, William O. Douglas, Dean Acheson, Richard Cardinal Cushing, Carl Sandburg, J. Robert Oppenheimer and Lauris Norstad.

All of them were talking heads on CBS News broadcasts. Each of them enriched television. And that is what this piece is all about—a defense of the head that talks on a television screen and has too often been maligned for doing so.

Let us begin by defining a talking head. The description may sound inelegant but it explains the phenomenon fairly accurately. A talking head is an in-tight closeup of a human head talking on television. Sometimes the subject is being interviewed. You hear the questions off camera. Sometimes he is making a statement. The shot is always a closeup to accommodate television's restricted screen. It usually frames the head from hairline to chin. A head-and-shoulders shot is a talking head, but a waist-up is considered a portrait view, a bit detached. Obviously, talking heads must talk. If it simply muses, rambles, broods or ponders, it is a head—but not a talking head. A ruminating head is frequently considered art. The head may not sing, recite poetry or do bird calls.

It will speak in English (see above), Russian (Nikita Khrushchev), German (Konrad Adenauer), French (Charles de Gaulle) or Spanish (Francisco Franco).

All of these heads appeared at one time or another on CBS. Eskimos, aborigines or any natives of Africa do not count as talking heads. They are adventure films.

There are several kinds of talking-head broadcasts. There is the hour with six to twelve heads prominently participating. This format is often dismissed as "heavy with talking heads." If more than a dozen heads are used the complaint is that the film is "just a collection of talking heads." If the entire hour is one man talking—Eisenhower or Black or Lippmann or Douglas—the purists will call it a "one-on-one" (the other "one" being the reporter); "illustrated radio;" or "just one goddamn talking head."

In praising talking heads (I believe they have given us some of our most memorable television) I know I am going against the tide. The filmmakers and the cinema verite devotees consider talking heads worse than out-of-focus. As a matter of fact they don't mind out-of-focus all that much. But the thought of a camera properly focusing on one head for an hour is intolerable. And some of the critics have taken this up and now use "talking heads" to disparage a broadcast. Apparently, this gives them in-group currency.

Even so estimable observer as John J. O'Connor of the *New York Times* complained about "news film clips and talking heads" in a recent hijacking broadcast with which I was involved. Later, however, he noted that the heads "provided the viewer with an impressive number of good hard facts, most of which are not likely to delight the nation's airlines."

Now, admittedly, it depends how you use the heads and how you use the clips, but 1972 seemed to me an odd time to find fault with the technique. The year's most distinguished documentary in my view was Marcel Ophuls' four-and-a-half hour "The Sorrow and the Pity." It consists exclusively of talking heads and news film clips.

When I screened Ophuls' film, I was deeply struck by the talent and passion that went into it. A not inconsiderable part of my own career is bound up with films of this genre. For nine years I produced *The Twentieth Century* for CBS News. Because the series dealt with history, and since I was not relying on reenactments, I went to the treasury a producer goes to when he requires historical footage—the film library. I believe we used our stock extremely well. I have always equated the use of historical film with what a writer would have to do today were he preparing a biography of Woodrow Wilson. He would, of necessity, turn to the libraries and archives simply because Mr. Wilson would not be available to him. The spirit world has been of scant use to scholars in the recreation of history.

But assuming the subject were available, what would he do? He would certainly do what we have done: interview him. We have had the rare experience of putting some of the great figures in world history on America's home screens. We have turned the probing eye of a camera on them; pitted them against bright, tough-minded reporters. In short, we have made them Talking Heads.

I remember vividly the hours with Justices Black and Douglas and with Presidents Eisenhower and Johnson. As history, as human drama, and as television, they were compelling. Here television is, in the fullest sense, the living chronicle of our times.

Ophuls put it well in a conversation in Paris with the writer, Jack Nessel:—

“Most modern non-fiction filmmakers detest the interview technique,” Ophuls said. “It is almost the opposite of *cinema verite*. The great prejudice against it is usually that it is not visual, that it is talk and therefore not so graphic. But I think it’s very visual to look at a man’s face, to see the flicker in his eyes when he decides he doesn’t quite want to hear the truth. Sometimes you can see it in the way he fidgets with a napkin or the paper, or the way he takes a photo out of his pocket. I think that this idea that you have to show people in action rather than people talking about themselves is an old-fashioned one, and it also has to do with the fact that most documentary filmmakers are frustrated fiction film directors. They haven’t done film with actors and action and therefore they think they must get the film direction into the documentary.”

The defense rests. Onward and upward with talking heads!



*BURTON BENJAMIN is senior Executive Producer of CBS News. He is creative supervisor of all documentaries, cultural broadcasts and special programs outside the hard-news area. Programs produced under his supervision include: Hunger in America, Justice Black and the Bill of Rights, Mr. Justice Douglas, and four conversations with Lyndon Johnson covering the years of his Presidency.*

*Mr. Benjamin was also executive producer of You Are There and the Adventure Series. He has won six Emmy Awards, a Peabody, two Ohio State Awards and the American Bar Association Gavel Award. Born in Cleveland, he attended the University of Michigan and began his film career as a writer-producer for RKO-Pathé in 1946.*



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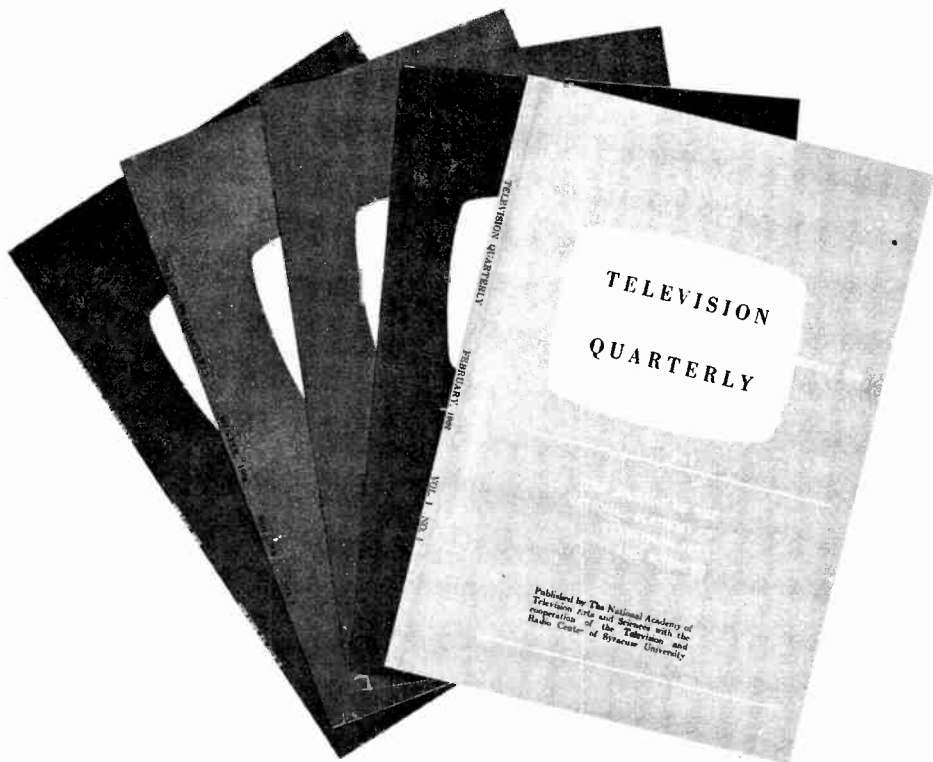
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# “TELLING IT LIKE IT IS”

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BY ROBERT STEIN

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Last August, just before the Republican convention, an ABC correspondent asked Spiro Agnew why he had stopped criticizing the media in recent months. “I don’t find much,” the Vice President replied, “to scream about these days.”

In the weeks that followed, right up to Election Day, the Nixon Administration had little cause for complaint about coverage of the campaign. During that period, the three networks did not find one political issue that merited prime-time treatment; for those viewers who tuned in after the regular evening news programs and ransacked the refrigerator during the political commercials, Wintergreen for President received more exposure than either Nixon or McGovern.

Why? The most obvious answer is intimidation, and there are persuasive arguments to support it. After three years of Agnew’s speeches, Dean Burch’s phone calls, John Mitchell’s subpoenas, FBI investigations of Daniel Schorr, and dialectics by Herbert Klein, Patrick J. Buchanan and Frank Shakespeare, the networks seem to be running a close second to Hanoi as the object of Administration pressure and rhetoric. In the past year, the President has dined with Chou En-lai and Brezhnev, but Frank Stanton has been notably absent from his guest list. Would any television executive in his right mind schedule a public-affairs special on Watergate after living through the aftermath of “The Selling of the Pentagon”?

With the pattern of massive retaliation against the networks so well-established, intimidation is rapidly being institutionalized. In October, when the CBS Evening News offered a three-part analysis of the US-Soviet grain deal, the Administration’s first team of media critics did not stir from the bench—a Republican Congressman from Illinois was dispatched to denounce the series as “unbalanced and inaccurate” and to demand equal time for a rebuttal. After the election, Charles Colson of the White House staff denounced Eric Sevareid and CBS for their treatment of the Watergate case on the Evening News. Colson, whose sense of irony is not overdeveloped, accused the network of McCarthyism.

As television newsmen face such unprecedented pressure from the Government, it may seem ungenerous to call them to account for their response to that pressure and to suggest that their own shortcomings may have helped to invite it. But the presidential campaign of 1972 has made it clear that television news is in urgent need of self-examination.

Before Spiro Agnew appointed himself chief diagnostician late in 1969, television journalists were not notably receptive to any analysis of the nature of their medium or their own principles and practices. Predictably, their response to Agnew (and the public resentment of television news he called forth) was pure outrage. "I hesitate to get into the gutter with this guy," said Chet Huntley. In a speech before Sigma Delta Chi, the national journalism fraternity, Walter Cronkite announced:

"I'm tired of sociologists, psychologists, pathologists, educators, parents, bureaucrats, politicians and other special interest groups presuming to tell us what is news or where our responsibilities lie . . .

"I don't think it is any of our business what the moral, political, social, or economic effect of our reporting is. I say let's get on with the job of reporting the news—and let the chips fall where they may. I suggest we concentrate on doing our job of telling it like it is and not be diverted from that exalted task by the apoplectic apostles of alliteration."

But "it"—reality—is what happens to people all over the world 24 hours a day. News is a selection by *someone* of a small fraction of the day's events as significant or suggestive. Those choices themselves have profound moral, political, social and economic effects. That they are made unconsciously by time-honored journalistic standards does not completely relieve those who make them of responsibility for the effects.

For example: One day in November of 1968, 55 reporters and cameramen waited for three hours in a cold rain to see Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis get off an airplane on her return to New York after marrying Aristotle Onassis. That evening, the news programs showed us her arrival in detail and the next morning, *The New York Times* gave 19 paragraphs and two three-column pictures to the story, starting on page one, and including the comments of the plane's stewardess: "She was just the most lovely, lovely person." At that time, 10,000 people a day were starving to death in Biafra. Of all the national media, only the *Times* covered a press conference the same day by a relief worker who predicted that two million Biafran children might die in the following months. That news was reported by the *Times* in five paragraphs on page 20. On the television news programs, there was silence.

News directors, to a man, had decided that it was more urgent to show us the arrival of Jacqueline Onassis than to remind us of the possibly imminent death of two million children. Such choices are made every day. The people who make them, willingly or not, shape our consciousness. No matter how impartially they report the facts, their choices both help reflect and determine the kind of people we are.

A century ago, in an era that Spiro Agnew would have found congenial, information moved slowly, and most vital news could be withheld, delayed, shaped or released by government to suit its own purposes. In an age of satellite television, such control is no longer possible. Most news flows directly to the media, and it is news directors and editors, not government officials, who make many of the decisions about what the public should know—and when—about distant wars as well as local disturbances.

If Nixon and Agnew cannot control the news, what they *can* do is question the values and practices of those who decide what the news is and disseminate it. To a large extent, Agnew's success is discrediting television journalists to acknowledge this growing power on their part and the complex new responsibilities that go with it.

The responsibilities are enormous, and they cannot be evaded with simplistic slogans such as "telling it like it is." To begin with, there is the disparity between what television news *says* and what it *shows*. For years the network anchormen reported the official optimism about "pacification" in Viet Nam but the pictures showed us, that "pacification" meant women and children, whom we were presumably protecting, running in terror as we bombed and burned their villages. What the politicians, and perhaps network newsmen themselves, failed to understand was that it was not the correspondents and the commentators who turned the country against the war but television itself—just as it was not Edward R. Murrow who turned the country against Senator Joseph McCarthy but the television screen itself with hour after hour of the Army-McCarthy hearings.

To say that the medium has such an effect is not to deny the importance of the message but to suggest that classic journalistic standards have to be re-examined. Before television, journalism had always been largely the record of what was said and done by the rich and the powerful. Over the past two decades, television has broken through every form of isolation: the black and the poor in rural backwaters and urban ghettos, the Indians on their reservations, housewives trapped in their domestic routines, children who used to grow up in a world limited to classroom and home, working men whose lives were bounded by factory, lodge, union hall and neighborhood tavern. As television made the world visible to those who used to be isolated, it made them more visible to the

world and each other. It taught those minorities that news is concerned with power, and it taught them how to call themselves to our attention—by displays of power: occupying buildings, holding protest marches, boycotting schools. The talking heads of angry militants joined the talking heads of political leaders on the evening news.

In all the media, power still determines the news. Editors and news directors still abandon to the politicians and, now, to the anti-politicians who represent minorities, most of the daily decisions about what we will know of the world. Doing so, they can hide from criticism by insisting they are “telling it like it is.” But it is becoming clear that, beyond the noisy power struggles that occupy so much of our attention, the important news about American society involves values—what kind of people we are and how we live. On every issue, journalists isolate values from power as carefully as the Victorians separated love from sex: Black militants and their skirmishes with police are news, but the daily reality of life in the ghettos is not. The seizure of campus buildings brings out the camera crews, but we hear little about the education going on in those buildings during normal times. When a few hundred militants take over the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Indians are news; before and after the occupation, they do not exist.

Power has always been hard news. Yet it is becoming increasingly important to find ways to understand and report what happens to people without power, whose lives constitute the vast reality that lies beyond power.

This kind of journalism would involve harder choices and greater risks. It is so much easier to assign correspondents and camera crews to press conferences and prearranged confrontations than to take the initiative in seeking out and reporting the significant events and conditions that are boiling below the political surface.

In 1971, Fred Friendly made a modest proposal to create an “electronic news service” to pool coverage of predictable pseudo-events. “The spectacle of half a dozen camera crews,” he pointed out, “and a dozen microphones, several from the same organization, standing tripod to tripod at Andrews Air Force Base to witness the Secretary of Defense’s departure for a NATO meeting, or to cover S. I. Hayakawa’s, Abbie Hoffman’s or George Wallace’s latest news conference, often says more about the newsgatherers than it does about the newsmakers . . . The price for such overkill is often paid by missing truly significant stories.”

Elmer Lower, president of ABC News, rejected the idea, insisting that such coverage would result in all the networks presenting “the same material in the same format—giving the viewer less choice in news than he now has.” If the viewer’s “choice” consists of a slightly different camera angle and cutaway, we can begin to understand his frustration over network news.

If television is to go any distance toward informing the American people rather than showering them with fragments of news, newsmen will have to condense the amount of time devoted to the Secretary of Defense's departure and Abbie Hoffman's press conference and explore in some perspective both the visible and invisible news of the society. Perhaps the worst aspect of the current intimidation is that it interprets every attempt at coherence as a political attack. The CBS Evening News rightly assumed that people were confused by the accusations and counter-accusations over Watergate and the grain deal; it was good journalism to try to make some sense of those stories. It would have been equally good journalism to treat McGovern's inconsistencies and the Eagleton affair the same way.

Patrick J. Buchanan, Richard Nixon's personal media critic, insists that television owes the President the opportunity to have "untrammelled communication with the American people" and hints at "antitrust action" if the medium fails to get the message—a strange application of the basic conservative philosophy that abhors government intervention in basic freedoms. "Untrammelled communication" in the newspapers would mean printing the texts of the President's speeches without news stories to provide background or perspective, and certainly without editorial commentary. If the First Amendment is to survive both the Nixon Administration and the Nixon Supreme Court, journalists will have to insist that the only right of untrammelled communication with the American people is their own. And they will have to use that right to do more than simply pass along what the politicians of all stripes have decided we ought to know.



*Robert Stein, who has spent 25 years in the media, is a writer, editor, polemicist and one-time professor of journalism. Currently he is the executive editor of McCall's. He lives with his family in Sherman, Conn.*



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**Howard K. Smith and  
Harry Reasoner on  
the ABC Evening News.**



**Weeknights on the  
ABC Television Network.**



# THE SCHIZOID TALK SHOW

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BY ROBERT BENARD

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Television talk shows are inherently schizoid. To yoke together the word “talk” — something any child over two can manage — and “show” — implying a dazzling display of talent — is to produce what pedants call an oxymoron. No, not an eight-sided fool, but a term that appears to contradict itself, i.e., “stupid genius,” “cruel kindness,” some might even say “military intelligence.”

Talk shows are, in truth, variety programs with scripts, timing, plotted questions and occasional moments of pure spontaneity. The format is tight and controlled. As in a Presidential press conference, nothing shocking or untoward is said.

All talk show guests are “researched,” quizzed, appraised and catalogued in a pre-show interview. Detailed questions and notes are provided the host, who will scan them briefly, then convey the impression that he has read the guest’s new book, seen his latest Shakespearean production or listened to his latest album of hot-rock folk songs.

Should a guest be judged a clod, conversationally, by the talent coordinators (those pre-show interviewers), a few quips will be provided to shine up the on-stage banter.

This procedure may be regrettable in the eyes of purists but in show terms it is unavoidable. With seven and a half hours of air time to fill each week, and an average of five guests per show to interview, no host could get to know each one personally in advance of air time. Viewers may have observed, however, that the talk flows more naturally when the guest happens to be an old friend of the host.

The schizoid strain of attempting to be both informative and amusing to a mass audience has, in the last year, destroyed the David Frost Show and relegated the Dick Cavett show to the relative obscurity of one week a month. Viewers who glimpsed, in these television salons a mood, a tone, slightly above the Saturday night beer party in Astoria had cause to mourn the fate of Frost and Cavett. Here, at least, were men of taste and intelligence, men whose minds had not been water-logged by total immersion in show-biz.

Besides the two old masters, Johnny Carson and Merv Griffin, there are regional, local and syndicated talk shows. Some of them are high-minded and courageous—at least a good part of the time. But, in general, the commodity offered is *ersatz* conversation. Mutual ego-massage, vulgar titillation, old vaudeville jokes and muddled but pontifical judgments on world affairs. (Has anyone heard George Jessel discourse on civil liberties or the history of American foreign policy?)

The talk show, as a permanent TV institution, might achieve a place of honor were it not obliged to live by ratings. It is almost axiomatic that the better the talk, the lower the rating. On one of Dick Cavett's nights off, he was supplanted by a rock group no better, no worse than most rock groups. But this raucous, ear-splitting gang outrated Cavett.

Adlai Stevenson's comment after losing the 1952 election is germane. "I have great faith in the goodness of the American people", he said. "As for their wisdom, beer still outsells champagne."

The success of some talk shows and the failure of certain others may suggest to some minds that mediocrity—provided it's brisk and a little vulgar—is crucial to success. Rampageous trivia is defended by television executives as a pragmatic response to the nature of the mass audience. Pap proliferates, they assure you, because pap is what the masses want.

But who knows what audiences might support, were quality shows retained long enough for audiences to develop a taste for them? Excellence on a daily basis does not appear to have alienated the viewers of Great Britain and Canada.

Except for an occasional flash of diamonds in the dust-bin, television is still the "vast wasteland" Newton Minow said it was in 1962. But it "moves the goods," so to speak, and this is all the networks seem to ask nowadays.

Even news programs have resorted to capering foolishness to draw higher ratings. Current champions, of course, are the self-conscious clowns on ABC's local newscasts. In house promotions they're called "noise-makers," which indeed they are. The audience, supposedly doubled up with laughter, has not been moved to ask "But are they newsmen?" Clearly, they are not. In one 60-second house ad, they're all seen dancing the Charleston, including the once-dignified weather-man Tex Antoine.

When the audience is fed news items as if they were Bob Hope one-liners, it should surprise nobody that disclosures of corruption in government, or sobering news from Vietnam, scarcely makes an impact. Viewers miss the meaning of the news because they are listening for the punch line.

There are, to be sure, moments of grace in TV's talk week. Edwin Newman conducts first-rate interviews with interesting, complex people, ranging from European statesmen to off-Broadway playwrights. William F. Buckley, however you may disagree with his philosophy, invariably has a guest whose talk commands respect. He has been particularly fortunate this year with his English visitors.

The talk shows that fail are perhaps those that start with the highest ideals. When David Frost was brought to this country by Group W (Westinghouse) to preside over 90 minutes of talk, five days a week, he was determined to challenge his audience with keen minds and fresh ideas.

"Our aim is unpredictability," Frost said before the show went on the air. "We will be as flexible and open to change and excitement as possible. We'll discuss deep issues, 'fun' issues, and things close to the lives of our audience. I like some talk about show business . . . but I think there are a lot of other subjects just as fascinating."

At the outset, the show lived up to its advance billing. Where else in the vast wasteland could viewers witness debates on legalizing hard drugs, busing, capital punishment, celibacy and birth control in the Roman Catholic Church and the Attica prison riots (a live show in New York, that very day)?

One of David Frost's virtues as a host and interlocutor was that he never seemed out of his depth, or over-impressed by a visitor. When he interviewed Norman Mailer, Albert Speer, Huey Newton, Spiro Agnew, Adam Clayton Powell and Edward Bennett Williams—to cite a few—he was very much in control of the situation. If other talk shows lack this gift, the lack is no reflection on character. It simply means that they have not enjoyed Frost's advantages—a Cambridge education and endless world travel.

If other talk shows fear to set the star before the camera with an elder statesman or a distinguished scientist, their fears are justified. When Joey Bishop is ill at ease, the feeling is contagious. So, to some, is his pleasure when he converses with a guest from his own world of Hollywood and Las Vegas.

In time, the Frost show drew away from controversial figures and from "intellectuals," a rather broad term embracing most non-performers. The old sterile chatter about show business replaced discussions of civil rights, new books and political issues.

A celebrity with a new movie, TV series, record album or autobiography to plug often turns up on five shows in a single week, making substantially the same spiel. Interviews with these floating guest stars elicited the same anecdotes, the same opinions. Frost, to his credit, tried to probe more deeply than his rivals were wont to do in interviews. But he struck gold only when the gold was there to strike. He was a chameleon, brilliant when the guest was a person of substance, boring when up against some preening starlet whose only concern was the camera angles.

With all his wit and zest, Frost shortly realized the naivete of his claim that "I only invite guests I'm interested in, so that I am never bored." (At least, that's what he told the Washington Post on July 13, 1969.)

Though his enthusiasm sometimes seemed excessive, audiences began to detect that he was frequently bored. It also became clear that he, as an Englishman, was sometimes only dimly aware of his guest's eminence as an American.

Another handicap was Frost's conviction, as the madness of the rating game overtook him, that audiences preferred questions straight out of the fan magazines. When conversation lagged, he always fell back on such poses as "What is your definition of love?" or "Do you remember your first kiss?" Definitely not the sort of question Edwin Newman asked of Bertrand Russell, nor William Buckley of John Kenneth Galbraith.

While interviewing an Orson Welles or an Arthur Schlesinger, Frost's propensity for the banal was held in check. But his decision, laudable in the case of Richard Burton or Shirley MacLaine, to conduct 90 minute in-depth interviews, led to stupefying sessions of boredom when the guest proved to have a small, dull mind and nothing much to say. Sadly, some of these know-nothings were great, glittering names.

People who did merit 90-minute interviews, such as Marya Mannes, Wilfrid Sheed, David Halberstam, John Osborne or Christopher Isherwood were either given short shrift or not invited at all. To "hype the ratings" as they say, this highly intelligent man began pandering to what he considered the popular taste. In doing so, he lost the educated audience and, in general, failed to hold the mass.

Television's need to "move the goods" had another unhappy result. Guests who advocated minority causes were put on the defensive by ruthless questions. Or, they were simply not invited to appear. Billy Graham and Melvin Laird were better guests, in Frost's view, than, say, a Father Berrigan or a Jack Anderson.

When actors or writers of an exhibitionist stripe find their fame waning, they take up causes. They head committees to preserve fur-bearing animals or wipe out pollution or restore capital punishment. Such publicity seekers used the Frost show as a soap box and the host seemed honored to have them do so. For every Shirley MacLaine who developed her political convictions the hard way, there were scores of overnight crusaders, ready to wave a banner for anything.

Besides attempting to compete with Carson and Griffin on their terms, Frost was also damaged by a lack of "identity." Viewers seem to watch Carson or Griffin or Mike Douglas because they feel these men are old friends. They tolerate guests they don't like simply to remain with the host.

On the Frost show, the guest list was vital. Despite his great courtesy and euphoric response to virtually everything, viewers never reached out to him. Part of Frost always remained disengaged and the public sensed it. The British accent, it must be added, was no great help.

But when you've finally weighed his virtues and examined his flaws, the final demise of the Frost show can be directly blamed on no traits of character. It failed financially despite dazzling guests and Emmy Awards, because Group W sold it as a daytime entertainment.

Because the show was syndicated, with widely varying air dates across the land, topicality was restricted. By the time they saw the prison riot show in Iowa, prison riots were no longer page one news. This was unfortunate. But the single hardest fact Frost had to live with was that the majority of stations carried his show early in the day. This meant that the interviews he preferred to do — serious talk, spirited debate and the like — were simply not the cup of cheer shut-ins and housewives at their ironing preferred. Had Frost been a network star instead of a syndicated host, he would have fared a great deal better.

Finally, the requiem for the Frost show is the requiem sounded for serious music, classical drama and other splendors deemed too grand for the small screen. Sponsors were interested only in the ratings. Not for a moment did they consider the *quality* of the audience, the consumer dollars spent by each household, the cults that develop when special tastes—particularly high-brow tastes—are pleased.

Someday, when statistics and demographics are more sophisticated, someday when subtle values are weighed along with gross ones, a sponsor may be content with the news that one Frost viewer out-buys 10 Carson viewers. That day does not seem imminent.

Even if David Frost had refused to compromise, had he pursued excellence as a holy grail, it's more than likely that he still would have been rubbed out of the schedule. But he would have faded away with more dignity, more respect.

Someday, when television is able to rise above the marketplace, salon conversation, in the best sense, will return. Meantime . . . "Heeeeere's Johnny!"



*Robert Benard was graduated from Yale University and subsequently studied at the Stanford University School of Communications. He conducted a radio talk show in Canada for a year, and has written for films and television. From 1970 to 1972 he was a writer and production associate for The David Frost Show. Currently, he is involved in producing two plays for the New York stage.*

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# POLITICS AND TELEVISION, 1972

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BY HARRY REASONER

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Early in the campaign, a lot of Republicans and a few Democrats took to calling Sen. George McGovern "the Goldwater of the Left." It became a cliché, and, like most clichés, it had a rough accuracy. All the way to the polls, the two men shared certain virtues and faults— in apposite form.

Both men had great personal charm and integrity. Both were a little vague on the specifics of their programs, contending—when you came down to it—that people ought to be a little better served in this democracy. Both men were misrepresented by some in their retinue who can best be described as slickly incompetent.

And, of course, both men were subjected to crushing, humiliating, final repudiation by the American middle. Repudiation, in each case, in favor of a man nowhere nearly as attractive.

Today George McGovern stands in what looks like the total wreckage of his party. Thus did Barry Goldwater stand in 1964.

But if the historical parallel continues, both the party and the man may come through in style. Remembering the GOP experience of '64, we may fairly say that disaster at the polls may be as stimulative to a political party as systematic pruning to a plant. The new growth starts at once.

The Republicans were worse off with Goldwater; he lost all the way, right down to City Hall. A Republican leader told me in November, 1964, that it might take 50 years for the party to recover.

But two years later Republicans gained 47 House seats and three in the Senate, along with eight governorships. That included, if you enjoy small ironies, the one in Maryland won by Spiro Agnew. Richard Nixon, who had made such a surly exit from politics in 1962, resumed campaigning to help the party. He became a prime fund raiser and had such a good time he decided he might, someday, run for something.

Two years pass . . . and the Republicans have installed Mr. Nixon in the White House and Barry Goldwater is back in the Senate.



It probably would be hard, at this point, to persuade most Democrats, let alone Sen. McGovern, that this walk through the valley of the shadow had been good for them. But experience tells us that hope rises from the ashes and losing an election is not losing the world.

In the aftermath of the election, I have been giving some thought to how we choose our Presidential candidates, the kind of men we choose, and how the public responds to this quadrennial rite.

Putting aside the selection process, let's look at the candidates we have been offered in recent years.

Beginning in 1960, we have had to choose each time between two Senators. Prior to that, we had only one Senator—Harry Truman—and he got the job by a stroke of fate. Go back over the candidates in our lifetime: a general, governors and cabinet officers. But since 1960, the Senate has been the breeding ground of candidates.

To the average voter, it must sometimes seem that the choice of candidates ultimately is decided by a handful of Yankees who vote at dawn in New Hampshire. That's the kind of importance the media attach to that first primary.

As long as the New Hampshire primary is there — and comes first — it will continue to give that small, insular state a disproportionate say in who runs for President.

The candidates and the media spent a good many dollars per New Hampshire voter this year, to little avail. There's a growing feeling that state primaries are a bad, expensive idea, proving nothing very much. It's an obligatory ritual for television, however, and it serves to introduce the contenders—there were at least six Democrats panting after votes in the primary Sen. Muskie won—to the nation at large.

By 1976—or, at least, by 1980—we may have the sense to establish a National Primary. In the meantime, there's little for newsmen to do but cover the imperfect process as we did this year.

There are those who say that the 1972 election hinged on the question of whether Richard Nixon depressed you more than George McGovern scared you. As a jest, that's unfair to both men. But it does call attention to the negativism and apathy that characterized our last campaign.

Some of the worrisome aspects of the elections just past may, surprisingly, have their healthy side. What are we to make of the curious television ratings for the big campaign events? What do they tell us of public taste?

During each political convention, according to Nielsen figures, more people in New York City watched the New York Mets than the doings at Miami Beach. Neither the Nixon Sisters nor Gerald Ford nor Gloria Steinem nor Shirley MacLaine beguiled baseball fans out of the ballpark.

The fact that many people found the Mets more exciting than either the Democrats or the Republicans calling the roll may indicate taste and judgment rather than apathy.

An objective conclusion would have to be what while the odds were good that the Mets might do something to surprise and please you, the odds that Gerald Ford or Gloria Steinem might say something surprising were astronomical.

As it turned out, the Mets left us as flat as the politicians - but not without supplying us with a more exciting race to the finish line than either party.

Evidence of apathy in this election continued after the conventions. Twice in two weeks, the parties bought every television channel in New York (save one) for 30-minute "paid political".

On the first occasion, John Connally, speaking for President Nixon, got 55 per cent of the audience on five out of six stations. The odd-man-out station, showing a re-run of "The Courtship of Eddie's Father", drew 45 per cent of the audience.

Two weeks later, Senator McGovern, speaking for himself, got 45 per cent on the five stations. "Eddie's Father" outdrew him with 55 per cent.

It would be interesting to set all this evidence before a panel of political scientists, television executives and psychologists, just to see how they'd interpret the audience response. My own conclusions are, in a sense, scary, assuming you care about the vigor of the democratic process.

Briefly, they are: First, if you're planning a new situation comedy, get John Connally to play the lead.

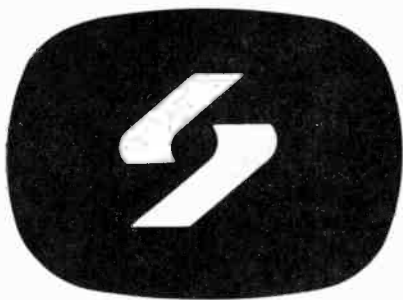
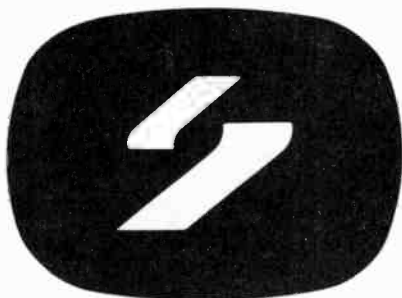
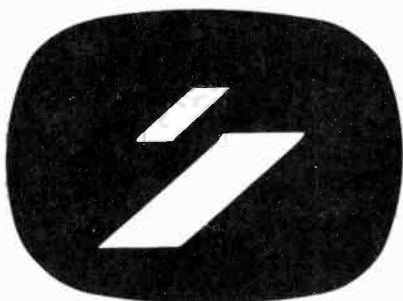
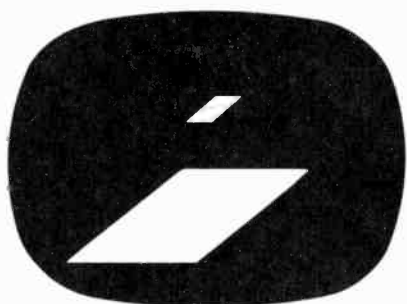
Second, if you're looking for a viable candidate for President, get Eddie's Father.



*Harry Reasoner, anchorman on the ABC Evening News, was born in Dakota City, Iowa in 1923 and has never lost his tall corn accent. He attended Stanford University and the University of Minnesota. He was drama critic on the Minneapolis Times from 1946 to 1948, later became a news writer for WCCO in that city.*

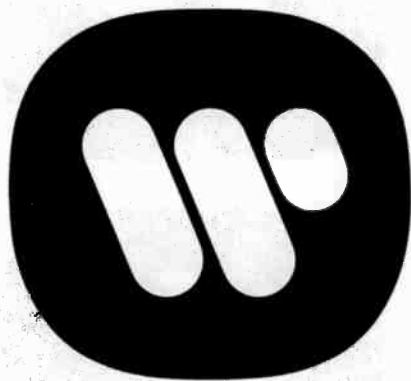
*Mr. Reasoner joined CBS News in 1956 and made a reputation as a humorist as well as a reporter. He has covered Congress, the White House and half a dozen election campaigns. He is the father of seven children.*





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# FREEDOM AND SATELLITES

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BY DR. FRANK STANTON

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*The following commentary is excerpted from an address by the Vice-Chairman of the Columbia Broadcasting System at ceremonies marking the 50th anniversary of WREC, Memphis.*

In America, broadcasters are dedicated to the idea that our nation's cornerstone is an informed public.

I wish I could say as much for the guardians of freedom of information throughout the world.

The United Nations General Assembly has before it a proposal challenging the principle which has been a tenet of our democracy, a basic article of faith since its very beginning—freedom of speech.

This challenge comes as the result of far-reaching new technology that has opened a new era of human progress, the miracle of satellite broadcasting. The satellite television broadcasts we receive today come into our homes through networks and individual stations. Through such world-wide linkage, over 600 million people on six continents saw the moonwalk on television—a significant reminder of the enormous potential of satellite transmission.

The capabilities of satellite communication are such that individual receivers may one day be able to supplement reception of locally originated signals with broadcasts direct from satellites 23,000 miles in the sky. Such broadcasts could make it possible for people in every corner of the earth to share in the free flow of ideas, the free communication of knowledge and information.

And yet, ironically, the prospect of this very type of satellite-to-home television broadcasting has been made the occasion for an effort to negate the principle of international freedom of communication.

On August 8, the Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union, Andrei Gromyko, submitted for the consideration of the United Nations General Assembly the text of a proposed international convention governing satellite television broadcasts directly into homes. What this proposed convention asserts is that governments have the right to control television broadcasts from abroad via satellite to their own people by controlling international broadcasts at their source.

It is an unfortunate fact that the leaders of too many nations have a deadly fear of information which could lead their people to topple the regimes in power. Understandably, these leaders are interested in stringent preventative measures. Hence the efforts of the Soviet Union have been encouraged by the acquiescence of other nations to a similar proposal from UNESCO. I want to return to this international proposal later.

The Soviet Union can and does jam incoming foreign shortwave radio broadcasts, at a cost estimated as high as \$300 million annually. It can and does punish its people for listening to foreign broadcasts. I am not addressing myself to the power of the Soviet government to do what it wishes within its own borders. The Soviet proposal to the United Nations, however, raises two new points.

It envisages not merely jamming incoming broadcasts, but also taking action directly against satellites themselves outside a receiving nation's territorial jurisdiction.

The Soviet Union asks UN member states, including our country, to agree that any nation, on its own initiative, may destroy satellites to keep broadcasts from coming directly into the homes of their own people. This would make censorship a principle of international law.

Undoubtedly the nightmare haunting the Kremlin is the possibility of its people hearing something other than their official government line — the chance that some future move like the invasion of Czechoslovakia might be reported in broadcasts directly into Russian homes, giving the lie to the idea that the invasion was joyfully received. What the Kremlin wants is assurance that it can seal off the Soviet people from everything but its own propaganda.

It is sometimes difficult for the Russians to make the distinction between their system of government communications media and ours of independent private communications entities. The Soviet Union sees no moral defect in giving governments, under international agreement, the right to orchestrate the flow of ideas. But such a right has no standing in this country, where communications media are private and the very first article of our Bill of Rights limits government authority over speech, press and thought.

What makes the USSR proposal more troublesome is that a climate of plausibility has been created for it, unbelievable as it may appear, by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization — UNESCO, the organization conceived in the noblest of international idealism for the advancement of free and unfettered cultural exchange. UNESCO experts from more than a dozen countries put together a document that can only be described as a compromise in principle, and a frightening danger in practice.

This astonishing UNESCO contribution, entitled "Draft Declaration of Guiding Principles on the Use of Satellite Broadcasting for the Free Flow of Information, the Spread of Education and Greater Cultural Exchange," has been submitted to the organization's General Conference. In general terms, the Declaration proclaims the people's right to freedom of information. In specific terms, however, the Declaration would have the United States accede as a matter of international law to any government's cutting off of its people from direct satellite television broadcasts — and not only television broadcasts but also, going the Russians one better, radio broadcasts as well. The rights which form the framework of our Constitution, the principles asserted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the basic principle of the free movement of ideas, are thus ignored. And in their place an alien concept is proposed — a concept which gives the UNESCO Draft Declaration its clear meaning, the *compromising* of freedom.

The UNESCO Draft Declaration twists and turns. It commences with an altruistic allusion to "such international agreements as may be necessary to promote the free flow of ideas by word and image." It cites the message of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that "everyone has the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." It even states that "The objective of satellite broadcasting for the free flow of information is to ensure the widest possible dissemination, among the peoples of the world, of news of all countries, developed and developing alike."

In practical terms, the UNESCO Draft Declaration gives international sanction to government control of what people can see and hear in direct satellite transmissions from outside their national borders. This means that nobody may legitimately broadcast to the USSR without the agreement of the USSR. That is what UNESCO proposes, not just for the USSR but for every nation. And despite the inclusion of all the disclaimers, what this amounts to is clear and frightening acceptance of the very same principle which lies behind the Soviet Union's proposal to the United Nations.

Cooperation, understanding and trade between Russia and the United States certainly are in the interests of peace. In serving the interests of peace, however, it surely is not necessary to sacrifice basic human rights. In the final analysis, there can be no truly enlightened progress and hence no real peace without these basic human rights.

Regardless of what body exercises the power of the censor, the effect of both the Soviet Union draft and the UNESCO draft is to make it possible for every signatory government to assert control over the content of international broadcasts. Quite seriously, I do not see how our government, given our Constitution, can possibly enter into any agreement in which the rights of Americans to speak to whomever they please when they please are bartered away. And that is what both draft documents would do.

Incredibly, in the ensuing months, wise counsel has not prevailed, despite the reasoned protests of the White House Office of Telecommunications Policy and the United States Information Agency, both of which are strongly opposed to the Draft Declaration. Rather than face the issue forthrightly and squarely, the State Department's plan of action presumably is merely to plead for postponement, and to vote against the Draft Declaration as a last resort — only if postponement fails.

The State Department's attitude is perhaps best described as "embarrassment" over the prospect of opposing the desires of developing countries, which support the Draft Declaration.

What the department obviously has in mind is an attempt to avoid a head-on confrontation and give everybody a tidy diplomatic out. But I submit that the central issue here transcends that kind of diplomacy. Delaying tactics, pleas that haste is unnecessary or further study is required are entirely out of place when the fundamental principle of free speech is at stake. There can be no temporizing. You don't negotiate free speech. The United States must do all within its power to block the path to international censorship.

We must indicate in unmistakable terms that we reject censorship today, that we will reject it tomorrow, that we will reject it whenever its head is raised.



*Dr. Frank Stanton left the psychology department of Ohio State University in 1935 to join the research staff at CBS. In 1945 he was named President of the network. He became Vice-Chairman of the board in 1971. After a distinguished 37-year career in broadcasting, Dr. Stanton will retire in March, 1973.*





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# LETTERS FROM OUR READERS

## SCREEN ACTORS GUILD



Mr. Robert F. Lewine  
President  
Academy of Television Arts & Sciences  
291 So. La Cienega Blvd.  
Beverly Hills, Calif. 90211

Dear Mr. Lewine:

A number of members of the Guild who are also members of the Academy have noted with consternation the treatment accorded the subject of reruns in the Fall issue of the Television Quarterly which is published by the Academy. We have read the article here at the Guild and we are quite familiar with it as a reprint of material Mr. Wood has recently been circulating. The general dismay expressed is not as a result of Mr. Wood's article, although we disagree, as I'm sure you know, with his position, but rather with the editorial comments which precede the article.

The editorial comment exhibits complete misinformation as to the Industry and the facts. The Editor notes that for more than 25 years the Industry has been re-running its prime winter shows in the summer and that now this is being attacked by "a band of media critics, led by Barry Goldwater, Jr., whose motives remain obscure."

The facts are that the Hollywood unions, including Screen Actors Guild, Writers' Guild of America, Composers & Lyricists Guild, and the AFL Hollywood Film Council composed of numerous craft and creative unions, are urging the FCC to return the Industry to a sensible limitation of reruns similar in quantity to the old summer repeats. The rule proposed would limit repeats *on the network in prime time only to 25 per cent*. Our surveys show that on a year-round basis network prime time repeats exceed 50 per cent. New episodes of series average 22 to 24 and in too many cases the balance of the year is filled with repeats. The author of the comment unfortunately has not taken the trouble of ascertaining the facts prior to leveling rather blunt criticism.

To make matters worse the leadership of this effort is attributed to Barry Goldwater, Jr.,\* who has nothing whatsoever to do with it.


I personally question whether the Editor read the article since Mr. Wood himself explains in the second paragraph that the proposal being considered by the FCC is to limit reruns to 13 weeks out of 52 at night on the networks, exactly the amount of old summer repeats so dear to the Editor's heart.

The Guild, on behalf of all its members, deplores the abrasive comments on a matter of serious import to the professionals who earn their livelihood in our Industry. We urge that appropriate corrective action be taken by the Academy in the circumstances.

Very truly yours,  
Chester L. Migden  
Associate National Executive Secretary  
Screen Actors Guild

\*The authority for Representative Goldwater's involvement in this cause is The New York Times.—Ed.





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*Accordingly we will devote the bulk of the next issue—Vol X #3—to a discussion of this problem. Responsible spokesmen for all parties to the controversy are being invited to participate.*

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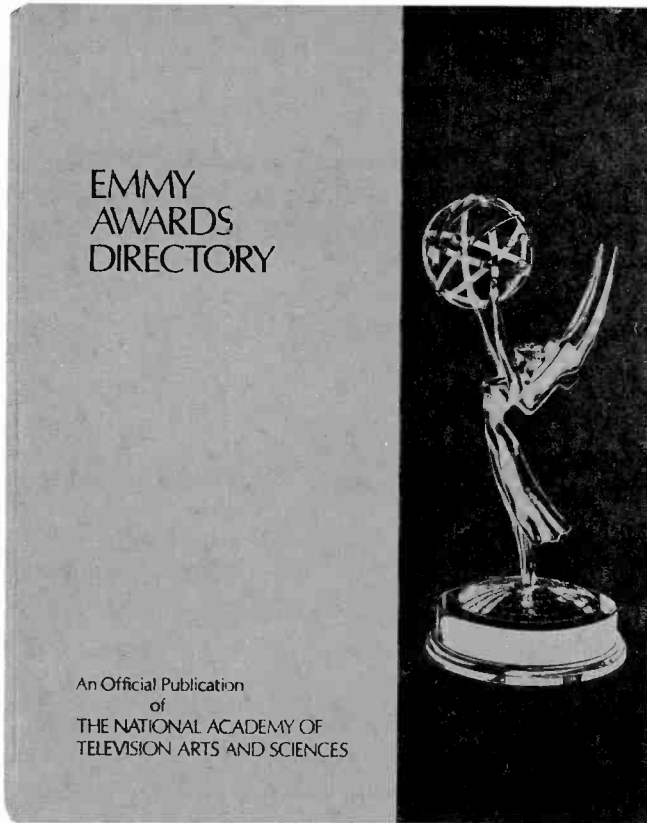
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