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VOLUME VII

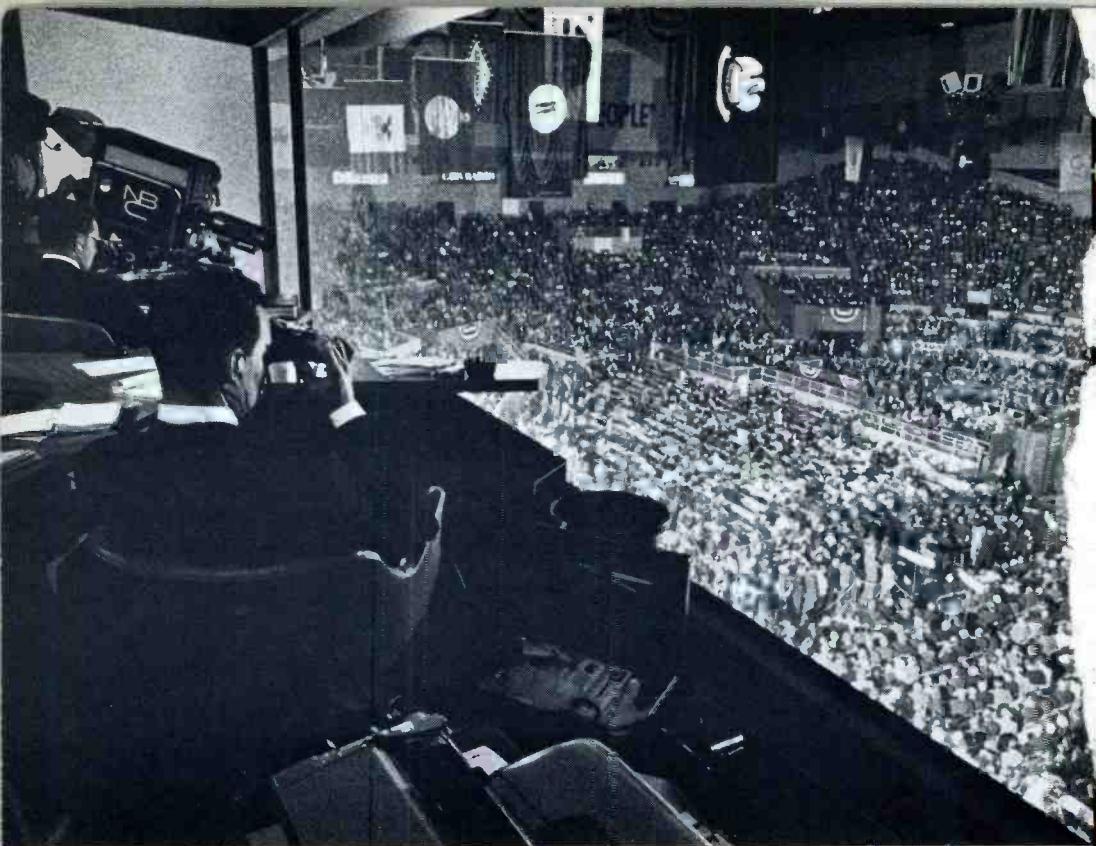
NUMBER 3

SUMMER 1968

QUARTERLY

THE JOURNAL OF THE
NATIONAL ACADEMY OF
TELEVISION ARTS
AND SCIENCES

Published by The National Academy
of Television Arts and Sciences with
the cooperation of the Television and
Radio Department, Newhouse Communi-
cations Center, Syracuse University



**The next best thing to
having watched the conventions
with NBC News was
to have been there.**

ELECTION NIGHT IS TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 5

TELEVISION QUARTERLY

JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF TELEVISION ARTS AND SCIENCES

Published by The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences in cooperation with the Television and Radio Department, Newhouse Communications Center, Syracuse University.

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TELEVISION QUARTERLY

SUMMER, 1968 VOL. VII NO. 3

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TELEVISION AND SOCIETY

The range of Television's social impact is reflected by the variety of interested parties who comment upon the medium's strengths and failures in this issue of *Television Quarterly*. Two former government officials, *Carl T. Rowan* and *Bill D. Moyers*; two television professionals, *Theodore F. Koop* and *David Karp*; three social-psychologists, *Harold Mendelsohn*, *Thomas Espie* and *Gregory M. Rogers*; and two university teachers of communications, *Herbert A. Seltz* and *Richard D. Yoakam*, bring their various expertises and insights to bear upon TV's actual and potential role in the shaping of our society. The essays by Messrs Rowan, Moyers and Koop are based upon papers they presented at this past summer's *William Allen White Seminar*, conducted by the School of Journalism of the University of Kansas.

The cultural impact of the medium is also considered in papers by *Tom McAvity* and *Barbara Schultz*, representing NBC-TV and CBS-TV respectively, who review some of the satisfactions they have enjoyed while associated with major "quality" program series of the past season.

Finally, *Avner Perry* and *David Attenborough* devote attention to recent TV developments on the international scene.

MASS MEDIA AND AMERICAN CONTRADICTIONS

CARL T. ROWAN

Today there exists an era of grim contradictions in which men yearn for peace as they yearn for nothing else, but still they fight with a savagery unexceeded at any time in human history. Black men fight and die in disproportionate numbers in distant paddies and jungles, all in the name of freedom; but black Americans also die in the streets of South Carolina because one arrogant man wants to keep his bowling alley lily-white.

We Americans plant a rocket with a robot ditch-digger on the moon and order that robot to dig. It digs. Still, we fathers cannot communicate with our sons, or mothers with daughters, or black Americans with white Americans.

We enjoy an abundance never known to any society, with booze, baubles, and banquets; yet we are told that the dollar is sick, the treasury is bare. Thus we can afford to pay for our foreign follies, but not for the deepest human needs of 33 million Americans who still know squalor, hunger and broad human want for respect from their fellow countrymen.

These are painful contradictions. They are made even more painful through their exposure to our mass media. However, the mass media can ease this situation. In erasing some of these contradictions, the mass media, the press and television, can mobilize

CARL T. ROWAN, syndicated columnist for the *Chicago Daily News*, was graduated from Oberlin College in 1947 and from the University of Minnesota in 1948 with a M.A. in Journalism. Before his current position, Mr. Rowan was the U. S. Ambassador to Finland between 1963 and 1964 and the Director of the United States Information Agency between 1965 and 1967.

in our generation some of the wisdom and compassion to combat these contradictions.

It has become a commonplace for Americans—especially journalists—to deplore our communications failures. We know that Lyndon Johnson isn't making sense to Ho Chi Minh; that Americans aren't well informed about events in Red China; that black Americans aren't communicating with white Americans; that poor people of all races feel alienated from affluent Americans of all races. We deplore all this out of a suspicion that Boston might have survived an era in which the Lowells talked only to the Cabots and the Cabots talked only to God—but that neither this world nor today's cities can survive the festering animosities, the violent explosions, that erupt largely because we do not, or will not, communicate with each other.

No more an acute example can make one aware of the magnitude of this problem than the U. S. Information Agency, of which I was director, and charged, of course, with the most mammoth communications assignment one could possibly be given. We (USIA) were to communicate to the South Vietnamese the nobleness of American intentions—and sufficient respect and understanding of the Saigon Government as to provoke peasants to give the kind of loyalties they had never given to any central government. We were to communicate to North Viet Nam the harsh reality of American resolution; but at the same time the tender message that we were not out to destroy North Viet Nam. We were to say to the Thais, Koreans, Malaysians and others that we would stand resolutely against the tide of aggressive Communism. At the same time we were to say to the Indians and Japanese that our objectives were limited, our fear of broader war was as great as theirs, our willingness to comprise was greater than our adversary's.

It did not take long for me to learn that my agency operated on the basis of more than a hundred "country plans"—a set of priorities, objectives, and programs designed for each country in which we operated. Each plan was based on what the Ambassador, the USIA chief, the intelligence experts, the military analysts agreed was peculiar to and important about that country.

As a result we lived with many conflicts of objectives from one country to another. We were required to carry propaganda water on both shoulders, and a little bit of it on the knees. Yet, I took up with enthusiasm this challenge to communicate at large

—to “tell America’s story to the world.” Imagine my great shock to learn that USIA wasn’t even communicating with the American people.

For example, there was a well-staffed secretariat to handle the hundreds of letters that came to the director each day. Someone thought my insistence on regularly seeing a sampling of this mail was peculiar. When I looked at my first sample, I understood why the secretariat might question my demand. Most of the public clearly was of the impression that the U. S. Information Agency was the place to which any citizen wrote who was having a problem finding something out. A boy in Amory, Mississippi, wanted to know when the Beatles were coming to the U. S. again and where in Montgomery, Alabama, they were going to perform. From Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania, a lad wrote: “I would like to find out some information about a Girl. Her name is Nora Carroll. She lives in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. I would like to know how old she is now, how tall she is, the color of hair. What school she goes to, what grade she is in. I hope this won’t be too much trouble to you. I guess that will be all.”

As inane as some of these requests seem, nevertheless they are true. So why was the USIA not communicating with the American people? It was the same reason for lack of communications across international lines and across ethnic boundaries in this country.

Congress had laid down certain prohibitions against the USIA communicating with Americans. There was one band of Congressmen who did not want the USIA lobbying for public support for larger appropriations. It was one thing for a huge military-industrial complex to lobby to push the military budget over 70 billion dollars a year, but heaven forbid that anyone lobby in behalf of the dissemination of ideas and information.

But there was a larger fear that was basically political. There was the constant, and partly valid, fear that some party, or politician, would turn this huge propaganda apparatus to selfish political benefit. In my time, the great feat was that the USIA would make Lyndon Johnson look like a saint to the American voter. This feat constituted about as big a compliment as anyone could have paid to the prowess of USIA’s propagandists!

Much that is wrong with the mass media today can be attributed to some kind of fear—fear of controversy or fear of advertisers, and most of all, fear of disapproval by the publisher’s or editor’s peer group.

Many of our communications problems at the USIA flowed from the fact that millions of Americans do not appreciate the potency of words, the power of ideas. They cling to attitudes belonging to an era when they could say arrogantly, "To hell with the rest of the world and what it thinks about us. We can lick 'em all in the showdown."

This arrogance sometimes expresses itself in the notion that communications with the rest of the world consists basically of our telling other people what is good and right about us. We see little necessity to know what is good, different, just about the acts and aspirations of other peoples. For example, we have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars telling Nigerians what a great, generous democratic people we Americans are. Yet, a bitter, murderous civil war has raged in Nigeria for a year. Most Americans can hardly give the name of the "country" that is fighting the Nigerian federal authorities.

Our press carries reams of copy about the war in Viet Nam. After all, *American* boys are involved in that struggle. But if as many people died today in the conflict between Nigeria and Biafra, so what? It is just so many more dead Africans.

These are harsh words, perhaps. But they are deliberate. We have a terrible domestic crisis in this country because this provincial philosophy has governed the operations of so many newspapers and television stations. A journalism professor in Texas recently was telling me that he works summers on the copy desk of a newspaper in a good-sized Texas city. One night, he said, the editors were bemoaning the fact that there was just no news—foreign, national or local. What could they use for a play story? Faces lit up when a telephone call told of a car crash nearby, in this newspaper's heavy circulation area, with six people killed.

When the first edition was brought up, the professor looked for the play story, expecting to read of the tragic accident. But some story of no import or interest carried the big headline. He scanned all the stories above the fold: no accident. Finally at the bottom of the page he found three paragraphs about the auto crash. It was incredulous. How could it be there when the editors were so happy earlier to have a story to put a bannerline on. He understood when he got to the last sentence and read: "All the victims were Negroes."

It was this kind of indifference, of racially-colored judgment, that was responsible for the press ignoring the race problem in America

for decades. When I was a young reporter, writing obituaries and the sort, an error in the work schedule left me with time to propose a return to my native South to write about what had changed in the lives of Negroes since World War II. What I wrote, in 1951, turned out to be a sensation largely because daily American newspapers had been too timid to deal with the subject. A Negro, almost had to rape or murder someone, generally white, to make the newspapers. As those articles appeared in the Minneapolis *Tribune*, the mail and the telephone calls poured in, many of them asking me to speak to this group or that. During these speaking engagements in rural Minnesota and the Dakotas, one thing got to be as regular as breathing: someone would get up in the audience and say, "We don't have any race problem in our town; we don't have any Negroes." Then I would try to explain that the problem doesn't exist in the presence or absence of Negroes, or any other "out" group; it exists in the mind. One only needs the presence of minority group members to make the problem manifestly obvious.

Today the press seems to sense a large responsibility in these areas of social conflict and dislocation than was the case two decades ago. There exists now a surfeit of newspaper copy and television treatment of the race problem. There is, however, a rather vigorous debate as to whether this better serves the interest of justice and the nation than did the old policy of timid silence.

Whitney T. Young, Jr., director of the National Urban League, argues that Stokely Carmichael is primarily the product of a press that craves sensationalism and conflict. He says Carmichael's following consists only of a handful of Negroes and "about 500 white reporters." Allowing for an element of overstatement, I am afraid that Young speaks more truth than the press is willing to admit. When Carmichael was virtually a nobody, some newspapermen noticed his facility for making inflammatory statements. And they made good copy. Very quickly, newspapermen and television interviewers everywhere were seeking out Carmichael to see who could relay to the public his most reckless utterance. In the same way mass media made Rap Brown a national figure.

The truth today is that someone who legitimately speaks for thousands of Negroes, who articulates their hopes and frustrations, can show up in most American cities and get no better than routine press coverage. But let a Negro show up who says: "If you don't do this or that, we're going to burn down this damned town." He'll make front page headlines and all the TV shows.

Does this mean that there is a need for a code to govern the coverage of riots and other racial disturbances? The answer is a certain "No." Who can develop a code that tells a reporter or editor what he must do in a situation that carries all the variables of human behavior? What we need are reporters and editors with knowledge of what it is they are writing about and with some contact with the peoples about whom they write. No newspaper would think of having a labor reporter who did not have some intimate contacts and associations with the men of organized labor. An editor would scoff at the idea of carrying the reports of a police reporter who didn't understand the police enough to know how they think, what their problems are, and figure out just whom to go to when he needed some reliable information. Many press people write about racial problems in this country who don't know a thing about Negroes—or Puerto Ricans, or poor people.

The press is worrisomely representative of one broad characteristic of human society as a whole: we make scientific progress in the physical sciences, in the areas of technical knowledge, but very little progress in terms of our ability to control and turn to man's benefit this new technical knowledge, this scientific know-how.

Mindful of the geometric progression of new knowledge, many good newspapers today have science editors and reporters who are literally experts in the field—whose scientific knowledge is broader than that of many college professors. Editors assume, rightfully, that only a man who specializes, who reads constantly, who brings a depth of specific interest to the field, can really say to readers what they need to know and understand about man's efforts to conquer the elements around us and turn new light on the dark fastnesses of outer space.

But in the field of social sciences—that area involving man's behavior that produces something close to anarchy on many campuses, an LSD fad at another college, a murder in Memphis, explosive rioting in a Washington, D.C. or a Chicago—most editors assume that anybody strong enough to carry a pencil and bright enough to string one word after another is capable of going out to cover the story. I frequently put on the hat of a public speaker and have occasion to be interviewed by newspapermen in many an American city. I don't need tell you that the questions they are inclined to ask initially are all conditioned by my color—as

if there is a basic assumption that race relations constitutes almost the sum total of a Negro's interest and knowledge.

Bias of this sort is revealed by the questions some of these reporters ask. I see an appalling amount of ignorance, a remarkable array of prejudices revealed as some reporter says: "But you've got a better job than I have. Isn't that proof that Negroes are not discriminated against in this country?"

"But I understand more Negroes drop out of high school than whites do. Isn't this proof that Negroes prefer to live where they do with what they've got?"

When I think that these questions, and whatever part of the answers newspapers carry, constitute a basic source of social enlightenment of the citizens of scores of American communities, it is little wonder that the Kerner commission would conclude that the nation is in deep social trouble plagued by white racism.

No other need is greater in this country than some type of journalism of hope. It may seem a bit harder to make interesting than conflict, and thus require more skill, more work, and more money. But it is what we must produce if our dreams and ideals are not to be overrun by hopelessness and despair.

We live in a time when men are more inclined to rely on force and oppression than ever before. It is true in international affairs. It is true in our strife-torn cities.

If reason is not to fail men in our time, we of the press must give men the information, the knowledge, to sustain reason. We can do so by practicing the journalism of hope—and I do not mean a journalism that offers only the pre-sweetened pap of empty optimism. We can tell our readers the hard truths, the grim realities, and still have it add up to constructive journalism.

Consider that shocking report on malnutrition and hunger in the United States. A few church groups, foundations and private citizens became concerned enough to assemble those grim facts about something that ought to shame us all. Now, where has the press been all this time? Why was it not some team of dedicated reporters who put these facts before the people? Is it only that the work involved cost more than publishers were willing to pay? I doubt it. I rather suspect that it is easier to pretend that we are discharging our responsibility to orderly social change in this country when we quote both Whitney Young and Stokely Carmichael—thus, no need for responsible crusading.

Ever since the forefathers' forefathers gathered in their first gatherings on the rocky shores of this country, it has been an unquestioned article of faith that every American is equally expert on politics, religion and the weather, and in this generation a fourth field has been added: television. This is probably fair enough, because television is almost as all pervasive, if not all persuasive an element as weather, religion or politics.

One of the natural hazards for a universal element is that it will become the universal whipping boy from time to time, depending on the national mood. So right now an assumption is prevalent among many, including Congressmen, that television causes city riots. The evidence for this seems tenuous so far, but there are already proposals that broadcast news people should get together and agree on procedures for withholding or delaying or managing news of riots in some degree or other.

There seem to be two parts to this concern: one, that a riot in a given spot may have started because cameras were present at the spot; two, that pictures of rioting in one city stimulate the irresponsible to riot in some other city. It is certainly true that some controlled demonstrations did not start until cameras arrived, which is also true of many press conferences, parades or ribbon-cutting ceremonies. It is true that some demonstrations never occurred because editors refused to send cameras, judging the affair to be only a publicity stunt. Demonstrators, of course, want their pictures taken, but it's highly doubtful that criminal rioters do.

On the second point, there is certainly a contagion about the riots. All contagions occur through communication, word of mouth, printed press, or broadcast, and whether the contagion is toward violence or sobriety, confusion or clarity. Wreckers require communication, but so do those who prevent wreckage. Because television does have an exceptional immediacy, many of its newspeople take certain precautions where riots are concerned. They try not to use camera lights at night; they use unmarked camera cars; they avoid emotional tones; they check and correct unfounded rumors, one of the most immediate and inflammatory causes of violence. They can blunder and do, like policemen or Guardsmen or city officials, but no general agreement or code for managing riot news is going to prevent this. It would almost certainly make things worse, because people would immediately distrust the news they do receive, and the rumormongers would have a bigger and more fertile field than ever.

Eric Sevaried

CBS Evening News with Walter Cronkite, August 22, 1967

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PRESS OR GOVERNMENT: WHO'S TELLING THE TRUTH?

BILL D. MOYERS

No two callings are more concerned with the public interest or more satisfying to a man's sense of duty than journalism and government. This bias of mine about the press and government is colored by the fact that I am a creature of both. I criticize them with affection, having learned enough about the vices and virtues of these two institutions to know that neither is totally innocent nor totally guilty of all the charges they heap upon one another. I have not learned enough about them to propose solutions to all the questions each asks about the other. But our obligation to each and their great power in a free society compel us all to ponder, question, and probe constantly whether they are meeting their obligations.

The first point to consider is that credibility is not the government's problem alone. Public officials are not the only victims of fallibility; they are not the only human beings who see things through their own special lens. The press also suffers from the appearance of contradiction, which is the essence of a "Credibility Gap." From my own experience at the White House, the following examples stand out.

First, when Edwin O. Reischauer resigned as United States Ambassador to Japan, he was interviewed by the press in Tokyo. The

Currently, **BILL D. MOYERS** is the editor of Long Island's only daily newspaper. In 1967 he resigned as Press Secretary to President Lyndon Johnson. Prior to that government position, he was Associate Director of the Peace Corps between 1961-1963. Mr. Moyers received an honors degree in Journalism from the University of Texas in 1956 and a Bachelor of Divinity degree with honors from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1959.

headline in the *Washington Post* the next day read: REISCHAUER BACKS U. S. VIET POLICY. The headline in the *New York Times* read: REISCHAUER CRITICAL OF VIETNAM POLICY. After a debate in the House of Commons on British support of U. S. policy in Vietnam, the headline in the *Washington Post* read: WILSON GETS SUPPORT FOR U. S. STAND. The headline in the *New York Times* read: COMMONS RESTRICTS BACKING OF VIETNAM. Perhaps both were correct, but was one more correct? To reconcile the difference is possible if one could read the full report in both papers, but for most people that is not an option. They do not have the opportunity to weigh the differences between contradictory stories.

Second, the day before the elections in South Vietnam in 1965, one commentator for CBS declared: "the armed forces have been turned loose in the get-out-the-vote movement. In the South Vietnamese army, like any other, an order is an order. But if the voters have to be driven to the polls with guns and bayonets, so to speak, it would appear that the Viet Cong has made its point about the Ky regime's popular support." The day after the election, however, another CBS commentator expressed amazement that so many South Vietnamese turned out to vote against the Viet Cong. "After all," he said, "the Government of South Vietnam is not driving the people to the polls with bayonets...." If the TV viewer had heard both reports, he might have asked: "What's going on here? Was one of the reporters not telling the truth? Was one right and the other wrong?" The answer is probably that each man was partially wrong and partially right, because each man saw what *he* was looking at, or looking for. "Who's telling the truth?" a correspondent friend of mine was asked when he returned from Vietnam. "Nearly everybody," he answered. "Nearly everybody out there bears true witness to his bias and his senses."

The nuances in these and other examples bear that out, and the point remains: the appearance of contradiction is a problem for the press, too. Like government officials, journalists look at ideas and events through their own eyes. There is nothing wrong with that practice: the mistake is to pass it off as something other than the pursuit of truth by men less opinionated than their peers.

I learned at the White House that of all the great myths of American journalism, "objectivity" is the greatest. Each of us sees what his own experience leads him to see. What is happening often depends upon who is looking. Depending on who is looking and writing, the White House is brisk or brusque; assured or arro-

gant; casual or sloppy; frank or brutal; warm or corny; cautious or timid; compassionate or condescending; reserved or callous. As press secretary, this was repugnant to me. As a publisher, there is no alternative but to accept it.

Does the press really permit its humanity to interfere in the search for truth? For example Richard Harwood, then of the *Louisville Courier-Journal* and now of the *Washington Post*, reported not too long after President Johnson was in office that several long-time correspondents at the White House, when asked why the President's honeymoon with the press had ended, gave this answer: "Although Johnson has made even more of an effort than Kennedy to cultivate and woo the press, most White House reporters don't care for him as a person. They liked Kennedy and enjoyed his company. Johnson hasn't won their affection." In response to this attitude, Ted Lewis, of the *New York Daily News*, asked: "What sort of journalism is that? It suggests that unless the President wins the 'affection' of the White House press, he is not going to get fair treatment." Ted may be right, yet in my experiences as White House Press Secretary, I rarely found that reporters were intentionally unfair to the President because he had failed to win their affection. No one begrudges a reporter his feelings, but one can lament the righteous indignation he expresses when it is suggested that he is an error-prone human being first, and a journalist second.

All of this is so obvious that the question arises, "Why discuss it?" The first part of the answer has to do with the professional longevity of the journalist. For all practical purposes we are beyond retaliation. We almost always have the last word because we are simply more durable. While the public can turn out officials whose integrity is exposed as unethical, or whose judgments are consistently wrong, or whose talents are proven to be inadequate, journalists do not operate at the end of an electorate's whim. The press can claim with Lord Tennyson's brook:

I chatter, chatter, as I flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

There is an even more important reason for examining our vision. It has to do with the crisis of confidence in America today. Many of our colleagues believe that the crisis affects public officials only. They are wrong. During my recent speeches at several col-

leges and universities I encountered a biting doubt about the veracity of both government and the press. One student in the Midwest said: "You know, Mr. Moyers, you have served in government and journalism, so it is doubly hard to believe anything you say." That remark says a great deal about the state of America today, and the state of America is disturbing. We seem on the way to becoming a nation of cynics. While skepticism is the mark of a healthy climate in a democracy, cynicism—widespread cynicism directed at the basic institutions of a society—can cripple a nation's will and undermine her spirit. A cynic, Lord Darlington told Cecil Graham, is a man who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing. And that is true of a cynical nation. Cynicism about the press and government ultimately will infect the very core of the transaction of public affairs; it will eat at the general confidence we must be able to have in one another if a pluralistic society is to work.

The fundamental issue, according to James Reston, is the question of trust. He writes: "The most serious problem in America today is that there is widespread doubt in the public mind about its major leaders and institutions. There is more troubled questioning of the veracity of statements out of the White House today than at anytime in recent memory. The cynicism about the Congress is palpable. The disbelief in the press is a national joke.... There is little public trust today." And even David Broder, one of the most perceptive of the young political reporters in Washington, told of spending a weekend in Pennsylvania, away from the political wars, only to find his hosts wanting to know if they can "truly trust anything the politicians, the press, or the public officials—the principal agents in the political process—say or write." Some of my colleagues in journalism say: "Well, they have a point, but most government officials lie deliberately—in the name of national security—while our mistakes are not intended." The reply is that a journalist can lose his credibility in the fashion many ladies lose their virtue: with the very best of intentions.

Many young people constantly point to examples of innocent discrepancy in expressing doubts about what they read. Take, as one example, the coverage last year of the protest in the United Nations Plaza. One headline read: 100,000 RALLY AT UN AGAINST WAR. Another account reported flatly that at least 300,000 had marched. One student told me, "We might forgive journalists for not being able to write, but how can we forgive you for not admit-

ting that you can't count?" Every political reporter knows how difficult it is to assess the size of a crowd, and no one has yet to offer a sure way of improving our estimates. The fact remains that people are not willing to recognize such handicaps in judging whether we are to be believed or not. Virtue can be lost quite innocently.

As citizens we should be worried when millions of people believe the government lies. As journalists we should be equally concerned when millions of people believe the press lies, too. A number of people, especially the young, agree with the assertion that "an ambassador is a man of virtue sent to lie abroad for his country, and a journalist is a man without virtue who lies at home for himself."

If there are growing numbers of people willing to believe the worst about the press, they are supported by quite sincere men in public life ready to convince them that their worst fears are justified. Who was responsible for the plunging fortunes of George Romney last winter? Not George Romney, but the press! "One of the most unfair things that has happened in the last two and a half years," he said, "was the effort by the press to create the idea that I have been inconsistent and wobbly and didn't understand the situation...."

And why do public doubts exist about the Vietnam war? Not because of the tenacity of the Viet Cong, the complexities of a brutish war, or the natural revulsion to the horrors of war. To hear military officials tell it, these public doubts can be traced to a "cynical element" of the press in Saigon. There are always people eager to prove that the press is responsible for their misfortune; the more they succeed in casting doubts on the veracity of the press, the more we have to work to clean our own house.

What specifically can we do? There is no overall cure. My suggestions are obvious and familiar. They simply need to be stated again and again as part of the vigilance that is the price of the power and obligation of the press.

First, the press should act with the same appreciation of candor about itself that it expects of public officials. This would lead to several improvements: an admission of "the subjectivity of our objectivity;" a confession that not even the press can discover the "whole truth and nothing but the truth"—that at best the press can only come up with the "bits and pieces of truth;" and an acknowledgement that its responsibility is greater than its skill.

Second, the press should either be prepared to live apart from tangling alliances with officialdom or be prepared to give up that illusion. There is considerable public skepticism about the cozy ties between the press and governments at every level, and much of this skepticism is justified. In Washington the temptation is often for both government and the press to think of themselves as brokers of the public interest rather than its guardians.

The third suggestion for improving the press's credibility is just as fundamental as a freshman journalism course. It is to make accuracy again the first rule of reporting. Nothing undermines the credibility of the press like sloppy reporting. Bad reporting creates unbelievers. When people read an inaccurate account of their own activities, they will tend to doubt everything else they read, too. It is a sad reflection on the state of our reputation today that far more readers believe the advice they get from Ann Landers than they do the advice of our editorials.

My fourth suggestion relates to one of the most common practices in Washington today—a practice that constantly afflicts the credibility of the press and government. This is the indiscriminate use of "backgrounders" as the source of hard-news stories. In order to correct this misuse, members of the Washington press must adopt some basic ground rules for "backgrounders" and must seek to get government officials to recognize and respect those rules.

The "backgrounder" is an old Washington institution—more endured than revered. The original purpose was to permit a government official to talk freely to newsmen without worry that some offhand remark would embarrass him, his agency, or the government. For that purpose it still has merit. But as Allen Otten of the *Wall Street Journal*, among others, has recently pointed out, the "anonymity of the 'backgrounder' has been increasingly abused to test public reaction to new schemes and projected appointments, to mobilize opinion behind government projects, and to advance one agency's cause or one politician's cause against others."

Individual reporters, as Otten emphasized, constantly seek information on a "background" basis from officials. They want as complete a story as possible, and frequently, in order to receive particular pieces of a story, have to promise not to quote the man they are talking to, or even mention his agency. But the individual reporter seeking "background" information on his own has a full opportunity to cross-examine his witness, to check the evidence with other sources later, to choose information he regards

reliable and accurate, and to throw away the self-serving propaganda.

Formal group briefings, however, are quite another matter. They tend often to degenerate into a relationship between the public official and reporters not unlike that of an *amanuensis* to his master. The competitive pressure permits little time for cross-checking and thus contributes to uniformity—as if the press corps were a delayed-action Greek chorus. That, indeed, is what the public officials want. Their objective is to get out what the government wants to get out, as the government wants it to get out—a quite natural and understandable ambition.

The dangers in this practice should be clear to anyone. For one thing, anonymity is fearless, and if a public official wants to do so and can find a journalist willing to co-operate, he can hide behind that anonymity to grind an axe or to float a balloon, while protecting himself from possible adverse reaction by fuzzing the source. Another danger is public confusion. I was once in a television control room at a moment when we could not see who was speaking although we could hear at least a dozen voices from the studio, and I thought at the time how bewildered newspaper readers must be when they read information from a plethora of unidentified sources. How can we expect to judge the reliability of a statement if it is attributed only to an "informed source?" Suppose, just to make a point, that instead of James Reston's by-line on his column, there only appeared these words: "By a high official of the *New York Times*." And in the place of the name of Tom Wicker there appeared only: "By a reliable source." They would be just as readable, but would they carry that urgent reliability essential to public trust in public information? The issue becomes more critical, when the people's understanding of public policy is clouded because certain information is deliberately divorced from its source.

All of this may appear hypocritical, coming as it does from someone who made his living by "backgrounding" the press. But I was troubled by the process, as were many of the reporters with whom I dealt, because while we knew the careful "backgrounder" to be useful and necessary, especially in the area of national security, we also felt it had become a habit of convenience, a rule rather than an exception. There was no question but that opinions and predictions, indictments, and speculation, coming from a host of anonymous spokesmen only increased the public's apprehension about the credibility of what it reads and what someone tells it.

Can restraint be brought to the use of "backgrounders" in Washington? Previous efforts of reform have been shortlived, but because public confidence is at stake, new efforts should be made. It is naive to believe that the practice will be abandoned altogether—or even should be. As Jules Frandsen, veteran head of the Washington bureau of United Press International, has said: "A lot of skulduggery in Government and in Congress would never come to light if everything had to be attributed. Employees often can't afford to risk their jobs by talking for attribution." Nonetheless, the practice is so consistently abused that some commonly accepted ground rules are in order.

A step in the right direction would be for representatives of the various press organizations to meet and try to agree among themselves on these ground rules. They could then request a meeting with the President-elect after the November elections to seek his support in getting the new Administration to recognize and respect the rules.

Having tried on several occasions to mediate between journalists and the government, I am not sanguine about the possibility of reaching agreement within or among either group on what the ground rules for "backgrounders" should be. As a point of departure for trying, here are eight principles which, in my opinion, would help to bring some order into a ritual that at the moment can only be as confusing to the public as Haitian voodoo.

ONE: "Backgrounders" should be designed to *explain* policy rather than *announce* policy. This rule would discourage the use of unattributed quotations which turn "soft news" into "hard news."

TWO: "Backgrounders" in subjects other than national security and foreign affairs should be the exception rather than the rule.

THREE: The contents of a group "backgrounder" should not be disclosed for at least one hour after the conclusion of the session. This would permit time for cross-checking. It would also reduce the possibility of a public official using a backgrounder strictly for self-serving purposes.

FOUR: The rules should be clearly stated before the "backgrounder" begins by the principal or by his press spokesman.

FIVE: There should be only two levels of concealment. Either the reporter uses the information on his own—a practice that

should be reserved for the most sensitive issues of national security—or it should be attributed as stated in the following principle.

SIX: The source should be identified by his specific agency. The loose anonymity of “high U. S. official,” “top government officials,” “friends of the President,” or “visitors who’ve talked to the President” would be replaced by “A Defense Department spokesman,” or “A U. S. Army official,” or “White House sources.” The reader would still be in doubt as to the authenticity and the reliability of the information, but the burden of proof would not be on **the** press completely.

SEVEN: The reporters should refuse to deliberately increase the obfuscation through such tactics as withholding the information until the source has left town (as in the case of General Westmoreland’s “backgrounder” last November), or by attributing the information to plural sources when it comes in fact from one source (as also happened when the correspondents changed General Westmoreland into “some U. S. officials”).

EIGHT: When a public official in a “backgrounder” refuses to permit attribution of material that is patently self-serving but reporters nonetheless feel obliged to carry the story, they should carry a sentence attributing the information to a Pentagon (or State or White House) official “whose name is withheld at his insistence.”

These suggestions are only the starting point for serious discussions by journalists and public officials. Other men will have better proposals. The important task is for the press to make some effort to deal with the problem. A “backgrounder” is useful to a public official and to a reporter, helping the one to get his viewpoint across and the other to gain valuable insight or information that he could not get if the official were required to speak for attribution. But **what** is convenient to the government and to the press is confusing to the public. These ideas are put forward with the *public* in mind. As far as the relationship between the press and the government is concerned, these suggestions tip the scale in favor of the press. That is deliberate. Most reporters in Washington go along with the existing arrangements for backgrounders because they feel they must—“that’s the name of the game.” They **do** so knowing that in most cases they are serving the government’s **interest** more than their own. However,

most reporters want and would welcome some attempt to agree on ground rules that would make it less necessary for them to compromise the appearance of integrity and independence.

Whatever rules are agreed upon, the problem will be in getting the government to respect them. But even that is not so formidable an obstacle as it appears. Government officials only call a "backgrounder" to brief a large press gathering when those officials have something to put out. If the newspapers and the media most read and watched by Washington officials—in particular, the three networks, the wire services, and the Washington and New York City press—insist that the rules by which they will transmit the information be followed, respect for rules will grow in time. And with it the credibility of the American press.

Now we come to the credibility of the Government—the "Credibility Gap." Time and time again these questions are asked: Do Presidents and press secretaries really lie? There is the obvious answer: Before there were Presidents and press secretaries, there were Adam and Eve, and there is a little of each of them in all of us.

The question, however, goes far beyond a simple affirmation that public officials are human. The press has an obligation to increase the public's understanding of the "Credibility Gap" since we have certainly increased the public's awareness of it. I have no question but that the Government overreacted to the charges of incredibility, partly because any man grows defensive when his integrity is assaulted. But if the Government has overreacted, the press has under-explained. The "Credibility Gap" became an overworked catch phrase that many people took for granted because they heard it repeated so often. What was otherwise an imprecise and poorly defined term took on the familiarity of an established creed which people read without thinking and repeat without understanding.

There has always been a credibility problem; the term is no recent addition to our political nomenclature. Some people trace it back to the premise of Plato that "The rulers of the State are the only ones who should have the privilege of lying, either at home or abroad; they may be allowed to lie for the good of the State." Plato has his apostles to this day; but they are not legion—they do not even often wind up in high places, fortunately. We will not be able to locate enough pathological liars in official Washington to dig a very deep "Credibility Gap."

Nor can the problem be traced merely to the obsessive tendency of public officials to be wrong in their predictions. That is a phenomenon of human nature, whether in public office or in the press. What better proof than the headlines that have appeared over the last few months in different American newspapers: "Romney Is In It For Keeps," "Rockefeller To Enter Oregon Primary," "Johnson Won't Quit."

No, we have to look elsewhere for a fuller understanding of the matter. I am familiar with all the charges and with the evidence: the erroneous predictions of military progress, the attempts to put the best face on every crisis, the fiscal confusion, the stories of peace feelers raised and peace feelers dashed, and so on. But it is not as simple as all that, and some things should be said to put the problem into perspective.

There were times when the Government was less than candid about important matters which were not related to national security. Never did it fool the press. The Washington press corps, by and large, is a persistent posse, and no administration will escape being called into account for its mistakes and sins.

But the problem of credibility is far more complicated. For the purpose of perspective rather than exoneration, a few observations should be made about some of the factors that make this a difficult issue.

First, some things are simply not suited for telling on the time schedule an inquisitive press prefers. At the risk of appearing to hide the facts, a President must often remain quiet. This is especially true when a President deals with a crisis over which he has little control, but for which he must assume great responsibility. The Pueblo incident comes to mind. As a journalist, I was quick to say: "Tell us more." But as one who has been there, I can appreciate why silence is sometimes the wisest policy.

I am not referring to the deep-seated propensity for clandestine conduct that led one official to put a sign on his desk which said: "The secrecy of my job does not permit me to know what I am doing." Instead I am referring to the necessity for a President to resist commenting on a situation until he can be certain his words will produce the intended result. President Harding learned this the hard way when he jeopardized the disarmament conference of 1921 by giving reporters an off-the-cuff interpretation of the treaty. What he did not know was that his Secretary of State had already

given the press his own interpretation of the treaty—and the two interpretations were at odds.

It is an axiom of the press that it will not hesitate to hustle a President's priorities if it can; the press forgets that diplomacy and political maneuvers, like film, can curl up and die from exposure. Nuclear overkill is a daily concern of a President; verbal overkill ought to be, too. Reporters should do their best to find out what is going on, but they must also recognize that the President has no obligation to spoon-feed them with a full disclosure of every facet of official thinking on every subject they see fit to probe.

Second, events make lies out of the best promises. Circumstances change, and so must a President's strategy. His best intentions may be aborted as a result, and he may end up in public having said one thing and doing another. But a President may sometimes do what he wishes; most of the time he may do what is right; he must always do what is necessary, and what is necessary changes with time and events. Thomas Jefferson no doubt was sincere when he opposed the creation of a national bank before he became President. Woodrow Wilson surely meant what he said about keeping us out of war; but circumstances overtook him, and he found it necessary to do what he did not intend to do. In 1964, Lyndon Johnson declared that he sought no wider war in Southeast Asia, that he would not send American boys to do the fighting for Asian boys. One year later he widened the war and American boys were sent to fight it. For these decisions the President has been accused of breaking faith with the American people, of lying, of deliberately doing what he had said he would not do, of creating the "Credibility Gap." If it were only that simple! Even when it leads him to be at odds with his former position, a President can ill afford to have a closed mind or to fail to do what *he believes* is best, no matter what *he said* or *believed* earlier.

Third, a President must sometimes reach conclusions from inconclusive evidence. There are times when a decision seems imperative before all the evidence is in. The choice may be between acting on the basis of information at hand—inconclusive though it be—or not to act at all. But Presidents know that each decision—to act or not to act—can have far-reaching consequences. No one could prove that the Marines were needed to save the lives of Americans at the Embajador Hotel in Santo Domingo, but his Ambassador was telling the President that those lives were en-

dangered. Later the press and others, with the benediction of hindsight, would argue that they were not required. The President, at the moment of decision, was not conducting a post-mortem. He was acting on the basis of immediate but inconclusive reports from the field; his decision was to commit. Only later would he be able more dispassionately to analyze more complete information.

I have made these points from the Government's point of view in an effort to build at least a small bridge across the "Credibility Gap." It is a shaky beginning at best, and I know how the view looks from the other side—the press' side—as well.

Some of the claims of government are incredible. I used to make them—although I was gone last year when the Department of Transportation revealed how the Bureau of Public Roads was bringing God back to American life. One of the Department's press releases began:

"There are 36 churches alongside the 60-mile Interstate Beltway (I-495) which rings the Nation's capital. And half of them have been built since 1958 when the route of the circumferential highway first became known." This, according to spokesmen of the Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration, points up vividly "the importance of the highway transportation system to the country's community life." This is known as straining the obvious.

A more serious cause of incredibility has been raised by Ted Lewis of the *New York Daily News*. Last year he wrote a column in which he quoted the statement made in 1963 by Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara that American troops could begin to be withdrawn from South Vietnam by 1965. Lewis was reprimanded by a spokesman for the Pentagon for writing that there had definitely been a "deliberate effort by Defense Secretary McNamara... to make things look better than they were." In quoting from the White House statement of October 2, 1963, he was told, "you have overlooked the very important final paragraph of that statement. It reads: 'The political situation in South Vietnam remains deeply serious. The United States had made clear its continuing opposition to any repressive action in South Vietnam. While such actions have not yet significantly affected the military effort, they could do so in the future.'" Lewis did not bother to reply to the spokesman, even though, at Hickam Air Force Base, six weeks after the issuance of the statement in December, Secretary McNamara had again talked about some U. S. personnel being able to

"return by the end of the year." Why did the newspapers at the time latch on to prediction about troop returns? Lewis answered, "Because people wanted to know how long our boys would be over there."

"My point is," he wrote me, "that there is a natural oversimplification in news handling due to limited space and public interest. Responsible government officials should know this. If a statement is distorted out of context, it is because it was susceptible to an honest oversimplification. Why don't people in Washington realize this is the heart of the credibility problem? McNamara's own case is only one of hundreds. He promised—in effect—when he should have expressed hope it would turn out that way."

Secretary McNamara unquestionably meant well as did the others in those "hundreds" of other cases. But Ted Lewis has a point. Many good intentions have gone awry in Washington because defuscation is susceptible to honest oversimplification. With each incident the confidence of Americans in the veracity of the government has diminished.

It is not possible to restore overnight what has been lost over the years, but a few steps can be taken at the top that will establish a climate of candor which is the minimum requirement for building trust between government, press, and people. If the new President elected in November wishes to work in such an environment, he will be advised to begin with four simple but essential elements:

First, regular press conferences—at least once each month—the purpose of which should not be to denounce the news but to explain the news. The timing of press conferences must fit the convenience of the President. However, they should be scheduled, and they should be frequent. And for all the short comings, they should also be televised.

Second, access for the press to second-and third-level officials in the White House and in each Department—men below the President and the Cabinet Secretaries who know the details of what is happening and who can increase a reporter's understanding of knowledge without abusing his responsibility.

Third, minimum use of "backgrounders" and unattributed quotations. The indiscriminate practice smacks of the secretiveness that Americans resist as alien to an open society.

Fourth, a willingness to live and let live. Some Presidents have regarded the press as an instrument of government, not an inde-

pendent arm of the people. Some have been eager to woo the press; others to criticize it. Some have wished to make cronies of reporters; others to make cheerleaders of them. Modern Presidents have realized that they can never effectively govern unless they learn to reach the people through the mass media, and the wise ones have discovered how to go through or over the press to the people.

What the press and government should seek from each other is a mutual no-poaching agreement, for the press and the government are not allies. They are adversaries. That should be repeated. They are adversaries. Each has a special place in our scheme of things. The President was created by the Constitution, and the press is protected by the Constitution—the one with the mandate to conduct the affairs of state, the other with the privilege of trying to find out all it can about what is going on.

How each performs is crucial to the workings of a system that is both free and open but fallible and fragile. For it is the nature of a democracy to thrive upon conflict between press and government without being consumed by it.

If neither the government nor the press can take for granted the confidence of the people, each of us must guard against poorly-formed judgments about the other and against an unperturbable sense of security about our own well being.

All of this is important because we are in quite difficult straits in this country. The deepest crises are not Vietnam and the cities, by cynicism about the political order and a corroded confidence in our ability to communicate with one another and to trust one another. For such crises the requirements are large—to revive the public spirit, to restore the political vigor, and to rouse the nation from her present querulous divisions to a new sense of purpose.

The government has quite a duty, for the issues must be made plain, the truth clear, if these things are to be done. But the role of the press is no less. As William Allan White said, "This nation will survive, this state will prosper, this orderly business of life will go forward if only men can speak in whatever way given them to utter what their hearts hold—by voice, by postal card, by letters, or by press."

TELEVISION: AMERICA'S STAR REPORTER

THEODORE F. KOOP

The techniques of newspapering and broadcasting differ greatly, but the aims are identical. Today the print and electronic media, however competitive, complement each other. I would not want to live without newspapers or without news on the air. If it happens that the latest Roper survey shows that most Americans get most of their news from television, there are also figures that report unparalleled newspaper circulation.

Newspapers function by printing news that connects each American with each other and with the other people of the world. In other words, a newspaper is a mass medium of communication.

That term has always been applied to newspapers, and rightly so. Because of its geography, the United States has no national newspapers such as blanket England. The three television networks, on the other hand, can simultaneously reach virtually all of the 94 per cent of American homes with TV sets. This nationwide focus of attention, be it for a pro football bowl game or the funeral of an assassinated President, is a catalyst that unquestionably is breaking down regional attitudes and attributes. Portland, Maine and Portland, Oregon are becoming more and more alike. Their interests and reactions are all-American.

Vice-President of CBS, **THEODORE F. KOOP** served as the Washington Director of News and Public Affairs for CBS between 1948 and 1961. Before that he worked as an editor for the Associated Press and *National Geographic*. Mr. Koop is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of Iowa.

As FCC Commissioner Lee Loevinger has noted: "Television is an element of our culture because it shows things of common and universal interest. National culture is not found in museums or formed by graduate schools or universities. It is composed of common habits and patterns of living of people in daily activities, and of the common interest in entertainment, sports, news, and even advertising."

Therefore, because TV is a mass medium of communication, of all of its manifold opportunities and responsibilities, its most important single function is the dissemination of news and information. This does not mean just daily showings of film clips of exciting events. Beyond the spot news of the day the broadcaster, like his brothers in the print media, has the duty of explaining events and putting them into perspective. Thus the documentary, a unique program form, is assuming increasing importance in network and station schedules.

Radio news achieved its stature with the advent of World War II, more than 15 years after the commercial industry began. Television news was nearly as slow in its development. At first many broadcasters considered it a novelty, just another form of entertainment. To present news programs they drafted announcers with honeyed voices and profiles that earlier might have graced Arrow collar ads. But professional newsmen, first recruited from newspapers, have gradually replaced these pretty-boys until today television is creating its own generation of trained reporters and editors.

In addition to journalistic competence, a TV newscaster must possess a nebulous quality that might be called flair. He must have believability—The knack of putting the news across. I suppose the greatest compliment he can receive is the comment, "He sounds as if he knows what he's talking about." *For he is not merely an impersonal byline.* Walter Cronkite and Huntley-Brinkley, for example, are the men who come to dinner in multitudes of homes; they are welcome friends of the family.

Television newsmen are the first to acknowledge that their progress, disciplined by the clock, cannot provide as thorough coverage of the day's news as a metropolitan paper. The number of words spoken in a half-hour newscast would fill only about three columns of type. Yet TV news has won tremendous popular acceptance. Not only does the Roper survey rank it as the prize news source for the majority of people but it also rates television first

in believability. For that reason it is proper to give television the accolade of "star reporter."

The impact of television news has never been more apparent than in the coverage of our immediate crises—the Vietnam war and the racial disturbances in American cities. It is not quite accurate to call the Vietnam conflict television's first war, for there was admirable film and voice reporting of the Korean fighting. But TV sets were fewer then, and this is the first war which the entire nation has been able to witness. Films taken only a few hours earlier bring home not only the horrors of battle but also their seering effects on the civilian population of Vietnam.

This is not a pretty sight. Television has banished the glamor of war forever. People do not like what they see, and many want to stop seeing it. Letter after letter urges broadcasters not to show the blood of battle, because it is too awful—not to show Viet Cong villages being burned, because our troops would never do such a thing—not to report Allied failures and mistakes, because it is unpatriotic. Moreover, these complaints object to the lack of firsthand accounts of what goes on behind the enemy's lines—his campaign of terror and torture, his own mistakes and failures.

Unfortunately, American newsmen cannot take cameras and microphones into enemy territory, any more than they can erase the gore and the terror of the entire war and suddenly make the fighting antisepctic. They cannot turn it into a clean war. To be sure, they edit for taste. But they cannot black out the conflict and give their viewers the ostrich's confidence that it has gone away.

War coverage does avoid one great dilemma that presents itself in reporting an urban riot. The course of the Vietnam fighting is not changed by whatever is shown on the TV screens in the United States. That may not be the case, however, with spot coverage of a racial disturbance. There is always the possibility that even the presence of television reporters and camera crews on the scene may generate further violence. Broadcasters in various cities have tried different methods of preventing such action. In some instances they have withheld all news of a disturbance for 30 minutes or so, until police can move in. Elsewhere, they have avoided live coverage and have shown film later. In many instances they have removed the camera crews if it appeared their presence was contributing to disorder.

None of these procedures, of course, is entirely satisfactory. In

a forum before the American Society of Newspaper Editors two weeks ago, Richard Salant, president of CBS News, observed: "You can get a small, sporadic action and it can look like Armageddon, but it isn't. But if we don't give live coverage, we give rise to this question: If you're not covering this, what else are you not telling us?" Emmott Dodmon of the *Chicago Sun-Times* promptly noted that whereas Chicago television stations had delayed broadcasting inflammatory material, his city desk was deluged with telephoned complaints that people had lost confidence in television because it was not carrying incidents which the callers had witnessed.

The question also arises whether such extremists as Stokely Carmichael and Rap Brown should be given air time. As in the case of the Vietnam war, the activities of Carmichael and Brown would not cease just because they were not seen on television. But broadcasters appear to be generally agreed that during the tension of a civil disturbance, their air appearances should be minimal if shown at all. The danger of further incitement is too great. Broadcast newsmen are no longer seeking out these men for special interviews.

So the broadcaster, like the newspaper editor, must make his own decisions, minute by minute, to fit immediate events. He cannot, like his critics, have the benefit of second-guessing. Television news is often live and thus does not even have the benefit of prior editing. The broadcaster stands on his best journalistic judgment, showing reportorial restraint but recognizing the necessity of giving his audience as much information as possible under the circumstances.

One other phase of television journalism—the reporting of governmental affairs and the election process—greatly surpasses newspaper coverage. What can be of higher purpose in a democracy where the people choose their officials and then monitor their performance to determine whether they merit reelection?

The television camera focuses on those representatives at work: it is the people's agent in the halls of government. Television asks the President, the Cabinet, members of Congress, governors and mayors to account for their stewardship, often under incisive reportorial questioning. The camera is still not admitted to sessions of Congress or to meetings of committees of the House of Representatives, presumably the elective body closest to the people. It is generally permitted in Senate committee meetings, and thus

poses a problem for broadcasters, as pointed up by the recent hearings on the Vietnam war before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Is it a greater public service to carry such a hearing live and in full during the day, before a comparatively small, largely feminine audience? Or is it preferable to edit the hearing into an hour of highlights, to be broadcast during prime evening time? Each method has its journalistic and its public supporters. To those who object when a television network or station chooses to present an evening summary instead of the full hearings, very few newspapers even carry the text of a thirty-minute speech, much less five or six hours of hearings.

Both television and radio broadcasters recognize that their media have not been fulfilling their maximum capability of public service in an election campaign. This is because of the "equal time" provision in the Communications Act. News broadcasts and such regularly scheduled interview programs as *Face the Nation*, *Meet the Press* and *Issues and Answers* are exempt. Where there are only two candidates for an office, there is little problem. But did you realize that there were a score of candidates for President in 1964? The prospect of providing, any 20 half-hours of air time for as many candidates, whether serious or frivolous, is inhibiting to the broadcaster's desire to acquaint voters with the issues and personalities of the campaign.

Repealing this section of the law would make it possible for broadcasters to keep the campaign in perspective by concentrating on major candidates, just as newspapers do. Waiver of the law in 1960 made possible the Kennedy-Nixon debates, whose popularity was indicated by the fact that a total of about 115,000,000 people saw or heard at least part of at least one of the four meetings. The average television audience for all four debates was 70,000,000. By comparison, the peak audience of any political broadcast in 1964—the night before election—was only 16,000,000. Perhaps even more important than the large audience for the debates was the fact that partisans heard the other side, in contrast to their usual tendency of following only their favored candidates either at rallies or in broadcasts.

Broadcasters currently are urging Congress to waive that portion of the law again this year, so that major Presidential and Vice-Presidential candidates can appear both before and after the conventions, not only in debates but in special interviews or talks. The climate is not ready for complete repeal.

Television's political coverage, however, has two unique aspects. The first is the networks' innovation on election night in making computerized forecasts of winners from the early returns in key precincts. Some politicians complain these announcements may affect the late voters in the West—whether to jump on the band-wagon or to favor the underdog, they do not seem to be sure. At any rate, all the responsible research has failed to show any correlation between these early predictions and the decisions of last minute voters. In any event, these complaints, meritorious or not, could be silenced by the establishment of a 24-hour voting holiday, with the polls opening and closing at the same instant from Maine to Hawaii.

The other aspect is editorializing for or against candidates. As with editorials in general, this is done by a comparatively small number of stations. But the practice is gradually growing, and many office holders are unhappy about it, even though time is provided for rebuttals. Broadcasters cannot ignore the possibility that Congress sometime may try to ban such endorsements, even though it would never occur to its members to try to forbid similar newspaper editorials.

Radio and television are helping to provide a greater variety of community voices—both editorial and news—at a time when the number of newspaper voices is diminishing. To be sure, too many of the broadcast editorials still are on "safe" subjects, but here again, it would appear that the older print medium has furnished the mould. Boldness will come with maturity.

The cost of television news programming cannot be overlooked—more than \$1,000,000 to cover one space flight; \$3,000,000 for last year's Middle East War, and well above \$10,000,000 for all political events of a Presidential election year. A station's news department is frequently not self-supporting. For the networks the news deficit runs into millions of dollars a year. Yet, despite the expense and the manifold technical problems, the great majority of broadcasters now accepts complete journalistic responsibility. The quality of the finished product is not uniform, but the resolve and the zeal are there.

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“OPERATION GAP-STOP”

HAROLD MENDELSOHN, THOMAS ESPIE,
GREGORY M. ROGERS

CRISIS IN URBAN COMMUNICATION

America has always been a nation of change—restless, dynamic, and creative. But since the end of the last war the rate of change experienced in America has become prodigious, outstripping anything that was known anywhere in the world. The fountainhead of this change has been a dramatically innovative technology which has produced startling dividends in wealth and leisure. Sadly in its wake it has also bequeathed a legacy of disquiet and perplexity.

Nowhere has the rate of social change produced by technological progress brought forth more urgent and pressing problems than in America's cities. The flow of population from the rural to the urban setting that has been a characteristic of industrial societies for more than a century has continued with some notable modifications. A series of significant mechanical innovations in the agricultural sector has in the last decade or so flooded the cities, particularly the Northern cities, with large numbers of dispossessed agricultural workers, many of them Negroes. However because of another series of innovations, the demand for such unskilled labor as these immigrants generally represent has been progressively diminishing. As unemployment has thus mounted among the urban poor, the resultant growth of crime and civil unrest has led to a progressive evacuation of the core cities by the middle class. This in turn has caused a diminution of the urban tax base resulting in run down underfinanced and undermanned civil services.

We are thus presented with a historically unique anomaly. As American society in gross terms proceeds to levels of affluence never before known, the great cities, traditionally the economic and cultural bases of our society, have become the scene of turmoil, unrest, and violence.

This new and disturbing situation represents the greatest chal-

lenge thus far to that pragmatic flexibility which has always been the strength of American society. The challenge is great because it is urgent. We are no longer in a position to reserve our options by debating whether or not change should take place. We must face the fact, however unwelcome, that radical and irreversible changes have already taken place and that either we adapt to those changes positively and creatively or passively submit to the damage to society that may be wrought by blind uncontrolled force.

No sector of our society is immune to the pressing necessity for adaptation to the new emergent reality. Most notably and most urgently government and business are under an inescapable obligation to redefine their respective roles and to accept a fuller more positive involvement in the total spectrum of urban life. Nor can the mass media evade the challenge of a radically altered and threatening situation.

Information is the life blood of our modern society. Knowledge is the basis of our affluence. The crises that face us are finally crises of ignorance and misunderstanding. Because it is through the mass media that most of our information flows; because it is by mass media that we build our store of knowledge, it is only through responsible and judicious use of the mass media that we can overcome the crises of ignorance and misunderstanding that face us. It was with these considerations that the aim of Project Gap-Stop was envisaged: to explore a new and innovative use of television.

Traditionally television uses a scatter gun technique. It hits the largest number of viewers by aiming squarely at the center of the mass. And it might well be argued that for a mass medium this is the most apt policy. Certainly most people are pleased most of the time with most of the fare offered by television. In general terms the scatter gun technique works well. But certain sub-populations miss out. Because they are too far from that central point on which programmers concentrate their aim, these sub-populations are inadequately served. The world portrayed on television is not their world; its problems are not their problems; its news has little real bearing on their day to day lives. Because of this, television rather than "tying them in" to totality of society to some extent even operates to reinforce and underline their separation and isolation from society. Television in this context ceases to be a tool of socialization, but acts rather as part of the mechanism of alienation.

THE TARGET AUDIENCE

Operation Gap-Stop was concerned with one of these relatively isolated sub-populations—the urban poor resident in the public housing projects of the City of Denver. The project set out to test the efficiency of television as a means of transmitting socially ameliorative information regarding day-to-day living to this particular sub-population. The approach adopted, in complete contradistinction to the scatter gun technique, was based on careful analysis of the needs and tastes of this distinct population and on the provision of program material hand-tailored to meet their very specific requirements.

Clearly the first task was to find out as much as possible about the people concerned. A team of interviewers was carefully selected, many of them from the Negro and Spanish-American minorities so amply represented in the housing projects. These interviewers descended on the housing projects and questioned a randomly chosen sample of 649 heads of disadvantaged families. From these interviews it was possible to put together an accurate and detailed picture of our target population.

The world of the City of Denver housing projects is very much a woman's world. Of our sample 76 per cent were female. If many of them were women without men, certainly they were not without children. A majority (60 per cent) of the women we were concerned with had more than two children, and 46 per cent had more than four children.

Not unexpectedly income levels were low, with 80 per cent living on less than \$300 a month and more than half (56 per cent) living on less than \$200 a month. About half (54 per cent) had at one time been Welfare recipients. Generally income levels and Welfare receipts were felt to be inadequate.

These women were trapped. The typical picture was that of a woman whose man had for one reason or another left her with two or three children, in a position where the only employment available hardly covered the cost of a baby sitter. Perhaps most strikingly they were trapped by their own lack of education. Only 17 per cent had completed high school, and only 26 per cent had ever received any kind of vocational training.

Naturally enough a high proportion of our sample (84 per cent) admitted to having one sort of worry or another, and 39 per cent confessed they were very worried. Predictably, in a group in which economic deprivation was endemic, financial problems

loomed large. Of those interviewed 61 per cent had some sort of financial problem in the family. Health problems were also widespread, affecting 50 per cent of the sample.

Many of these women suffered feelings of inadequacy in the face of the many problems besetting them. Some sort of inadequacy was experienced by 61 per cent of our sample in dealing with health problems, by 45 per cent in dealing with money problems, and even by 33 per cent regarding the purchase and preparation of food.

One of the saddest aspects of the kind of situation in which so many of our sample found themselves is that they had no clear idea of where to turn for help. Of those interviewed 60 per cent confessed to a lack of knowledge concerning where to go for help in solving their problems. Poignantly 68 per cent found themselves in sympathy with the sentiment that "These days a person doesn't know who he can count on."

Many of the people in our sample were isolated from society and uninvolved in any kind of social activity. Of those interviewed 92 per cent said they usually spent their non-working time at home and 65 per cent belonged to no clubs or associations of any kind. Perhaps in view of the fact that 65 per cent owned no car, this lack of mobility is not so surprising.

Significantly, though, 90 per cent *did* own a television set. One fact our survey brought out clearly was that television was the channel of communication preferred by our sample in building up its store of information about the world at large. Of those interviewed 50 per cent said that TV was the medium through which they received most of their news of the world. Newspapers ran second representing the favored information channel for 30 per cent of the sample. The sample spent more time using television than with any other medium at all times of day. They even spent more time viewing TV than in conversation with friends and neighbors. In the afternoons, for example, 46 per cent spent more than an hour viewing TV. Whereas only 32 per cent spent more than an hour in conversation. In the evenings 65 per cent spent more than an hour viewing TV compared with 30 per cent who spent more than an hour in conversation. *Clearly McLuhan's electronic village is already with us!*

Why did they use television? The following were cited as reasons why they viewed television by those interviewed. The *per*

centages refer to the proportion of the sample citing the reason in question.

A. To keep me company when I feel lonely	60
B. To help kill time	50
C. To help me forget my troubles	46
D. To make me feel good when I feel bad	45
E. To stay feeling good when I feel good	39

In other words these psychologically supportive functions were mentioned, on average, by 48 per cent of the sample. However other reasons were cited as follows:

F. To learn about what is going on in the world	83
G. To learn new things I didn't know before	72

So that what emerges is that although the psychologically supportive functions of television were clearly important to our sample these were of subordinate importance to the learning functions of the medium.

What kind of television did these people watch? Given the primacy of the learning functions over the psychologically supportive functions as reasons for viewing one might have been pardoned for expecting news, documentaries, and so forth as the preferred program category. True this category was cited by the second largest proportion of respondents, seven per cent, as their first choice and as their second choice by six per cent, but the kind of program cited by the highest proportion of respondents as first choice, by 16 per cent, and as second choice, by 14 per cent, was the *day time serial*.

The conclusion was unavoidable. If the prime function of television was a learning function and the preferred program format was the "soap-opera," it seemed very likely that *soap-operas were in fact being used as learning material*. But was there really an unrequited demand for the kind of program content we envisaged? We sought confirmation.

Our sample was asked what would be the chances of their viewing TV shows containing various kinds of informational material. The following per centages replied that there was a good chance they would view such programs.

HEALTH	86
WHERE TO GET HELP WITH PROBLEMS	84
MONEY MANAGEMENT	81
HOW TO GET A JOB AND KEEP IT	75

Clearly a felt-need existed. Could we provide the kind of program which could successfully fill that need?

OUR KIND OF WORLD

Our pre-exposure survey had provided us with an invaluable body of information regarding our target population. This was rounded out with information from other sources.

Of late years a considerable literature has grown up concerning urban poverty. This we freely availed ourselves of. Michael Harrington's *The Other America*, David Caplovitz's *The Poor Pay More*, Herbert Gan's *The Urban Villagers*, Margaret Clark's *Health in the Mexican-American Culture* are only some of the references which proved particularly useful.

We went further and sought first hand expert advice from agencies and organizations familiar with the problems of the poor and operating in Denver. Altogether 27 experts affiliated with 14 such agencies were interviewed on the following points. What kinds of information were the poor most in need of? What kinds of ignorance hurt them and had the most damaging kind of effects? What specific idiosyncracies should we be aware of in trying to reach them? What emerged from the inter-play of these various inputs?

As we have seen the television format preferred by our audience was the soap-opera. Hence the emergence of *Our Kind of World*—an eight part family serial. Woven into the eight scripts were "bits" of information in eight categories—health and hygiene, diet and food preparation, social services available, social and family obligations, the world of work, how to get a job and keep it, family budgeting and credit management, and sensible shopping habits. The information in these various categories was carefully balanced and metered to simplify the eventual assessment of impact.

The chief characters in the series belonged to two families living next door to each other in one of Denver's housing projects. In the first episode Mrs. Donahue, the mother of a Negro family, is rushed to the hospital to have a baby and a cousin, Marilyn, arrives to look after the two Donahue children Willy and Vicky. Mrs. Valdez, the Donahue's Spanish-American neighbor, rallies round helping Marilyn with good advice. Mrs. Valdez's husband has left her to bring up her son Ramon on A.D.C. In the second episode Floyd Donahue returns from California, where he has been unsuccessfully seeking work, to welcome his new son and to continue the heart-breaking search for employment in Denver. In later episodes Ramon, in his mother's absence, is smitten with diphtheria. His mother's brother Sam Romero arrives on a visit,

intervenes between Ramon and the ministrations of the neighborhood *curandera* and rushes the boy to the hospital. Ramon and Willy are accused of vandalism at school, and Mrs. Valdez and Mrs. Donahue are brought to take a fresh look at the way they are raising their sons. Mrs. Donahue has an enlightening run-in with a door-to-door book salesman. Sam Romero buys a dud television from a gyp artist, and Mrs. Valdez explores the possibilities of redress with Legal Aid.

Finally Marilyn becomes engaged; Floyd Donahue gets a job in a welding shop and signs up for a welding training course in the evenings; Sam Romero takes a General Aptitude Test Battery at State Employment and is set to go on an M.D.T.A. training course as a chef.

All in all *Our Kind of World* is a real story about real people in real situations.

To complete adherence to the "soap-opera" format preferred by our target audience several "commercials" were devised for insertion into the actual programs. Because it was hoped that the shows might eventually be aired in other urban centers than Denver, local references are almost completely absent from the scripts themselves. The "commercials" compensated for this by stressing the services available through the Colorado State Employment Service, the City of Denver Department of Health and Hospitals, the Office of the Mayor of Denver, the City of Denver Welfare Department, City of Denver Schools Department, and the Denver Metropolitan Council for Community Service.

Production of the eight shows was undertaken by Station KRMA, Denver's non-commercial television outlet. So far as possible actual members of the city's ethnic minorities were cast as actors. Sensitive and creative direction succeeded in extracting vital and believable performances from all those involved. All concerned were more than satisfied with the quality of the eight shows.

But of course finally the arbiters in this regard had to be the audience. With this in mind Operation Gap-Stop proceeded to its last phase—a survey of those same family heads who had originally been interviewed. Had *Our Kind of World* reached its audience? What kind of impact had the shows enjoyed?

IMPACT OF THE SHOWS ON THEIR TARGET AUDIENCE

There are difficulties in the way of assessing the relative success or failure of truly pioneering enterprises. There is no form to go

on, no precedents, no yardsticks. In spite of this, what has been learned concerning the impact of these shows seems to give grounds for a high degree of optimism regarding the approach adopted.

In the first place prior to the shows being aired a survey was conducted covering 649 heads of families (predominantly females) living in the public housing projects of the City of Denver. The chief aim of this first survey was to find out as much as possible about our target audience. What was the pattern of their day to day lives? What were their problems? What were their tastes in television? How did they gain knowledge of the world? What was their biggest areas of disabling ignorance? These were the kind of questions asked. The answers were invaluable in the preparation of the scripts.

By the time the shows had been aired several months had passed. Deaths, movements out of the area, and other reasons had reduced our original sample to 424. We were interested in measuring the relative efficiency of various methods of motivating our audience into actually viewing the shows. The 424 individuals remaining from our original sample were therefore divided into three sub-groups.

One group of 68 was motivated to view by means of exposure to a modest amount of printed promotional material. A second group of 193 was motivated to view by means of a word-of-mouth campaign. A third group of 64 was motivated by means of a small token monetary incentive. A fourth group of 99 was used as a control, receiving no form of motivation at all.

As expected the most potent form of motivation proved to be the monetary award. Forty-four per cent of the group thus motivated viewed the programs.¹ Print and word-of-mouth proved about as effective as each other with 16 per cent and 17 per cent of each group respectively viewing the shows. Ten per cent of the control group viewed one or more of the shows.

In all 82 (19.3 per cent) of the 424 individuals in the sample watched one or more of the programs. Here it should be remembered that our first survey found that ten per cent of those interviewed did not own a television set. If we assume then that ten per cent of those interviewed in the second survey were unable to view because they did not own a receiver, our 82 viewers represent 24 per cent of all potential viewers (owners of TV receivers).

Our Kind of World—would have received a rating of 7. Although the shows were also aired at 6:00 P.M. in the hope of picking up male viewers who worked during the day, from the outset

our prime target audience was recognized as female and the shows were aired at 12:00 noon with this audience in mind. Between 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M., ten soap-operas are screened in the Denver area. Noon was the central point in this period, and the time we expected to find most of our audience. This proved to be the case.

Our rating of seven compared well with other shows. The average rating for shows screened at noon in Denver is six. The average rating of the ten soap-operas mentioned is five. Only one of the ten rated more than a seven. Nine of the ten rated less than seven.

True *Our Kind of World* was aired twice a day and special motivational techniques were applied to a proportion of those in our sample. On the other hand in view of the short period *Our Kind of World* was going to be on the air and the fact that it was on an educational channel generally neglected by our audience, the use of these devices is apt. The other soap-operas it should be remembered were on regular entertainment channels and in many cases had built up their audience over several years. *Our Kind of World* had only eight days!

The viewership per centages mentioned obviously refer to the per centage of those individuals comprising our sample who themselves viewed the shows.

However our survey also brought to light the existence of a substantial "secondary audience." Although 58 per cent of the sample reported they viewed *Our Kind of World* alone, 19 per cent said they viewed the shows with their children, five per cent with their spouse, 12 per cent viewed the shows with spouse, children and other members of the family, and ten per cent reported having viewed with friends and neighbors. It would seem, therefore, a safe assumption that 38 per cent of our "primary viewers" watched the shows in the company of say three other individuals which would seem to point to a "secondary audience" of the order of approximately 100 individuals in addition to the primary audience of 82.

Comparing the *Our Kind of World* shows with other shows they liked to watch, 67 per cent of viewers found them "better than most." They were particularly liked by Spanish-American viewers, 73 per cent of whom thought them "better than most." Of all those who viewed the shows 31 per cent said they enjoyed viewing them "about the same as most." None found them "worse than most." Asked whether they found the shows believable, 90

per cent replied that they had found them "very believable." This compares well with a mere one per cent who believed "hardly anything" of the contents in the shows. Asked whether they found *Our Kind of World* like their own life, 79 per cent of viewers said the shows were like their own life of which 37 per cent said they were "very much" like their own life.

In view of the fact that we were limited to producing only eight programs in the series, we were particularly interested in whether or not, given time, it would be possible, hypothetically at least, to build a substantial audience for this kind of program. Indications were that a long-running series of this type would indeed find itself an audience. *Of those who viewed the shows 95 per cent said that, if more similar shows were aired, there was a good chance that they would watch them; 62 per cent said there was "a very good chance" that they would watch them.*

The shows were talked about. Of those who viewed them 46 per cent reported they had discussed the shows with friends and relatives, and a satisfying 45 per cent went so far as to recommend the shows to people outside their own immediate viewing circle. Surprisingly 42 percent reported that, so far as they were able to determine, these friends *had* in fact watched subsequent episodes.

Although the one aspect of the series singled out by most viewers (29 per cent) as that which appealed to them was the plots or stories, an important 21 per cent mentioned the informational content as the aspect which most attracted them.

This, of course, was to us the most salient issue. Had we really reached our relatively "unreachable" audience? Had we made any real impact? Our survey indicated that, without any doubt, meaningful gains had been registered in this regard. *Of those who viewed Our Kind of World—62 per cent said that the shows had, indeed, helped them with their everyday problem, and 36 per cent said the shows had helped them "very much" or "a lot."*

Certainly, those who had viewed the shows evidenced more self-confidence in dealing with everyday problems than did those who had not. When those who had viewed the shows were asked to rate their own knowledge in areas of practical everyday importance and when these findings were compared with similar data obtained from non-viewers in the sample, viewers displayed considerably more confidence in their own knowledge.

The following compares levels of knowledge claimed by viewers and non-viewers in areas of information covered in the *Our Kind of World Programs*.

CLAIMED AMOUNT OF KNOWLEDGE OF AREA

	<i>A Lot-</i> Score 2 <i>Per Cent</i>	<i>A Little-</i> Score 1 <i>Per Cent</i>	<i>Nothing-</i> Score 0 <i>Per Cent</i>	<i>Mean</i> <i>Score</i>
Taking care of health problems				
Total Viewers (82)	52	48	-	1.5
Total Non-Viewers (343)	45	52	3	1.4
Purchase and preparation of inexpensive, tasty and nourishing food				
Total Viewers (82)	61	34	5	1.6
Total Non-Viewers (343)	57	40	2	1.5
Use of available community services				
Total Viewers (82)	42	51	7	1.3
Total Non-Viewers (343)	30	54	16	1.1
How to handle finances and avoid financial troubles				
Total Viewers (82)	58	37	5	1.6
Total Non-Viewers (343)	52	42	6	1.5
How to go about finding and keeping a job				
Total Viewers (82)	31	51	18	1.1
Total Non-Viewers (343)	31	50	19	1.1

Although in one area, that concerning "How to go about finding and keeping a job," there was no real difference between viewers and non-viewers, the average difference over all five areas was .1 on the 2 point scale indicated. This is equivalent to a five per cent premium to viewers over non-viewers regarding self-confidence in these areas of knowledge.

But of course our real aim had not been to improve self-confidence. *The Our Kind of World shows had from the beginning been envisaged as an innovative attack upon ignorance. In this regard the shows had generally proved successful.* Comparing viewers with non-viewers in various general categories of knowledge covered in the *Our Kind of World* shows, in six categories viewers registered nothing but gain:

	<i>Per Cent point net gain for viewers</i>
Where to go for Information Relating to Various Kinds of Community Services	9.5
Importance of Medical Care during Pregnancy	7.5
Importance of Immunization Shots for Children	7.0
How to Find a Job and Keep It	5.0

Budgeting and Wise Shopping	2.4
Importance of Psychological Support for Children in Learning Context	1.0
In one category gain and losses were mixed nevertheless resulting in a net gain.	+1
General Health Information	
However in two general categories viewers actually scored consistently lower than non-viewers.	
Wise Handling of Credit	-3.5
Correct Diet	-3.5

These findings can be regarded from a somewhat different viewpoint. Non-viewers over the entire range of information with which we were concerned answered correctly on average 76.2 per cent of the time and incorrectly 23.8 per cent of the time. In other words regarding the whole range of information on which they were tested, they displaced 76.2 per cent of knowledge and 23.8 per cent ignorance. Viewers on the other hand, displayed 79.5 per cent knowledge and 20.5 per cent ignorance; i.e., 3.3 per cent less ignorance, than non-viewers.

Although generally the *Our Kind of World* programs proved successful in getting over the information intended, clearly failure had to be accepted in certain areas. But even these "failures" posed exciting questions which might well become the subject of future research. For example our efforts to educate our audience in the wise handling of credit proved consistently relatively less successful. This was a topic the programs hit hard—and yet they failed. Why was this? Clearly there is scope for more research here.

The acid test of this kind of programming had to be whether or not we had instituted any predispositions to change the behaviors of our target population. Those who had viewed the shows were asked whether they had actually changed their way of living on account of viewing the *Our Kind of World* programs or envisaged doing so; 39 per cent answered in the affirmative, i.e., that they had at least thought of changing their way of living.

The following responses are the kind of changes in behavior that viewers reported to have been initiated by the programs:

"It taught me more about my budget; also more about getting along with people;" "The shows taught me to keep my house cleaner and to plan my meals better;" "I will be buying and cooking foods that I had not thought of;" "It told me where to go for help, otherwise I would not know where to go;" "We should make a list when we go to the store—otherwise I buy extra things;" "It made me more brave about talking with the teachers; I am not as shy

as I was." These are real advances. To the poor ignorance is a luxury. Even such small gains as we have here been considering represent something of a minor triumph.

This carries communications overkill to the point of absurdity. Surely it is not too much to ask that one of those 48 positions on the TV dial reserved for the poor, another for the old, another for the house-wife, and so forth. Operation Gap-Stop has shown that this kind of "rifle" approach is not a mere idealistic hypothesis but a tried and proved practical reality. Operation Gap-Stop may well point the way towards a solution to the "Crisis in Urban Communication." Certainly it is an approach that warrants further investigation.

As proven in the results, *Our Kind of World* shows represent a pioneering attempt in the use of television in bringing to a particular sub-population, the disadvantaged, the particular kinds of information which they most need. The use of the "soap-opera" format notably represents a very definite innovation in this regard.

Although only eight half-hour shows were aired, it seems legitimate to claim a high degree of success in relation to the goals originally envisaged. *67 per cent of viewers found the shows better than most. 90 per cent of viewers found the shows believable. 79 per cent thought the shows to be "like their own life." 95 per cent of viewers declared they would watch similar shows in the future. 62 per cent of viewers said the shows had in fact helped them with their everyday problems. Viewers generally expressed a five per cent gain in self-confidence in key knowledge areas over non-viewers. 39 per cent of viewers had changed or were considering changing their day-to-day behavior as a result of viewing the shows.*

IMPLICATIONS

One thing clearly demonstrated by Operation Gap-Stop is that television *does* have an alternative available to the scatter gun approach. True the scatter gun approach is likely to remain of prime importance to the television industry. The mass public demands such generally acceptable anodynes as the *Beverly Hill Billies* and the *Andy Griffith Show*, and the television industry will continue to provide them while at the same time performing its other vital function, moving mountains of detergents, kitchen cleansers, aspirin, and stomach remedies.

But there is an alternative approach. Let us call it the *rifle technique*. Operation Gap-Stop has shown that the rifle approach can

be used to pick out a specific target population and hit it successfully with exactly the kind of material it needed in exactly the kind of format preferred. There are many such specific sub-populations whose real needs are only marginally met by the scatter gun technique—the old, the sick, the young, the house-wife—all with their particular problems and highly specific informational needs.

Also, be it noted, there are now 48 positions on the TV dial. What does this portend? Is the same mass public to be assaulted at the same time by 48 scatter guns?

NOTES

¹That is viewed one or more of the episodes. The mean number of episodes watched by all 82 viewers was 4.7.

THE UNKNOWN “GREAT DEBATES”

HERBERT A. SELTZ, RICHARD D. YOAKAM

In the eight years that have passed since the Nixon-Kennedy “Great Debates,” Section 315 has remained unchanged, incumbents have shown little interest in debating, and a media legend has flourished. In retrospect, the sights and sounds of those four hours of broadcast history are easier to remember than the behind-the-scenes planning and plotting, that was employed to determine the pattern and course of the debates. What follows is an examination of what could be termed the non-public debates; the in-fighting between the candidates’ representatives to select a format and to consider a never-to-materialize fifth debate.¹

It was clear that the networks were going to provide extensive free time for the candidates in the 1960 election, either under existing “equal-time” provisions or under a desired suspension of Section 315. Some of the proposals made by the networks included time for the candidates to appear on existing or specially designed public affairs programs.² The network’s formal presentations were made to both parties immediately following Nixon’s nomination in Chicago, on July 27. Apparently the NBC offer reached Kennedy first, and he accepted eagerly and without qualifications.³ Nixon stated his acceptance through his press secretary, Herbert Klein,

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that same day, and confirmed it three days later. The other network proposals were also quickly accepted. Since both candidates favored the debates, it is not surprising that the House of Representatives approved Senate Joint Resolution 207 temporarily suspending Section 315 on August 24, during its post-convention session.

THE FORMATS

The *Meet the Press* proposal, the debate idea, and Vice President Nixon's formal-acceptance wire all played major roles in determining the formats for the programs which were planned during the next six weeks. The details were hammered out in 12 meetings between a committee of network news executives and the representatives named by the candidates. For the networks, the committee consisted of William McAndrew, Executive Vice President for News, NBC; Sig Mickelson, President, CBS News Inc.; John Daly, Vice President for News, ABC; and Joseph Keating, Vice President, MBS. Leonard Reinsch served as the chief adviser for Senator Kennedy, and William Wilson was his production adviser for radio and television; Fred C. Scribner Jr., Under Secretary of the Treasury served as Nixon's chief representative, with Herbert Klein and Carroll P. Newton as advisers for radio-TV, and Edward (Ted) Rogers as technical adviser for radio and TV during the campaign.⁴

The first meeting took place at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York, August 9. It was agreed then that the "debates were desirable," that they should be on all networks simultaneously, one hour in length, end by October 21, and be worked into the candidates' travel schedules by mutual agreement.⁵ The Democrats wanted a later closing date but agreed on October 21. Subsequent meetings between the candidates' representatives helped to determine the dates. And, according to network representatives, the candidates' teams also talked about the format.⁶ Nixon, in his acceptance wire, gave the following general outline of what he wanted: "joint television appearances of the presidential candidates should be conducted as full and free exchanges of views, without prepared texts or notes, and without interruptions...and with time for questioning by panels of accredited journalists."⁷ The network committee also came up with proposals. All of these ideas were discussed at a meeting in the Mayflower Hotel in Washington, on August 31, where the formats were established although, apparently, not agreed upon.

Formats for the first and fourth debates were quickly approved: opening statements, questions from the news panel, and closing statements. Kennedy drew the first position in the first debate, a turn of fate his advisers considered very important. Nixon, therefore, went first on the last debate. The candidates' representatives also gave the networks the dates and the cities agreed upon. The place of the second debate was later changed twice, and its date was moved up twenty-four hours.⁸

The format for the first and fourth meetings was the choice of the candidates' representatives. At the August 31 meeting, the networks, led by Mickelson, proposed that the candidates engage in what is known as "Oregon Debate."⁹ Under this form, debaters present opening statements, then are permitted to question each other directly. This suggestion was rejected by the candidates' representatives.¹⁰ Neither the networks nor the candidates' teams were in favor of an outright debate, on the grounds that it would not hold an audience. Furthermore, a major consideration for a good debate must be a relatively narrow, clear-cut issue on which the debaters can take definite stands. However, the candidates' representatives were frank to admit no such clear-cut issue existed in the campaign. While the candidates disagreed on methods and approach, degree and application of policy on both foreign and domestic issues, their representatives and the networks feared that use of a debate format to present such "shades of gray" arguments would result in rapidly diminishing interest from the audience. In the immediate background were the West Virginia Primary debates between Kennedy and Hubert Humphrey. Both men had been overly polite and the results had been disappointing. The debate format, in the view of at least one of the leading representatives, held hidden traps because accuracy of statements could not be checked immediately, and because one of the candidates, in the heat of an argument, could make an injudicious remark which would have immediate international repercussions.¹¹

All of these considerations seemed to have prompted the candidates' representatives to insist upon the interposition of a panel of newsmen who would ask the questions. The representatives of both the candidates and the networks felt that such a format was well known to the American TV audience. To be fair, it must be pointed out that Nixon's telegram suggests a form closer to a straight debate than that used in the actual programs. The *Meet the Press* type of program, however, was specifically urged by

Nixon's representatives during the negotiations. Kennedy's representatives said that they were not as interested in the format as in getting the Senator on the same TV program with the Vice President. They realized Kennedy's skill with the question and answer setup, and were really happier with it than with a straight debate format.¹²

Final format of the second and third debates was not established at the August 31 meeting. The candidates' representatives wanted the form that finally appeared on the air—question to candidate A, answer, comment by candidate B, question to candidate B, answer, comment by Candidate A. The network representatives objected to this form, claiming it would be confusing to the audience and would not permit much follow-up or expansion of views. They continued to battle for the "Oregon Debate" system up to a few days before the second debate went on the air in Washington; but they never succeeded.

Concerning the subject areas of the first and fourth debates, it is not clear just how the idea of having one program devoted solely to domestic issues and another solely to foreign policy evolved, but once the idea of having a news panel ask the questions was established, it must have become clear that some control over the direction of at least some of the programs would have to be exercised.

With the moderator, news panel format rather firmly entrenched, the question of who would serve in these roles also became an issue. The various factions wrestled with the idea of using a public figure as moderator. Along with other notables, the President of the American Bar Association was suggested. In the end, all sides agreed on a TV professional, to be selected by the network responsible for a given debate.

The selection of the news panel was a more difficult problem. Since the networks were putting on the programs, they insisted that the panels for programs one and four be made up of network newsmen, but agreed to 50-50 representation between the electronic and print media on debates two and three. Not more than 10 days before the first debate, however, Press Secretaries Pierre Salinger and Herbert Klein opened the question again with a protest—that the lack of newspaper reporters on the panels was discriminatory. But the networks stuck to their guns, and told Klein and Salinger to devise a method for picking the print media representatives on debates two and three. An elaborate lottery system

was established by the press secretaries to provide for newspaper, wire service, and magazine representation as the argument concerning discrimination went on right up to the day of the first debate. There is evidence that Senator Kennedy was pushing most strongly for more newspaper representation; the Republicans did not seem to have been as much involved in this discussion. Immediately after the first debate, Klein, who was prompted by requests, suggested the possibility of representation on the panel of special interest groups such as the civil rights advocates. The networks rejected the suggestion on the grounds that it would be impossible to satisfy all.

Shortly after the August 9 agreement that there would be debates, at least one network received inquiries from prospective sponsors as to whether the programs would be for sale. When the question was raised by House Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee chairman Oren Harris, NBC publicly explained that it would consider sponsorship of the programs unless the candidates objected.¹³ At the August 31 meeting, it was announced that there would be no sponsorship.

THE FIFTH DEBATE

The idea of a fifth debate was brought up publicly by Democrat Senators Pastore, Monroney, and Magnuson on October 8.¹⁴ The trio had sponsored the legislation permitting temporary suspension of Section 315 of the Communications Act, which made the debates possible. Consequently, when they wired the networks that they favored a fifth debate which was closer to election day, the Senators received immediate consideration. The networks implemented the idea immediately, and Senator Kennedy wired a blanket acceptance two days later, on October 11.¹⁵ The Nixon reply the same day was not quite as all-inclusive, but he did accept the idea of more time. His proposal was to extend the fourth debate to two hours, with the second hour to be taken up with questions phoned in by the public.

The situation developed into a barrage of public statements in which the candidates accused each other of not wanting to go ahead with the fifth debate idea. Kennedy, in all his public pronouncements about the fifth debate, kept hammering away at the idea that the fourth debate was too far from election day. And, he flatly accused Nixon of being afraid to meet him again after October 21. Nixon's television representative, Fred Scribner, con-

tinued to request an extension of the fourth debate to two hours. He proposed that telephone calls with questions from the public be handled by a moderator, and that each candidate have three minutes to answer. This is essentially what Nixon himself did in a nationwide TV marathon answering session from Detroit the day before the election.

On October 19 Scribner called for "immediate meetings" in order to discuss the extension of the fourth debate to two hours, and Kennedy replied that he was agreeable to an extension, but that it was "...in no way a substitute for another joint appearance in the final days of the campaign."¹⁶

On the day of the fourth debate Kennedy wired Nixon again, urging a fifth debate, and perhaps more. He challenged Nixon to announce his acceptance of a fifth debate on the program that night. His wire said "...In fact I believe that more than five debates would be helpful if the record were to be corrected properly."¹⁷

Nixon seems to have been worried about his tactical position in all this. There is evidence that on the day of the fourth debate the Nixon camp had decided not to become involved in a fifth debate if they felt Nixon was ahead in the campaign at the end of the fourth.¹⁸

The Nixon strategists did, however, hold open the possibility of the fifth debate, if Nixon came off second best in the fourth.¹⁹ Nixon also proposed turning over the fourth debate to the Vice Presidential candidates, and held out the possibility of a fifth debate if Kennedy agreed to this.²⁰ In a 1,000 word telegram on October 23, Nixon renewed the idea of putting the Vice-Presidential candidates on for at least part of a fifth debate, and suggested the whole time period be devoted to the question of Cuba, and what to do about Castro—an issue which had been touched on briefly during the fourth debate. Nixon's long wire devoted much more space to his views on Castro and Kennedy's point of view on the same subject than it did talking about arrangements for the fifth debate. Kennedy's reply, on the same day, was similar since it was primarily an attack on Nixon's point of view, although it was shorter. But, Kennedy rejected the idea of limiting the subject of the fifth debate to one item.²¹

By October 25, the idea of a fifth debate seems to have been given serious consideration by both sides. Scribner and Reinsch met in Washington to discuss it once more, and the network com-

mittee—McAndrew, Mickelson, Daly, and Keating—met in New York to work out a format. They wired Scribner and Reinsch, suggesting a return to the original network proposal—one more try for a real “Oregon Debate.” The wire read: “We urge that you consider reverting to the original format; a face-to-face appearance without a panel, but with a moderator to preside and to provide for a fair division of time.”²² The network representatives also suggested another modification of this plan—that the candidates present statements on subjects previously stipulated and that they reserve some time for direct questions. Reinsch and Scribner reached no decision on the 25th and met again on the 26th. On the 28th the network committee met again, and must have been convinced that there really would be a fifth debate. John Daly withdrew ABC from the production of the fifth debate, since ABC had already presented two, and CBS drew the assignment with the probability that it would originate in Washington on October 31.

The next 24 hours must have been the wildest in the entire debate series as far as the network committee was concerned. Mickelson’s personal memoranda on the debates includes a complete record of the activities.²³ While the network committee was meeting in Mickelson’s office in New York, Reinsch and Scribner were meeting in Washington. Faulty communications resulted because all sides were firing off telegrams to each other, and releasing the texts of the telegrams to the press before they were received at the other end.

Scribner and Reinsch compromised on a format. First, they dictated that the two Vice-Presidential candidates, Lyndon Johnson and Henry Cabot Lodge, would each make a ten-minute statement at the beginning of the program. The Presidential candidates would then work with a panel of newsmen as they had in the second and third debates, with the exception that the answers and comments would continue for five minutes. An additional two minutes would then be given the first speaker for “sur-rebuttal.” Since twelve-and-one-half minutes were necessary for each complete sequence, time for only three questions would remain after the Vice-Presidential candidates finished. Reinsch was less in favor of using the Vice-Presidential candidates than Scribner, but a call from Scribner later in the afternoon indicated that he and Reinsch had agreed they would appear on the program.²⁴

Somewhere along the way, the Republicans suggested that cameras be set up in New York’s Central Park, so that the candidates

could answer questions from anyone who wandered by—a truly soap-box approach.²⁵ The networks pointed out that such a plan might attract a mob of 100,000 persons or more, and that it was impractical from the points of view of security, production, and engineering.

Reinsch and Scribner both asked that the network committee come down to Washington the following day, October 29, for a meeting to work out production details. Mickelson agreed that he and McAndrew would go to Washington for the meeting, and it was scheduled for 11 a.m. at the CBS Washington headquarters. Reinsch promised to call back to confirm the meeting, and it looked as if a fifth debate would materialize.

However, early in the afternoon of the 28th, Reinsch sent a wire under Kennedy's name which Scribner took as a personal affront. Scribner felt that the wording of the wire accused him of bad faith, and tried to make it look like the Republicans were resisting the fifth debate. Furthermore, he pointed out later, Reinsch released the text of the wire close to the time he and Scribner were meeting to discuss the final details of the fifth debate.²⁶

Reinsch did not call back, but sent word to Mickelson late that evening that some sort of a hitch had developed.²⁷ Mickelson could not tell from Reinsch's message whether there would be a fifth debate; he and McAndrew went to Washington the following morning. Mickelson contacted both camps. He found Scribner very upset about Reinsch's wire. Scribner read Mickelson the text of his reply to Reinsch, in which he said that until Kennedy apologized for charging bad faith and withdrew what Scribner believed was an ultimatum, there could be no more negotiations, and there it ended.

NOTES

1. An attempt was made to suspend Section 315 for the 1964 presidential election but the White House showed little interest and the matter died. Early in 1968 the Radio-Television News Directors Association and others filed suit in the United States Court of Appeals for the 7th District challenging the so-called "Fairness Doctrine" and Section 315 on First Amendment constitutional grounds. The United States Supreme Court then set aside other Section 315 appeals until this case, "RTNDA et al" is heard. The Staggers Special Subcommittee on Investigations of the House Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee held hearings on suspension of Section 315 and the "fairness doctrine" in the spring of 1968.
2. The offer by NBC for 8 weekly hour long broadcasts of *Meet the Press* was made by NBC president Robert Sarnoff April 21, 1960 in a speech before the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences in New York. The offer by CBS of 8 hours of prime evening time between Labor Day and Election

- was made by Dr. Frank Stanton in testimony before the Subcommittee on Communications of the Senate Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee May 17, 1960. He proposed a variety of program types. ABC president Oliver Treyz, in testimony before the same committee, proposed each network set aside 8 hours of its regular programming, picking the most-listened-to time periods, and pre-empting the regular programs for special programs by the candidates. Sarnoff used the term "The Great Debates" in a wire to House Speaker Sam Rayburn in urging House passage of the Senate Resolution.
3. Kennedy's advisers told the authors they felt it was very important to be the first to accept, and thus "challenge" Nixon to the debates. The decision was quickly reached during a luncheon at Hyannisport, Mass., July 28.
 4. Not all of these people attended every meeting; the composition of the meetings varied depending on what was to be discussed and other considerations such as travel schedules.
 5. Leonard Reinsch told the authors that the most difficult part of the negotiations was schedule arranging.
 6. McAndrew told the authors that both sides had been working on formats between the August 9 and August 31 meetings, but that he felt the candidates had virtually agreed on what they wanted before the August 31 meeting.
 7. Text of the telegram from Nixon to the networks is in the networks' files; the ellipsis indicated is that of the authors.
 8. Interview with McAndrew, New York, April 6, 1961. Also "Ground Rules," memo adopted at August 31, 1960 general meeting.
 9. For a fuller explanation see "The Oregon Plan of Debating," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, XII, (April 1926), pp. 176-180.
 10. McAndrew, Mickelson files. Stanton testimony before the Senate Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee, January 31, 1961, and interview with Reinsch, Washington, April 4, 1960.
 11. Letter from Fred C. Scribner, April 9, 1961.
 12. Reinsch, *op. cit.*
 13. Text of wire from Sarnoff to Rep. Harris.
 14. AP dispatch, dateline New York, October 11, contains the sense of the wire to the networks.
 15. Text of telegram in Mickelson's personal files.
 16. Exchange of wires between Kennedy and Scribner, October 19, 1960.
 17. Text of Kennedy wire to Nixon, October 21, 1960, CBS films.
 18. Mickelson files.
 19. *Ibid.*
 20. *Ibid.*
 21. Texts of exchange of telegrams between Nixon and Kennedy, Oct. 23, 1960.
 22. Text of wire to Scribner and Reinsch from McAndrew, etc. October 25, 1960, CBS files.
 23. Mickelson memorandum dated October 31, 1960.
 24. Mickelson, *op. cit.*
 25. McAndrew hand-written notes read to authors, April 6, 1961.
 26. Text of telegrams exchanged between Scribner and Reinsch, October 29, 1960, CBS films.
 27. Mickelson, *op. cit.*

WHO STOLE THE MELTING POT?

DAVID KARP

The late Ben Hecht once observed bitterly in a little book called *Guide For The Bedevilled* that the giant motion picture studios had portrayed thousands of priests, churches, church weddings, Christians at prayer—but never a Jew, never a synagogue. Hecht recalled that the Jew was once a gay, lively figure of fun on the vaudeville stage which had “Dutch” comics, funny Swedes, gesticulating and excitable Italians, shiftless blackamoors, intransigent Chinese (no tickee-no washee), and a whole potpourri of national types which make up our strange and mixed land. He asked, “What became of them?”

Hecht’s book, of course, was designed to instruct and confront the modern “bedevilled” Jew as opposed, I presume, to the ancient “bedevilled” Jew, but the question is well put, not only for motion pictures but for the largest, most pervasive entertainment and educational media the modern American has ever known—television.

Without putting too fine a point on it, I will at once concede that Auschwitz, Buchenwald, the “Final Solution” take the “fun” out of the stage Jew and the stage German, just as Mao Tse Tung and the Red Flower Children take the fun (but not the intransigence) out of the Chinese. The civil rights movement, the riots, “Black Power” and the various Panthers, SNNCS and Stokely

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Carmichaels take the innocence out of the blackamoor, and the Anti-Defamation League of the Italian Americans makes very sure that no one ever walks on a bias the way Henry Armetta did so comically and cheerfully in so many pictures. We have had grim times indeed in which national, racial, and cultural differences have been used by bigots and fanatics for their own evil and cruel purposes. Sensitive and thoughtful people might cite all of our recent history for preferring that nothing more be made of our cultural, national, and racial differences, even in fun, especially in fun.

In short, a lot of wounded, frightened, tense people insist that there be no "fun" made of national character and the differences between people. They do not go so far as to say that there should be no jokes, no humor, and no light-heartedness. They sometimes piously claim that a "sense of humor" is good for people, just as organically grown foods are good for them. They attend "black comedies" and applaud them on the grounds that it is better to mock the whole human race than to single out any national, cultural, or racial group. There is, to my mind, more danger in black comedy than in comedy about blacks in that "black comedy" engenders a savagery towards human character which can be sprayed shotgun fashion against mankind and, by those who have specific targets in mind, at groups and classes and races in particular. So the object which is sought through failing to single out groups or races fails. The "fun" goes on, and, because it is submerged, comes out as cruelty.

Max Eastman once prepared a long, learned book on humor complete with diagrammatic analyses of where the humor lay in jokes and situations. All I can recall of it is the one "dirty" (sexual) joke Eastman said he heard. The first, in fact, he recalls ever having heard. A boy comes to visit his girlfriend and she calls out from the top of the stairs that she is not dressed. The boyfriend advises her to "slip on something and come down," so she slipped on the top step and came down. As the radio comics Stoopnagle and Budd used to say, end of joke. The point is, that no one would define it as a "dirty" joke today. Once it was. Times change and tastes change, and the changes have been for the worse and not for the better. What has vanished is an innocence in humor, a gentleness, a clear distinction between "making fun" and reality.

Before wandering off in the vast bogs of what is funny and what is not, a critic ought to arm himself with charts, books like East-

man's, Freud, Jung, Adler and the most recent polls on attitudes toward minority groups. There was a time when it was simpler. All you needed was Joe Miller's joke book. Perhaps it can be made simpler now by saying that people who have the power to dispose of the subject have evidently decided that the whole difficult area of what is funny about ethnic groups should be left to the ethnic groups themselves.

Well, the word has been used and it will be used again and again, so we had better recognize it. *Ethnic*. It is the description which networks and advertising agencies use when they refer to anything but white, Anglo-Saxon, semi-Protestant, middle-class, middle America.

No one uses ethnic to describe drama. "The Final War of Olly Winter," to cite an instance of drama which concerns itself with a Negro in Vietnam wouldn't be called ethnic drama. Ethnic is a description applied only to humor, and it might as well stand for "forbidden" when it is applied to humor. Ethnic humor, in the judgment of television executives and programmers, and perhaps even advertising agencies, is "death". It is a *verboten* zone ringed with warning placards: Do not tread here. Television comedies may be written about Martians (*My Favorite Martian*), robots (*My Living Doll*), cave men (*It's About Time*), resurrected corpses (*The Second Hundred Years*), talking animals (*Mr. Ed*), prisoners of war and Nazis (*Hogan's Heroes*), city dwellers on the farm (*Green Acres*), mountain folks in the city (*Beverly Hillbillies*), spies (*Get Smart*), witches (*Bewitched*), nuns (*The Flying Nun*) disk jockeys (*Good Morning World*), married life (an endless list), the trials and tribulations of living with a celebrity (*The Danny Thomas Show*), the (*Joey Bishop Show*), naval doctors (*Hennesey*), men at war (*McHale's Navy*), cavalrymen (*F Troop*). The range is broad and remarkable, but nowhere in it will you find, within the past few seasons, any sign that there are comic troubles and joys and situations in families or relationships which can be considered "ethnic."

Has it always been like this? No. There was a time when television offered *Life With Luigi* and *Bonino* (Italian-American), *The Goldbergs* (Jewish-American), *I Remember Mama* (Swedish-American), *Amos and Andy* (Afro-American), the *Bill Dana Show* (Puerto Rican), and radio was rich with Parkykarkus, George Givot the "Greek ambassador of good will," "the Mad Russian," and Fred Allen's "Allen's Alley" was a walk right down the Eastern seaboard from Titus Moody (the eueptic New England Yankee),

through Mrs. Nussbaum (the scourge of the Bronx), to Senator Claghorn, the corn pone of the Deep South.

The racial and national diversity of our country has vanished from television as if snatched out of sight by a gang of kidnappers. "Why?" Out of shame? Out of a false desire to prove that we are all Americans and all resemble Dick Van Dyke and his TV wife?

Why did no one feel such guilts when Desi Arnaz was murdering the English language in *I Love Lucy*? One of the sure laugh-getters on that show was the sudden and violent rendering of English into Desi's peculiarities. And don't think Lucy didn't tease him about it. No word heard from Cuba or the Anti-Defamation League for the Spanish-American Born.

Glib explanations about guilt don't seem to explain the mysterious disappearance of any humor which relies upon the difference in national and cultural backgrounds. Some of it, no doubt, was harassed out of public view by respectable and well-meaning organizations such as the NAACP's continuing campaign against "Amos and Andy." No conscience-stricken group of whites asked the networks to remove *Amos 'N Andy*.

Ethnic humor, such as it exists today, is found like gold washings in the stand-up patter and routine of such comics as Myron Cohen, Jackie Mason, and Pat Cooper who come readily to mind. Cooper tells stories that sound like honest representations of a strict Italian-American family (and for all I know about Italian-American families, are typical). They are funny as a recollection of a rigid, non-permissive, old world style of raising children and evoke a response in the generation over 40. Cohen is nothing more or less than a salesman with a trick drooping eye and a caricature of an American-Yiddish dialect delivery which is harmless but not revelatory as the best humor is. Jackie Mason is a brash, abrasive comic who, I am confident, will turn out one day to be an Arab provocateur masquerading in a yarmulka.

Unfortunately, none of them have anything to do with ethnic humor. There is a theory that our country is unique in that successive waves of immigration provided the older American an opportunity to make fun of the newer Americans and each national group to make fun of its own "greenhorns," but as each group secured its own status and citizenship papers and right to vote and the understanding of "bloc" voting, each group began then to forbid anyone else the right to make fun of them. While we permit ourselves the right to laugh at ourselves in our own groups,

we begin to resent the exposure of our own jokes about ourselves to "outsiders." The jokes that Negro comics now tell on network television are old stories to the audiences at the Apollo in Harlem. They sound fresh and biting and funny to an audience which never knew they existed. But jokes, by themselves, are a kind of underground culture and if we are going to understand something about ourselves as a nation, we are going to have to hear the "inside" stories and attitudes—not necessarily in-jokes which often rely upon a body of common knowledge and experience, but in ethnic humor in a deeper, larger, wider form.

Gertrude Berg told us more about Jewish-American middle class life in thirty minutes of *The Goldbergs* than we are likely to learn in eight years of listening to Myron Cohen and Jackie Mason. Ethnic humor of the best kind is understood everywhere and *Fiddler On The Roof* (for however little it resembles *Sholem Aleichem*) can get itself translated into Japanese and move an audience as it did in Tokyo. When I speak of ethnic humor, I think it is clear that I am not speaking of dialect comedians, but of the whole comic-drama of the groups who live in America and make up her richness but who do not exist in the eyes of the television camera.

Network executives are understandably tentative about ethnic humor when they confront the bristling array of organizations designed to protect "the good name" of this group and that. There is no question that if ethnic humor were a surefire formula for getting big Neilsens, there wouldn't be an organization or a force on earth strong enough to keep it off the air. There is no standard on earth that is followed as relentlessly and devotedly as the network programmers follow the Nielsen gonfalon. One answer as to why ethnic humor has faded from TV is that the Nielsen families appear to be all made of processed American cheese with Little Orphan Annie eyes and are tenth generation Americans who look at one another in ignorance when .3 of the 2.3 children ask, "Daddy, what's a Jew?"

They can, of course, get a lot of answers on that question from a spastic joker who is convinced that whatever twitches is a Jew, or from Charles de Gaulle who is convinced that the Jews are elitist expansionists, or from Adolf Hitler, or from *Commentary*, or a number of other sources which most non-Jewish-Americans can consult, depending upon their educational, intellectual, and curiosity levels. But the point is that the gingerbread people liv-

ing in gingerbread all-electric Medallion homes all over America are never going to know from television. They are missing from the little screen from which so much of their entertainment, instruction, and *education* comes.

By the same token, Negroes have been also missing from television, except when they lurch wild-eyed before TV cameras and threaten to burn down your house and mine and theirs, too. Italian-Americans seem to be missing from television except when they are hustled, handcuffed to Federal courthouses. Irish-Americans seem to be visible on television only on St. Patrick's Day. American Indians exist only as historical clay targets for settlers, and it would be interesting to find out how many of the Gingerbread children of the Nielsen families know that there are still a number mooching about off the reservation. Greek-Americans? Don't be absurd, they don't exist. Armenian-Americans? Is Saroyan the last one? Danish-Americans Isn't Victor Borge one? French-Americans? Don't be silly—everyone knows that French headwaiters are either Italians, or they really live in Paris—flying back after supper. Polish-Americans? The last that we heard they were digging coal out of Pennsylvania. German-Americans? Weren't they all deported when the Bund was broken up? Somewhere way back there at World War II?

Well, what kind of Americans are there, anyway? On TV, they seem to be Dick Van Dyke and Mary Tyler Moore. Nice People. Happy people with happy problems and with happy solutions. Anything wrong with them? No, of course not and even as crusty a TV critic as Jack Gould used to feel his libido pitter-pattering when he regarded Mary Tyler Moore who is a dish. My objection to Miss Moore (or Mrs. Tinker in real life—and in real life I have no objection to her) as a dish, is that she is a dish created by sunshine bakers in Crispy Wispy Land. There is a Pavlovian theory that we are shaped into our responses by selective stimuli, and by this theory TV is the largest Pavlovian lab in the world in which we are shown Dick Van Dyke and Mary Tyler Moore and encouraged to laugh approvingly and lovingly. The other images of America have been removed. And when seen at all, they are on the eleven o'clock news.

The commercials, oddly enough, are a step ahead of television, as they have been for some years and TV commercial film companies look for "real" people—unactorish-looking folk (never mind that they are generally actors) who don't look like Dick Van Dyke

and Mary Tyler Moore. Brooklyn accents, Midwestern twangs, New England head noises come out of the mouths with less than perfect teeth, out of necks which are larger than size 15 collars will accept and out of faces whose features are squashed, squeezed, blunted, irregular, broken and even wrinkled. The commercial makers know the appeal of real people-looking people even if network programers do not. Some years ago, an inspired agency came up with an ethnic advertising campaign for Rheingold beer in which we watched Negro-Americans, Italian-Americans, Greek-Americans, Spanish-Americans, Jewish-Americans whooping it up at weddings, bar mitzvahs, fiestas, etc. unashamedly and beautifully. And although people were good-looking and marvelous, there was not a Dick Van Dyke or a Mary Tyler Moore in the crowd. On the whole, they were great-looking folks and a hell-of-a-lot-more interesting than the parade of sunshine cracker cut-outs who represent American life on network programming. You can still watch a Chinese who loves pizzas sell a pizza mix just as other Chinese have been used in a campaign to sell Levy's Real Jewish Rye bread.

There are almost no Americans living anywhere in this star-spangled land of ours who don't know a Chinese, even if it is only from eating in his restaurant or going to his laundry, or know about a Jewish delicatessen, or an Italian pizza parlor, or a French bread. And not the dimmest of our fellow citizens seriously doubts that people with different-shaped noses, heads, colored skins, and accents live somewhere in his town, his state, his country. But where, on TV, is there any record (even of a fictional kind) of the life they lead? Where can they come into a Negro-American home and visit for a half hour once a week and eavesdrop? To cry, to laugh, to be absorbed, to see a Negro family as they live? Or any other kind of American?

To people of a conspiratorial inclination, the answer to what has happened to representations of our fellow Americans comes right out: the networks have conspired to homogenize American life. My own experience with network executives is that if three of them got into an elevator, one would push up, one would push down, and the third would hit the alarm bell. The ability to conspire presupposes the ability to make a commitment. The three networks of our great land are in the hands of the greatest non-committers that time, energy and money could find. The moment any executive shows any tendency to commit, he is released with instructions to turn in his credit cards, identification passes, and

washroom key. It is no accidental choice that CBS is a one-eyed abstraction, NBC is a peacock (vain, silly and quick to flight whose beauty is all behind it and whose brain is one of the smallest in the bird kingdom) and ABC is a number constricted inside a very tight-circle—like a prisoner in a small exercise yard. They have been trying to tell us something about themselves, and no one has really paid them any attention.

What we have to recognize is that in their great towers of glass, concrete, and rusted metal in New York and Los Angeles, the powers which make program decisions are pathetically anxious to be told what to put on the air. They subject new ideas to pre-view audiences, to committee mettings, gnaw their fingernails, turn helplessly to the cookie people Neilsen has wired to TV sets. They want answers and no one really gives them any until vast amounts of money have been spent. Too late. All too late. If anything is to be done about restoring the rich diversity of American life to the little screen, then the viewers are going to have to do something about it themselves. They can sit down and write letters and ask whatever happened to the Hungarian-Americans, the Italian-Americans, the Afro-Americans, the Jewish-Americans, the other-Americans of the 200,000,000 that we have become. And it would help if such letters were written in some tongue other than English. After all, if they get 50,000 letters written in Hungarian, they are going to have to send out for an interpreter or two because that many letters in a language they can't read is bound to arouse their curiosity. And as the interpreters are supplemented by Hungarian-speaking typists and assistants, the network corridors are going to be crowded with Magyars and Slovens and Russians and Yiddish specialists and Italians and Poles and Germans until some one of the guys (the guy who got in the elevator and pushed the up button, for instance) is going to muse, "Gee, there are a lot of them, aren't there?" And from this mustard seed of a thought is going to come a program idea and the first show entitled, *The Scranton Novaks* is going to hit the small screen with a Billy May orchestration of a theme by Paderewski, and ethnic humor will be back on television.

The second thing I would ask the viewers is to watch the show, if they can. And finally, I would ask the Pilsudski Society not to point out that Papa Novak eats his beans with a knife and endanger the whole trend. If we are going to recapture our country, a few lousy beans on a knife seem a small price. *Avanti!*

Does the motion picture still have the power to shake us, to stir our wills to action, to confront us with such deep emotions that we truly want to change the world?

The very flood of communication today, the endless wash of moving images on our TV screens, may actually dissolve our energy, leave us limp with the excess of information, the constant assault on our attention, the busy flow of messages. How much harder it is for the few true issues of our time to be seen and heard when we can hear shouting from every quarter and the echoes never die!

These observations are the results of the three great visual experiences of our time. First, there are the commercials. The brightest creative contributions to the art of film editing today are coming from the punch of the sales pitch, those program interruptions on TV. They are always at us to buy, buy, buy, buy, and the normal man or woman builds up a natural resistance to action. The more of it he sees, the more familiar and hollow the call to buy becomes, and our common man sales' resistance becomes a reflex. Skepticism, in the face of such bold claims and extreme demands, assumes a way of life.

Second, there is the fuller examination of the bedroom. At the movie theaters today, the big push is to use all the freedom that the decline of censorship allows. Led by the artistic maneuverings of unclothed actors in foreign films, the Hollywood studios have been eagerly seeking to show more and more explicitly what happens when a man and a woman lie down together. Sex is no longer hidden, but it is no longer a very special experience, either, and the forced voyeurism of the average moviegoer is gradually turning it into something commonplace. Romantic love was almost done to death by the movies of the 1930's and 40's. Is it possible that sex can be made a ho-hum thing by over-exposure in the 60's?

Third, we are amazed at the heavy burden of visual data we have been receiving on the Viet Nam war. Never has war been so directly, emotionally, graphically, physically covered at the same time it was being fought. We are surfeited and overwhelmed by the nightly trauma of the news. We see what war is like, as far as Army cameramen and network facilities can show it. War is ever present in our living rooms, and in our heart of hearts we hate it so much that we have turned it off. The record flows over us and we are unmoved. It is no longer possible to react. We are numb, not because we are unfeeling, but because there is too much to respond to, and we are only human.

If war and love and even salesmanship are beginning to leave us cold, untouched, and weary, what is left for the motion picture in the years to come? Should it turn itself off, and give us a rest? There seems very little likelihood of that. And if it is there to be looked at—mostly because of the commercial pressures that sell goods, sell sex, and sell news in this country—there is also very little likelihood that the average viewer will see some sudden new light and turn it all off himself, preferring instead to read a good book.

Out there in no-man's-land between producer and audience is the critic. An increasing burden of interpretation, a responsibility for judgment and even for selective enthusiasm, falls on the teacher and the critic in the field of motion pictures. There is an explosion of interest in films among young people of college age—film societies, film showings, film courses, film production. This fascination with the film as a medium of personal style and as an art

has tended to obscure the role of film as a carrier of ideas in society, a way of calling emphatic attention through emotion. The critic and the teacher have the job, among others, of saying what films are worth looking at, what messages, among the media, are of crucial concern to man today. This kind of responsibility makes the university film teacher a personal center of judgment, as the university itself is a center of criticism for all the agencies of society.

Can the film teacher know enough, or have time enough, to choose wisely, and make his choices known? He is himself subject to the same flood of images as anyone else. He has the advantage of knowing the history of communication and the precedents in the movie and television business. He must do what he can. He cannot afford to be merely a librarian, or a pleased promoter of the screen.

For example, if he feels that the rise of the Negro in American society is one of the great issues of our day, the critic and teacher must call attention to those rare achievements in communication which deal effectively and wisely with that issue. He will surely find time to praise the latest documentary in *cinéma vérité* style by Gregory Shuker, the unfinished story of Martin Luther King's preparations for the march on Washington, shown on the Public Broadcast Laboratory April 7. He will relate it to the great tradition of the poverty protest film in America, from *The Plow that Broke the Plains* and *The River* to Edward R. Murrow's *Harvest of Shame*. He will cross over from the documentary to the dramatic film and give credit to *Home of the Brave*, *Lost Boundaries*, *No Way Out*, and all those recent Sidney Poitier vehicles which have carried some small measure of the tension in that one-tenth of the population that is Negro.

The deepest feelings and the clearest revelations on this subject emerge in two recent pictures. *Nothing But a Man*, directed by Michael Roemer, is the best feature film ever made about the dilemma of the Negro in the South, a simple story of the savage white pressure put on a decent black man to keep him from holding a decent job. *A Time for Burning*, directed by William Jersey, tells in direct cinema style the documentary story of the failure of a Lutheran church in Omaha to undertake a new responsibility to the Negro community.

Yes, the film has a function today which goes beyond entertainment, beyond the flooding of our consciousness with emotions and conflicts and commercialism. It is a function that film has always fulfilled in some small degree, creating a challenge to our intelligence and our yearning for justice. This is the highest communicative function the mass media can have. Critics and teachers are aware that the film can do this kind of work. They are concerned with technique, style, history, and biography—the fascinating details of film making and film makers' lives. But above all they are concerned with the relations of film to society, the ways in which its unique transparency can show the movement and values and truth of life itself.

—Richard Dyer McCann

*A position paper prepared for the William Allen White Seminar
at the University of Kansas*

We must recognize that the image projected by the television commercial has changed more rapidly in one year than the image of America has in 100 years. Up to about a year or two ago it was almost exclusively an image of an affluent, happy, smiling, all-white America. Anyone who saw the average television commercial got the unmistakable impression that America was a kind of wall-to-wall Scarsdale—a nation of blond, blue-eyed children and blond, blue-eyed parents whose only problems were bad breath, body odor, and tooth decay. During the past year, however, the television commercial—along with other American institutions—has changed significantly. The television commercial has often prodded these American institutions to change.

But if our record is better than a year ago, it is something short of excellence in its representation of American life. According to a survey of the Joint Equality Committee of the four television talent unions, our efforts have been shamefully meager. During a three-week period, November 20 to December 10, in 1967, the JEC monitored 8,279 commercials. Of that number, 199 had one or more minority performers or 2.3 percent of the total. (The total Negro population in the nation is about 11 per cent.) Of that 8,000-plus, only 16 had lead or spokesman roles. Forty-three had secondary roles, and 104 had roles as extras. Even when we do integrate, we're still relegating Negroes to the back of the commercial. But we are improving.

There are many reasons, of course, why commercials should advance in this area by trying to improve their record. First, it's the law of the land—although laws against bigotry are hard to enforce. Twelve years after the historic Supreme Court decisions on school integration, barely twelve per cent of the schools in the whole South are integrated, and in the deep South, the figure barely reaches two per cent.

Second, it makes good business sense. The Negroes national expenditure on goods and services in 1967 was 30 billion dollars—a market no profit-conscious advertiser can ignore.

Third, in failing to integrate advertising, we may be missing an important *creative opportunity* to add memorability, interest, and effectiveness to advertising for *all* audiences—white and black alike. Conversely, the non-integrated, all-white commercial, while acquiescing to real or imagined resistance by a sector of the market, may actually *antagonize* another large part of it—the Negro consumer.

The fourth reason is the children—black children—and what, generation after generation, the cruel imbalances of American life have done and are still doing to them. I think of it every time I commute on the New Haven from affluent Rye to affluent Madison Avenue through Harlem—a blighted, black world of tenements tiered like the decks of slave ships. The sense of poverty and hopelessness presses palpably against the windows of the train. I thought of it last week when I read Johathan Kozol's *Death At An Early Age*, a horror story that tells what the school system of Boston—that former "Athens of America"—did, and is still doing, to the mind and spirit of the Black child.

The television commercial is one of the Negro child's windows on the world, a window through which he can catch a glimpse of himself, and perhaps a glimpse of a more hopeful future in which he is a visible and participating and respected part of the American scene. Until just recently, the television commercial has shown him the white affluence of Greenwich, Darien, Hollywood, or any other city. It is a world in which he's a nobody. How does he know he's a nobody in it? He rarely sees a face the color of his own.

The television commercial that puts the Negro into the contemporary scene—naturally, easily, and unself-consciously—can begin at least to lessen what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. called, "the nagging sense of *nobodyness*," the sense of inferiority and hopelessness that is created very early in the mind of the Black child. Television advertising, by fairly and realistically showing an integrated American society can go a long way in giving young and old Negroes alike the sense of *somebodyness*.

—Gordon Webber
Benton and Bowles

WE CALL IT EXPERIMENT

TOM MC AVITY

On August 6th, 1966 as part of a commencement address at Western Kentucky University, NBC President Julian Goodman made the statement: "In every form of expression—and indeed in every progressive business—we need to experiment so that we can develop new directions in our service and quicken its promise. Experimentation is not easy in network television, where each network presents a half million dollars' worth of programming each evening, where advertiser support is the only source of revenue for the whole enterprise; and where the penalty of failure is so enormous. Nevertheless, experimentation in one form or another is vital in television, in helping a medium that is reaching maturity also remain dynamic. So I have given the NBC Television Network a difficult assignment, but I am sure its management and creative people will fulfill it with distinction. Simply put, it is to develop an experimental series for television. Underlying this end-product are a number of purposes."

"One is to bring forward and test fresh writing approaches that will not be confined by the immediate demands of broad-appeal prime-time programming. Another is to give established television writers a change of pace and a more creative outlet and also to

THOMAS A. MC AVITY, general programming executive for NBC, supplied the impetus needed for NBC's experimental television programs. Previously Mr. McAvity's experience in broadcasting has come from his associations in programming and sales with NBC between 1929 and 1932, and between 1951 and 1957. In between he has served in top executive posts with Lord and Thomas; CBS; Famous Artists Corporation; McCann-Erickson and J. Walter Thompson; he was for a while an independent producer and programmer. While with Lord and Thomas, he helped inaugurate the *Bob Hope Show* on NBC radio.

bring to television proficient writers who have not been able to find their way in. For writers must write for an audience. The work of their minds and imaginations must be communicated to others to be real. It can only become sterile and artificial if it is locked up in a literary workshop. The task we are setting for ourselves is not easy. Perhaps it will not work, because creative achievement cannot be made to order. But it will get our most energetic and enthusiastic effort. And even if we cannot make it work, we expect to learn from it how we can adapt or modify its direction to achieve the same purpose." In making this statement Mr. Goodman spoke for most of us in the television industry—writers, directors, producers, performers—and not just network management. Most of us recognize that while we are giving the viewing public a wide range of programs that find popular response, we wish at the same time that they could want for something more. We look back over the programs made since the beginning of television, and there is no question but that television fare has improved tremendously in quality, despite the reverent homage paid by some critics to the so called "Golden Years." While progress is being made, we all feel that it could and should be made faster. One way to make progress is to keep exposing the public to more and more quality programming. All networks have presented some quality shows knowing that they will fail commercially and be cancelled along the way, but sooner or later some roots will take hold and hopefully the viewing public will appreciate the difference between quality and pap programming.

As program executive assigned to this project that Julian Goodman announced, I don't believe I have ever had a more rewarding task in the 41 years that I have been in broadcasting. The opportunity to try things on the air without fear of low Nielsen ratings and sponsor cancellation was in itself a unique privilege. Quite obviously a Sunday afternoon series of "experimental" programming is not designed to be in the top ten or indeed to win the time period. Our judgment of success or failure had to rest in the words of the intelligent critics and in the response from the thinking segment of the audience. It was with this goal in mind that we undertook the venture.

One of the first things that we discovered was that despite Mr. Goodman's earnest dictum that the program be devoted to the presentation of works of new writers, good new writers simply did not exist in great enough numbers to fill such a series with their works.

As a result we changed our viewpoint somewhat and expanded our goals to include non-dramatic fare. As a result, the 17 shows that we have done in two seasons included six new dramas; the others were documentary, semi-documentary, and even fictional-documentary in nature.

Broadcasting an "experimental" series first let us experiment in defining "experimental." Because it means so many different things to so many different people, we decided that we would not try to be tricky or way-out avant garde just to prove that we were "experimental." *We also decided rather early that it was not our role to report what people in other media were doing experimentally, but rather to confine our experiments to our own broadcast medium.* Thus, even if we had had time to perform it on the air we would not have done a production of, for example, *Hogan's Goat*—a fine play, but one which had already been reported by *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Life*. So, quality alone does not necessarily qualify a work for our series. In the final analysis we decided on our own definitions of what we consider experimental, and these definitions came from Mr. Goodman's original statement: to give new writers a chance to be heard and to give established writers (and producers and directors) opportunities for expression which TV had denied to them until now. The results to date have been most gratifying.

An NBC news producer, Stuart Schulberg, produced a play written by a new playwright Harry Dolan, on location, live on tape, in the Watts area of Los Angeles called "Losers Weepers." It was directed by his good friend Lamont Johnson, pretty much as a labor of love. Stuart produced a remarkably powerful though primitive play which told "how it is" in a ghetto. Stuart and Lamont carried experimentation even further by using a cast of seven, only two of whom held AFTRA cards. In our first season we also did a documentary look at a new facet of American Theatre, *Theatre of the Deaf*, live on tape from the Eugene O'Neill Memorial Foundation in Waterford, Connecticut. This show was produced by the well known Broadway scenic designer David Hays—his first production in television or in any medium. With the aid of top flight directors—Arthur Penn, Joe Layton and Gene Lasko—staging scenes and under the overall television direction of Dick Schneider, we were able to have a most moving and unusual program. It proved so worthwhile, in fact, that it was repeated this season. A New York lawyer and entrepreneur Thomas Ham-

mond was given the opportunity to produce a satirical review—actually a spoof of television itself—"We Interrupt This Season," and the results were most gratifying. Two new playwrights were introduced, 25 year old Emanuel Peluso and Professor John Hawkes of Stanford University. USC students under the able production supervision of old-hand producer Ted Post gave us a remarkable performance of the works of Lawrence Ferlinghetti, which were depicted in song, reading, and dance. Ernest Pintoff a writer-cartoonist-musician together with a former NBC graphic arts designer, Guy Fraumeni, wrote, produced, and directed a program explaining the mystique of Professor Marshall McLuhan. We had so many requests from advertising agencies, advertisers, civic organizations and institutions of learning for this film that it was necessary for us to make outside arrangements for the distribution necessary to fulfill these requests. Robert Saudek produced a show for us demonstrating the fine work being done by students on film. The films represented the output of students from Europe as well as America. George Vicas, the well known NBC news producer who is stationed in Paris, produced a most unusual fictional-documentary for us—a view of a 12 year old son of a French father and American mother living in Paris. What we saw was this boy's day and day dreams pictured in the streets of Paris, a most unusual and imaginative departure for a news producer.

In the past season we decided to continue with the same mixture of new plays and of semi-documentary type of programming. Two new playwrights were introduced, Charles Eastman with his "Hamster of Happiness" and John Guare with his "To Wally Pantoni We Leave a Credenza." It is gratifying for us to read that Guare currently has an off-Broadway hit in *Muzeeka* and that a new play of his, *House of Blue Leaves*, is being prepared for Broadway production this fall.

In line with our policy of giving people opportunities, NBC news writer John Lord, wrote and produced for us a most unusual fictional-documentary called "Four Days to Omaha." Apart from giving a newcomer an opportunity, there was a further experimental facet to this show in the fact that we made use of real people as actors. This phase of the experiment was so successful that we will probably expand on it in the coming season. Again in the area of introducing new people, we did a film, "What Color Is the Wind," which was produced, directed and photographed by an ex-*Life* photographer Allen Grant. This was a most beauti-

ful documentary look at a Los Angeles family with four year old twin boys, one of whom has been blind since birth. Grant's approach to the subject, asking not for pity but rather for understanding, plus his exquisite photography made this a most unusual contribution to our series. Stuart Schulberg returned to our series with an extension of the Watts theme, this time showing us the output of the strong creative force at work in Watts in poetry and drama.

Jim Henson, the creator of the well known Muppets, became a television producer in a show called "Youth '68." Jim and his associates produced a most unusual look at the youth of today, what it is and why it is. The subject might ordinarily have been treated by a network News Department, but what made it extraordinary was the unusual technical approach they used. Basically it was shot on film, but extensive use was also made of tape; and a true mixed medium show was effected by the projection of film on taped subjects. For example, girls dancing in studio 8H were not only dancing in front of rearview film projection, but at the same time there were filmed scenes projected on their bodies. Hanson's intelligent and experimental use of Chromo-Key, rear projection, and other devices were not only novel but extremely valuable in maintaining an ultra-modern view of an ultra-modern subject.

The well known French director/producer Pierre Gaisseau, creator of the Oscar winning *The Sky Above the Mud Below* did an unusual documentary look at Africa. Seen through the eyes of contemporary artist Larry Rivers and through the eye of Gaisseau's camera, we were treated to a non-travelog, non-Burton Holmes, and a very personalized look at this mysterious continent.

Victor Vicas, the brother of George Vicas, did for us what is believed to be the first entertainment program shot for American television behind the Iron Curtain. Written by Vicas and American TV writer Manya Starr, it was a simple story of a happily married American housewife who while visiting Prague falls in love with a Czech glass designer. What made it more unusual was that the American girl spoke no Czech, and the Czech man spoke no English. As a result they had no common language. In spite of the fact that much Czech was spoken on the screen, no attempt was made explaining it via subtitle or dubbing because we felt that the audience should be sharing the problems as well as the emotions of our heroine, and that they should understand

only what she understands. The entire picture was shot on location, both exterior and interior, in the beautiful city of Prague. The crew was entirely Czech, even the cameraman, who was recommended to us by our friend, the well known Czech motion picture director, Jan Kadar. It is doubtful that anyone other than Vicas could have directed this picture because since most Czechs have a second language not all of them have the same second language. Fortunately Victor is thoroughly proficient in Russian, German, French, and English. His infinite patience not only with the problem of communication but with the slow pace of a communistic labor force was the only reason the picture was finished at all. It was also finished on time and on budget.

I am often asked by people submitting ideas if they can talk to some member of my staff. This is not always possible. At the time of this writing, for example, my entire staff is in Europe. One typical new member of my staff is a young man named Peter Goldfarb, who joined me at the beginning of this project. Yesterday, he was in Rome and was trying to find a way to get to Paris. He is young, 26, which is important to me since I don't really feel that I am capable of completely understanding the young people of today; its been so long. He is also well acquainted with the young off-Broadway and off-off-Broadway writers, directors and other creative talent. The fact that he studied drama at Michigan, The Sorbonne, UCLA, and the Royal Academy of London is of no little benefit to me with my rather unilateral 41 years of broadcasting experience. Also the fact that he is completely fluent in three foreign languages is of no small value. I recall a day when Pierre Gaisseau was calling me from Lagos in Nigeria complaining bitterly in his very broken English about the rudeness of the drunken Nigerian major who had arrested him and Larry Rivers as white mercenaries. They were held in prison for four days and at one point were about to be shot when the drunken major sobered up enough to change his mind. Pierre's call to me was so frantic that I could not begin to understand his English over the static-filled air but fortunately Peter poked his head in my office, and I put him on the phone. Through a torrent of French yelling we finally heard the story and were able to help Pierre and Rivers with their problem. I mention Peter not just because he is a very valuable asset to this series but because again, in the nature of experimentation, we gave someone who had not before worked in this medium an opportunity to show what he could do.

Most of our mail and many critics have let us know that they want the program broadcast in prime time. I am happy to say that as of this writing a commitment has been made by Burlington Mills to sponsor two of our shows in prime time. We are, of course, grateful for this recognition by a top American corporation. We hope too that this is an indication of the future course of the series. Certainly Julian Goodman is right when he states that experimentation in some form is vital to the future of television. While it is true that most television commercial producers cannot afford the luxury of experimentation with new people—writers, actors, directors etc.—it is too bad that their budgets are not so arranged that they can provide for such experimentation. If you think about it, the one ingredient which brings the big money into television is, of course, the program. No one ever sold a time period without a program in it. The vital component of the program is, of course, writing. One can have fine producers, directors, and actors with beautiful choreography and exquisitely mounted scenes and still have no show without good writing. Thus the basic raw material which is most essential to our business is writing. Every big industry, including many much smaller than our broadcasting industry, spends millions of dollars each year on research and development. To my knowledge, outside of a few scholarship awards, the broadcast industry as a whole doesn't spend the money it should in the development of this essential ingredient—writing. Experimentation does not stop at writing either. New producers with fresh ideas perhaps could be instruments in finding new writers and directors. In our small way and with our limited exposure, we are attempting to find such people and to give them the opportunity they would never get in the big New York and Hollywood production factories. There is no question that talent exists deep beneath the surface, waiting to be mined and refined. As we go forward season after season reading the same apathetic reviews from the intelligent critics of our medium and as we ourselves are more and more prone to look with indifference at the tube night after night and season after season, perhaps it is time for us to realize that we should all be doing, in our own way, more of this experimentation which is so vital to the medium.

WRITING AND *THE CBS PLAYHOUSE*

BARBARA SCHULTZ

Obviously, everyone approaches his job or the field in which he's involved from his own point of view. Until the time I came to CBS a little over two years ago, my job for about ten years had been to work with writers in television as a story editor. I worked on various series, and I found that there were always three or four, or perhaps five shows in a season that particularly excited me, that I cared about and that were most fun to do. These shows were usually somewhat outside the formula of the series. They represented, more than the others, the individual expression of the writer. As time went on, the formula of any given series became more and more rigid, and it was more and more difficult for a writer's own personality to emerge. It was almost impossible to tell who wrote which episode in a series. For someone whose main interest is writing, this was an alarming development.

From his position as Senior Vice President in Charge of Programs at CBS, Mike Dann's point of view and approach to his job is certainly a very different one from mine. I can only guess, but I believe that he looked at the whole spectrum of television and concluded, from a much broader base, some of the same things that I did about the quality of material on the air. Along with this, *Death of a Salesman* went on, and it was established that there

BARBARA SCHULTZ, a graduate of Barnard College, holds the position of the Executive Producer for the *CBS Playhouse*. Miss Schultz, who has been story editor of these highly acclaimed original drama specials, joined the staff of CBS Television Network's Program Department in 1966. Prior to joining CBS, she had been the story editor of programs such as *The Defenders* and *Armstrong Circle Theater*.

was a definite and large audience for a play of stature. Thus, the *CBS Playhouse* began to emerge in Mike Dann's thinking. He saw a way of doing original drama. It was simply to approach it as one did a Broadway play: to commission writers to write plays on whatever subjects they chose, in whatever time they had to devote to such a project, and for whatever length they thought best. It would then be up to the network to decide which plays were worthy of production and at what time to present them to the TV audience.

When this decision was made, Mike Dann asked me to take over the project. I had been at the network for about three months. For me, it was like being able to concentrate on some four or five plays a year that I had admired so much before. He was not doing the series for my benefit, but I felt as though he were.

CBS Playhouse was announced to the world at a luncheon at 21 in early July of 1966. There was a great deal of skepticism about whether or not the project would ever be much more than a press release. Now, five productions and exactly two years later, the skepticism has disappeared.

Ironically, our first production, "The Final War of Olly Winter," was written by an author new to television. Ronald Ribman had had two plays Off-Broadway and a bunch of unproduced one-act plays and sketches for plays. Among these latter was the germ of a play which he agreed to re-do with the *CBS Playhouse* and television in mind. In a way, Ronald Ribman was fortunate that his prior experience had been limited to the theater. His approach to his work was thoroughly individual and personal, without any of the self-censorship and sophistication so common to many of the writers who had worked so long in television. It was this quality of innocence in his writing which appealed so much to Fred Coe and to me when we first read the material. And, there was Mr. Ribman's fearlessness in writing a play almost entirely of character rather than plot. I believe this concentration on character made the production work for television in a way it would not have in any other medium. The focus was small and intense. The play was very slow-moving for television, but in order to be faithful to its intention, this was a necessary part of its production. As it was a character study, time was needed to explore the character, to create a mood, and to involve the audience in the world of Olly Winter. When it was first produced, I began to worry that the context in which these shows were to be aired was too grand. We were not presenting *Hamlet* or *Death of a Salesman* and there-

fore the audience might lose the value of the intention in the atmosphere of a long-awaited special. I was wrong. I had underestimated the audience. For the most part, they saw it for what it was and appreciated it. This attitude has continued, not only on the part of the audience, but with most of the critics and with our very enlightened sponsor, the General Telephone and Electronics Corp., who allow the shows to run uninterrupted by commercials.

Loring Mandel, who wrote "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night," had for many years wanted to do this story. With the customary disillusionment of a long-established television writer, he never believed a drama about old people could go on the air as a special. He was willing, however, to try. As there seemed to be no pressure, his writing and re-writing were accomplished in an ideal way. He worked on one aspect of the play at a time. He built his character very slowly, and with each successive reworking of the material, the focus on the character became more varied and individual. It was not Mr. Mandel's intention to write a story about the generalized problems of the "aged," but to tell the story of one man who learns he can never give up until he dies. Although the character was a large one, both his inner and outer life were shown through the smallest details. Conflicts were dramatized most often through physical action: getting the key to open a piano, fixing a newel post, making coffee, etc. As the man was a carpenter, this was an obvious way to characterize him, but it also added to the absolute simplicity of the writing and the natural, or human, terms of the play.

The reaction to Mr. Mandel's play often missed the larger theme in the emphasis on the problem of aging. It was a case where so many people are involved and concerned with this problem that the "struggle for life," as the author puts it, sometimes escaped notice. I contend that the fact that the character existed as a very real person in specific circumstances made it possible for the audience to identify with the problem in a very personal way.

Reginald Rose's approach to "Dear Friends" was a very different one. The subject of marriage was what seemed to interest him most of the time, but rather than starting with one or two characters, he started with eight, and with a very difficult, almost unbelievable situation in which to put them. Three couples give a party with the purpose of bringing the fourth estranged couple back together

again. It was necessary to justify this situation through characterizing each person so carefully that the presence of eight people in one room would first make plausible the initial situation and second, set off the emotional conflicts which exposed each person to the group. Thus, Mr. Rose started with somewhat arbitrary circumstances and proceeded within them to build to various explosive climaxes in a way that seemed altogether real, natural, and even inevitable.

An opposite problem existed in our next production, "My Father and My Mother." Robert Crean wanted to tell the story of a man who found his own generation too complex and felt that life was simple and ideal when he was a boy. Of course, he found out differently. But Mr. Crean also wanted to eliminate the normal and naturalistic sequences of time and space. He wanted to create an inner logic to the play which would permit his hero to literally walk from memory into phantasy into the present with absolute freedom. He wanted to create a reality within the man's mind rather than an external one. Whether or not it was possible to communicate this interior logic to an audience was, of course, the problem, and the struggle. The characters were quite well defined from the beginning, but it was always a matter of shaping and pushing and squeezing to make it work, to eliminate external confusion and yet retain the inner conflict of the hero. I'm not sure that we altogether succeeded, but I think the try was well worth our producing this play.

In "Secrets" Tad Mosel started with a theme or an idea, that of personal privacy. It had been suggested to him by an experience of his own. When he started to write, however, it was first a matter of creating the characters. Again, this was a difficult concept to put across. The matter of personal privacy was only one level in a fairly intricate structure. More than any of the others, this play exemplified the taking of a very broad issue and making it intimate and specific, personalizing it in the detailed terms of the television medium. Also, more than any other, this play had a life of its own. A complete world was created within the play, where a tiny incident in the life of one man led to a chain of events and became magnified, intruding into the life of everyone around this man, and deeply affecting his relationships. It had elements of mystery and of a love story, as well as the philosophical theme of the protection of an individual's privacy no matter how "quiet" the secret may have been.

That the best way to reach someone is often not to try to reach them, is not an easy point, and unfortunately it was missed by many viewers. Although the story of this play was the simplest, the subtleties were the greatest. "Secrets" created more controversy than any of the other productions. To our complete surprise, bitter argument resulted from this production. Many people lost the point completely and never understood what all the fuss was about, while others defend it with a vehemence quite unusual for any play, let alone a television play.

I hope it is clear that while the *CBS Playhouse* is in no way an "experimental" project, it does represent a very sincere effort to retain the writer's initial concept throughout all the work involved, from the script to the final production, to remain faithful to that which the writer is trying to express in his own style and form. None of the plays were perfect, but it is my feeling that a perfect play which is limited in scope and intention, is less interesting and less valuable than a play which aspires to be more than it is, and in which the aspiration is recognizable. This, in my terms, is one of the purposes of the *CBS Playhouse* and of a serious approach to writing in any medium.

Writing in television has not been taken seriously for a long time. It is about time that it was. Aside from the commercial and absolutely justifiable considerations of entertainment, if there is to be material of quality, it must, I believe, begin with a concept about writing, which is simply the protection of individual expression.

THE ENIGMA CALLED ISRAELI TELEVISION

AVNER PERRY

The modern State of Israel does not have a television system. Yet, the story of Israel television is nearly as old as the medium itself. It goes back all the way to 1951, and involves one of America's all-time giants in the field. In that year RCA's General Sarnoff contacted Israel's Chief of Staff, Yigael Yadin, and suggested to him the use of television for military purposes. The American army in Korea had tried a new method by which to determine the direction of ground artillery fire. They were aided by television cameras mounted on helicopters. Yadin even sent a small military mission to the United States to check on the possibilities of establishing a system to be used for tactical and strategic training. It would be interwoven into the army's educational program which at the time was the main melting pot for the integration of Israel's thousands of immigrants.

A number of business men in many parts of the world sent proposals for investment in television in Israel. The files concerning television in the Prime Minister's Office began to bulge with ideas, suggestions, and offers of financial support. But since the prime minister was at that time and for some years to come David Ben-Gurion, and since David Ben-Gurion believed that movies and

AVNER PERRY was born and raised in Israel. After two and one-half years of mandatory military service, he joined a large local news magazine. After several years of work experience in numerous fields, he came to the United States to go back to school in order to study the wider aspects of mass communication. Having received his B.A. and M.A. from the Radio-TV Division of the Theater-Arts Department of UCLA, Mr. Perry is currently working toward a Ph.D. in the Telecommunication Department at USC.

television and the likes were a waste of time—time which should be used more productively—Israel did not have television for more than a decade to come.

Israel has been called “unique” in regard to so many aspects of its nature, struggles, and way of life that one more or less would hardly impress anyone. But in the area of television, the state has probably added to its list of unique characteristics. Were it not pathetic, the tedious struggle for the introduction of television into Israel might even be viewed as being funny. Even with the accompanying humorous elements, the fact that Israel, as of this day, does not yet have an on-going television system can only be seen as a tragic detriment to the country and a sad mistake brought about by political bickering and different types of coercion which the state has to endure.

In recent months a number of government representatives were engaged in hopping from Asia to Europe and the U.S. and back to Israel. Their aim was to recruit personnel for an “Emergency Television System” to begin operation in the country as soon as possible. This activity came closest to the actual initiation of a television system than any of the numerous activities before it. Talks about the introduction of television began in Israel as early as 1951, and, ever since, the subject has been given almost constant consideration in the press, the parliament, and cabinet. Committee upon committee came to the tiny country, investigated the problem, and offered its proposals for action. Policy statements were made by the government concerning television. These statements were either denied or not acted upon primarily because of two major obstacles, political and religious.

The political obstacle has several facets. Israel has 14 political parties. Not one has more than 30 per cent of the vote. Naturally the opposition parties were reluctant to allow those in control of the coalition government establish such a powerful communication tool and through it exercise more control over the electorate. Elderly politicians from all parties also were not too happy about the idea of having to confront the electorate “face to face” via television. The average age of the elected officials in Israel is relatively advanced, and since the voters cast their ballots for the party rather than for an individual politician, most of the voters do not know the majority of parliament members and other elected officials. The party committees nominate candidates for parliament and municipalities. The electorate has nothing to say about the

choice, and, as mentioned, hardly knows most of those selected by the party nominating committee. Many of the political figures would rather see this anonymity preserved if they can at all help it. They also fear the telegenic personality of Abba Eban. His video image may possess too much of a charismatic quality which would certainly affect Israel's electorate.

Since Israel does not have a separation of church and state, and has several religious political parties represented in its parliament, it is hard to make a clear distinction where politics ends and religion begins. In the area of television, the problem is even more acute due to the fact that the orthodox branch of Judaism is by far the dominant in the country, and through political maneuvering achieves its goals, although representing only a small part of the population. The religious leaders were strongly opposed to television all along. They cited examples of the worse in violence and moral laxity in Western television and warned of a similar fate should the medium be permitted in Israel. Tied in with this religious objection may be the threat of a disruption of the social and religious kibbutzim organizations.

It is significant that in all the discussions regarding television, hardly anyone has attempted to suggest a commercial system. All agreed that if television must come, it should be government controlled. Until several years ago that meant actually owned and operated by the government. However, in 1965 the "Broadcasting Law" was passed with resultant establishment of the Israeli Broadcasting Authority. Thus some of the direct control over broadcasting was removed from the prime minister's office, but the government still had wide authority in appointing people to the Authority and generally supervising its activities.

Another breakthrough in the arduous way toward the introduction of a television system into the country came in April, 1966, when the first programs emanated from the Instructional Television Trust (ITT) studios in Tel Aviv. The ITT is a project donated and operated by the French Rothschild family. Although it was made perfectly clear by the Rothschilds that the project would not cost Israel a penny and that after several years it would be turned over *gratis* to the government, it required several months of bitter debates in the parliament for approval of the pilot educational program. In the words of an elderly and suspicious lady member of parliament: "Do we need a corporation of contractors for education, a concession on culture?"

While the limited scope of the ITT programs prevents them from being of much interest to the general public in Israel, and thus no real "threat" to anyone other than school children, there exists a much more serious problem that has been greatly disturbing to the Israeli government for the past several years: Arab television.

Television first came to the Middle-East in the summer of 1960 when Egypt and Syria began broadcasts of entertainment, propaganda, and news programs. The Arabs in Israel soon discovered that they could receive those programs from across the borders. The general public followed suit, and tall television antennae started appearing everywhere. The Israeli government, realizing the disastrous effects on the morale of its people that such propaganda programs can have, tried everything in its power to discourage the importation and purchase of television sets. For a time there was a total ban on wholesale importation of sets. When the pressure mounted and the import licenses had to be issued, the sales tax was fixed at 200-300 per cent of the set's price: \$500. And still the public continued to purchase the sets. Owning a television set became the newest status symbol in Israel.

As the number of sets increased at a rapid pace (40,000 TV sets), so did pressure on the government for programs. But the perpetual opponents of television persisted and the local service has not begun. Interesting to note that while the government did not provide television programs, it saw fit to levy an annual license fee on every set just as it does for every radio in the country.

1967 saw a constant worsening of the Arab-Israeli situation. More and more Israeli politicians became convinced of the urgent need to counter the fiery propaganda speeches from Cairo with local information and propaganda programs. CBS was already serving as an advisor to the government on television affairs, but that was a future proposal which required another year or two before initial operation.

Emergency regulations were used under which the government can confiscate almost anything for security reason. The studios of the ITT were prepared to serve as news and documentary outlets. Radio people with some television knowledge prepared to start operation when the shooting war erupted. They did not. The reason, according to the head of the program department at the Israeli radio: "The war was too short to give us a chance to start the thing rolling."

Several days later the war was over, but television was still non-existent. There was no longer an emergency, at least not for the moment. But then Israel realized that it had annexed about a 1,000,000 Arabs to its 250,000,000 population. The new million Arabs were those residing in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank formerly belonging to Jordan, and the parts of Syria which Israel now occupied.

What happened in Israel immediately after the war serves to illustrate the lack of appreciation in that country for the power of mass communication and especially television. As soon as the shooting ended and business was again as usual, the government decided that there was no need any more to hurry and put television into operation. The idea to commence broadcasts at once was dropped, and the question of television was pushed aside to allow work on more pressing problems. It was, however, very shortly afterwards that the same non-urgent issue of television received top priority in the country. Something drastic had to happen to convince the authorities to change their minds so radically. It did.

While before the war most of the world was in sympathy with Israel, and during the actual battle it was applauding the state's stunning military triumphs, this feeling and attitude was quickly altered. Israel, which was the underdog for so long, became the victor. The bullies of yesterday were the dead and injured of today.

From within the country and from abroad came cries for information and clarification. In order to overcome that "Information Crisis" the government decided to go ahead immediately with plans to establish a television system. It was called the Emergency System to distinguish it from the General System which the country was "preparing." The immediate concern was to see it go on the air, in order to try and win over the viewers of Arab television, "...even if all we see is someone reading the news," according to the Secretary General of the Israel Broadcasting Authority. The idea was mainly to lure set owners in Israel and in the occupied West Bank to watch Israeli offerings in television rather than that of the Arab countries' television.

The plan to initiate Emergency Television won almost unanimous support in Israel. Even the perennial ardent opponents of the medium suppressed their opposition, convinced that the security of the country was at stake. And if Israel has a sacred cow more sacred than all the rest, and it has many, that one is security.

However, there were still some voices of dissent which were far from being convinced. Their main objection was regarding the usefulness of such hastily built service. Many expressed doubts as to the effectiveness of the limited Israeli plan as compared with the more than twenty hours of television programs from the three powerful stations in Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon. Another apprehension voiced by Israelis was regarding the damaging influence a primitive television system might have on the existing Radio Arabic department's broadcasts. It is one of four radio services: Hebraic (classical music with news bulletins), The Light Channel (commercial without classical music), Voice of Israel (similar to Voice of America), and Arabic (17 hours a day, hourly news and Arab music). It has acquired during the years a wide audience for its Arabic programs and a reputation for being quite reliable. The broadcasts are frequently quoted by Arab leaders, and in some parts of the Arab world it is forbidden by law to listen to them.

Although the proponents of television have been continually stressing the invaluable help to education and integration that the medium could provide, opponents of television also use this issue as a basis for criticism. They argue that a hastily conceived system would have the reverse effect on viewers in Israel and in neighboring countries, and would be detrimental to a number of Israel's goals.

One of the country's foremost experts on education, in a lengthy article titled "Emergency Television—Second Contemplation," pointed out that the project may actually cause more harm than good in yet another critical area. Professor Yehoshua Praver noted that one of Israel's outstanding psychological triumphs in the six-day war was the image of the country created in Arab public opinion. Israel appeared as a sophisticated state, a carrier of technological superiority in the area. The supremacy of its Air Force, the intelligence, and excellent co-operation among all branches of the Armed Forces, as well as the accurate service provided by the Arabic radio programs created in the eyes of the Arabs an image of a state capable of maximum utilization of the means of modern science. Professor Praver concluded that it would be a fatal error to ignore this impression. On the contrary, it should be developed further. Inferior television programs would do much harm to that psychological concept.

Praver brought up yet another point, and one which was all but overlooked by the co-ordinators of plan for television. He reminded

the government policy makers that broadcasts in Arabic are not going to be viewed by only Arabs. A very significant number of the Jewish population in Israel has command of the Arabic language. Of these, most are poor. If television should really be regarded as an urgent need, these sections of the Jewish population should be the primary targets. The educator proposed using Arabic as well as Hebrew, aiming the programs at the poor Jewish population first, and only after gaining sufficient experience in the operation of the new medium, start beaming program specifically to Arabs and Arab states.

The bi-lingual problem of Israel was given extensive consideration by a European expert who prepared a report for Israeli television under the auspices of the EBU (European Broadcasting Union). In 1965, after being sent to Israel with a special committee, Pier Emilio Gennarini, Director of Planning Services for the Italian Radio-Television, suggested a simultaneous bi-lingual broadcast which could send out two sound tracks at the same time. Identical visuals would be aired, according to the Gennarini proposal, with the sound both in Hebrew and Arabic. Special adaptors would be attached to the television sets, and the viewer could select the desired audio by switching channels on the adaptor. In an interview after the June 1967 war Gennarini stressed that his suggestion is even more applicable today than it was at the time it was written.

The Gennarini Report was only one of several like it which experts from other countries prepared and which were never utilized. Yet what all those proposals and sheer time did not do, war did. The primary reason for the sudden urgency in establishing television in Israel was the need to create some means of communication with the more than a million Arab inhabitants of the areas Israel occupied during the war. About a year before the recent war, a leading Arab journalist writing for the Israeli press stated that "...television programs emanating from the neighboring Arab countries are the most important factor in hindering Arabs in Israel from integrating into Israeli life." To the somewhat 250,000 Arabs in Israel, more than a 1,000,000 were added after the June '67 war, and that in a total population of about 250,000,000. While for years the principal argument against television was its harmful effect on the viewers, especially the young, suddenly there seemed to occur a complete switch in attitude. Almost instantaneously, television began to be regarded as the

magic cure for a multitude of ills; internal as well as external, political as well as social. Many believed television could serve as a substitute for a clear policy in regard to the West Bank and other occupied areas, sort of a hypodermic needle that would change overnight ancient ideas and social structures.

Minister of Information Israel Galili came under a heavy barrage from the news media. There developed what was called in Israel the "Information Crisis." A native Israeli Brigadier General who was asked to co-ordinate the preparation for television decided after the short June war to keep his army position. To replace him a sociology professor from the University of Chicago, the founder and head of the Institute for Mass Communication at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, American-born Elihu Katz was appointed "special assistant" to the Minister of Information, in charge of television. Yet contrary to the magical powers attributed to the medium in postwar Israel, Katz was consistent in his academic studies expressing pessimism as to the chances of television by itself changing mass reactions. Shortly after his appointment Katz complained that many Israelis in and out of the administration exaggerated the extensiveness of mass communication effects. He mentioned that international experience shows these effects are quite limited when not accompanied by social activity in the field. And such activity could come only as a result of a clear policy.

Deciding on a clear governmental policy was only one of the prerequisites to be met. There were several other hurdles to be crossed before Israel could have its television system, even the emergency plan with its limited scope. Two major problems concerned the technical aspects of the service and the actual program content. Since the initial plan was to begin with only four hours of broadcasting per day, it was arranged that the transmitters of the ITT be used, at least in the first stages of operation. Yet the ITT transmitters cover only a small portion of the country, and the Post Office was called upon to build four additional transmitters in different parts of the country to facilitate reception in as wide an area as possible. The problem of program content was far more acute and involved. There existed an almost complete lack of information about the viewing habits of the potential audience, their cultural level, social and political views, and their needs. Since the main purpose of introducing television hastily to Israel was to establish means of communication with the 1,000,000 Arabs that Israel has annexed, and to lure other Arabs from watch-

ing programs emanating in the neighboring countries, it was decided to devote three hours of the total daily broadcast of four to programs in Arabic and only one hour to Hebrew.

The need to communicate with the Arabs did not arise suddenly in June of 1967. It existed since the establishment of the state in 1948. Yet while senior staff members of the radio for years toured Europe and North America to learn about television, and radio employees were sent abroad to study in television courses and workshops, there was not one representative of the radio's Arabic department among them. Now, that 75 per cent of the programs are planned in Arabic, the shortage of adequate personnel is quite severe. Recruiting delegations were sent abroad, and application forms rushed to several countries calling for television experts. Although Israel does not yet have sufficient personnel for the limited emergency system, the Ministry of Information declared it was continuing with the preparations for general television, the non-emergency type.

The plan currently is to have news, newsreels, Hebrew lessons, Israeli films, foreign films, and slides. After a breaking-in-period of about six months, there will also be interviews, special programs for the farmer, the housewife, and other specific groups. With a miniature "United Nations" for a crew, the task of Israeli television will be to find the most suitable and effective way to appeal to one of the most diversified audiences in the world. Much of the initial work will no doubt be by trial and error. However, it will not be entirely guesswork. The emergency staff will be "advised, supervised, and scrutinized" by a sufficient number of officials from the Foreign and Defense Ministries.

Israel has been in an emergency situation of one type or another since its establishment. Numerous institutions and bodies which were formed on a temporary basis are still in existence. Considering the number of years television has been an issue in Israel, one wonders why the country had to resort to a hastily conceived emergency plan. One also wonders how long the emergency state in television will remain in effect, how this will affect the plans for a normal system, and how efficient such a system will be if it is ever built.

In the past the reason given why there was no television in Israel was simply that the country could not afford it. This may well have been true; but it is also that the rulers of Israel did not want to afford it. Even today many people I spoke to look on the introduction of the medium with very mixed feelings. Their unease, seems to spring from a rather lofty, puritanical notion of themselves—or of what they should be—that is in some ways rather touching, in others merely irritating. They wish to think of themselves as an energetic, pioneering, outdoor people highly cultivated in their tastes, of course, who have left behind them the corruption, frivolity, and idleness of Western bourgeois society. All of which, such Israelis feel have achieved their final electronic embodiment in television.

—Dan Jacobson

"Images of Death in the Mass Media" The Listener, February 1, 1968

DAVID ATTENBOROUGH has worked as controller of BBC-2 since 1965. He was graduated from Clare College, Cambridge and then joined the BBC in 1952. Until his present position with BBC-2, he was the producer of BBC Television Talks Department. Among his production credits at BBC are *The Crossing of Antarctica*, *Traveller's Tales*, and *Adventure*.

BBC-2 PLUS 4

DAVID ATTENBOROUGH

In 1955, Great Britain had two television networks—the BBC and a newly arrived commercial network, run by the Independent Television Authority and known at ITV. Most people in any way concerned with television then assumed that a third network would be required. Many, one suspects, made the assumption on the somewhat dubious grounds that more television automatically meant better television. Few doubted, however, that for better or for worse, a third network would arrive.

In 1960, the Government appointed a committee, headed by Sir Harry Pilkington, to examine the future of broadcasting in Great Britain. Two years later, in June 1962, the Pilkington Report was published. It recommended among other things, that a third network should indeed be introduced; that its function should be to provide "complementary programming" with "planned alternatives;" that this network should be provided by the BBC; and that it should begin broadcasting "as soon as possible." This was the genesis of BBC-2.

Unfortunately, there was no room for the new network in the Very High Frequency waveband—the existing BBC service (that was to become known as BBC-1) and ITV, between them, used the bulk of the available frequencies in providing almost continuous coverage across Great Britain. BBC-2 would therefore have to be broadcast on the Ultra High Frequency band. To complicate things further, the Pilkington Committee also considered that the 405-lines standard used by BBC-1 and ITV, which was a legacy of the television service instituted by the BBC in 1936, was of too low a standard of definition and should be replaced by a new 625-line standard. BBC-2 should be the first to use it.

Thus, two major technical tasks had to be tackled before BBC-2 could begin broadcasting. Industry had to design and manufacture dual-standard receivers that would operate on both 405-line VHF

and 625-line UHF. And the broadcasting authorities had to construct a new network of UHF transmitters which would eventually cover the country.

Because, eventually, ITV would also be broadcasting on UHF in some form, this network of transmitters was planned and executed as a joint operation by the two organizations. Even so, the task was immense. Since the UHF signal does not travel as far as a VHF one, and is only too easily interrupted by hills and even buildings, approximately four UHF transmitters would be needed to cover the area served by one VHF transmitter. Complete UHF coverage of the entire country would require at least 60 high power stations and several hundred medium and low power stations. The construction of them all would inevitably take several years.

The immediate and urgent problem, however, was to get just one transmitter on the air, for by now Pilkington's phrase "as soon as possible" had been translated into a date—April 1964—a mere 20 months after the Government's go ahead. Work began on a transmitter for the London area, and it was this which radiated the first programs of the new network on April 21st. Some ten million people lived within the coverage area. Unhappily, less than one in ten of them had equipped themselves with sets and aerials in order to watch the new programs.

Although BBC-2 was launched so soon after the publication of the *Pilkington Report* which recommended its creation, both the Press and the public seemed to have forgotten totally the program policy that Pilkington had said it should adopt.

The television retailers and manufacturers needed no report to tell them what purpose it should serve. It should inject new life into the market for receivers which was, at this time, nearing saturation and showing signs of a slump. One manufacturer even suggested that the most popular and well established drama and light entertainment series on BBC-1 should be transferred immediately to BBC-2. "That would force the public to buy new sets," he said, with relish. That the morality of this form of blackmail might be questionable did not, apparently, occur to him. Most, however, never doubted that the network's aim was to sell the greatest number of receivers in the shortest possible time. I should, therefore, in their view, schedule the most popular kinds of programs.

Any broadcaster and any advertiser knows well enough what

kind of programs these are. They need only consult the rating charts to find out. Few could imagine that there was some completely new vein of widely popular programming that had not yet been mined. The retailers' recommendation therefore was, in effect, that BBC-2 should devote itself to producing new versions of programs that already existed on BBC-1 or ITV. To spend millions of pounds in building a new network merely to transmit more of the same seemed not merely absurd but almost criminally wasteful. At any rate, such a policy was unacceptable to those responsible for BBC-2.

Some critics held a diametrically opposed view to the commercial one. In their opinion, BBC-2 should pay no regard whatever to mass taste or mass opinion. It should be unashamedly high-brow. It should schedule nothing that did not make substantial intellectual demands. Many broadcasters would believe that such a network would be doomed to failure even if, in order to view it, the audience had to do no more than flick a switch. But to hope that with such a program policy we could persuade people in any numbers to buy new sets and install new antennae was obviously wildly unrealistic. Such a policy would be truly suicidal.

Other people put forward a less extreme suggestion. BBC-1 should change its policy and become a completely light-hearted network. All its serious material should then be transferred to BBC-2, so that the two television networks were divided according to the seriousness of content rather as happens in radio. Many of us in television would have been dismayed at this segregation of programs for several reasons, but, in fact, the possibility of making such a division never existed. As long as BBC-2 was only available to a section of the country, and only a relatively small proportion of viewers had UHF sets, then BBC-1 had to remain the national network and had to fulfill its role as such, providing a fully balanced service and covering all practical fields of information, education, and entertainment.

The remaining possibility lay in that original phrase in the *Pilkington Report*—"complementary programming." Precisely what this meant had now to be thrashed out. We had, clearly, to offer viewers a choice. In strictly logical terms there can be no choice between unlikes. One cannot logically choose between apples and oranges—only between two oranges, one of which may be more the kind of orange to suit the taste of the chooser. But to interpret choice as the scheduling of one football match opposite another football match was

clearly not in anyone's mind, quite apart from the fact that competition often drove BBC-1 and ITV to do this anyway. The aim clearly must be to do the reverse, to make quite sure that whatever else was placed opposite a football match, it was *not* football. What should it be? The immediate conclusion was to take refuge in a classification of brow. Football is, arguably, low-brow. Therefore the alternative must be high-brow—a recital by a string quartet perhaps. This might, indeed, be a satisfactory pairing, but in making it we had to be quite clear that some of our audience might find the choice an agonizing one—for who is to say that a man may not like both sport and chamber music, providing both are well played. What ever policy we adopted would infuriate somebody. Furthermore, we came to the conclusion that always pairing programs according to a high-brow-low-brow opposition, or even majority-minority opposition, would be stultifying to the new network. We decided, in the end, that our interpretation of complementary was to be, simply, different in kind.

But this in itself was not enough. It would not be sufficient justification for BBC-2's existence, and its cost, if it simply provided slightly different versions of BBC-1 prototypes, arranged in a different order. BBC-2 must also strive to produce new kinds of programs that were not to be found anywhere else. Since, quite clearly, the most popular kinds of programs were already being produced by BBC-1 and ITV these new BBC-2 programs could hardly be expected to be enormous audience-pullers. But what they lacked in breadth of appeal, we believed, they could make up for in intensity. That is to say, we would seek to promote programs for enthusiasts—people who were so devoted to their chosen subjects that they would become BBC-2 viewers solely in order to see these particular programs which might not amount to more than one or two a week. Opera and serious music, science and painting and archaeology, properly done, obviously met this requirement. But they are high-brow subjects, and we had already set our faces against becoming solely an intellectual's ghetto. We had to seek other kinds as well. Happily, enthusiasts are not limited to highbrows. Fishing and motoring, golf and science-fiction are scarcely the exclusive preserve of high-brows. Yet none were treated regularly by either BBC-1 or ITV. They, too, were put on our list.

Thus, it was that BBC-2's stated policy came to rest on two propositions: first, that it provided a strongly contrasting and

carefully planned alternative to what was being shown at any one time on BBC-1; and second, that it sought out subjects and devised program formats of a kind that, for one reason or another, were neglected or ignored by other networks.

In adopting this policy, however, BBC-2 planners knew well enough that it was hardly one calculated to attract audiences of a spectacular size. The network was not only to schedule more programs of a specialist nature than other networks, but it was also committed by the concept of alternative programming, to schedule them in a way that minimized rather than maximized their potential audience. The principle of audience inheritance is a powerful factor in the minds of those who build BBC-1 and ITV schedules. They know that if they are to get a substantial audience at 10:00 p.m., they must have an even bigger one at 7:30 p.m. They therefore schedule the most widely popular programs early in the evening and the more specialist ones later into the night. BBC-2, if it was to provide alternatives, was likely, much of the time, to do just the reverse.

There were, in addition, two other major factors that would threaten BBC-2's success, no matter what kind of programs it scheduled or how it arranged them. The first and obvious one was the cost and trouble demanded from any viewer who wanted to see the new network. At the worst he would have to buy a new receiver solely for the purpose. At the best, he would have acquired a VHF/UHF set automatically when he replaced his old and worn out receiver; but he would still have to buy and erect a new UHF aerial before he got tolerable reception of BBC-2 and that usually costs more than the average viewer can afford. Second, BBC-2 would have to recruit its audience from viewers who were for the most part already firmly wedded to one of the two existing channels. Why, after all, should they desert their favorite Western, already long and firmly established in their affections, not to say their daily domestic routine, to sample a program of a kind they had never even contemplated before?

We knew, therefore, that the audiences we would get were very unlikely to be large. What targets, then, should we set ourselves? By what standards should we judge whether we were failing or succeeding? It was plain that we could not adopt the kind of evaluation necessarily and properly employed by BBC-1 and ITV, the simple measure of audience size. That was not our aim.

BBC-2 as envisaged did not and could not exist in isolation.

Were BBC-1 not already there, fulfilling its comprehensive national role, then BBC-2 could not possibly adopt its proposed policy. Thus the only proper way to consider the network was as part of the unified twin-channel output of the BBC. There was to be no competition between the networks, only the fullest co-operation, with extensive crosstrailing of one another's programs and, quite frequently, programs transferred from one network to another. Nor was there to be an ambition to breed a new species of viewer, a BBC-2-only viewer; instead, we hoped to create a BBC viewer who, by switching in a careful and discriminating way between the two networks, would be able to find more things, that more closely matched his own varied tastes, more often, than before. We believed, in sum that whereas it was patently impossible to please most of the people most of the time with one network alone, or with two networks in competition, that ideal could be approached very much more closely with two carefully integrated contrasting networks. If, however, it had to be considered in isolation, then its success or failure would not be measured by the absolute size of the audience added up over the week and compared arithmetically with the BBC-1 or ITV audience. The measurement instead, would be the proportion of the owners of dual-standard set who regularly, two or three times a week, turned from BBC-1 to BBC-2.

The knowledge that, because of the arrangement of our schedules, hardly any of the audience of a BBC-2 program were merely semi-interested viewers inherited from a previous show, but that all had made a positive decision to turn the switch and view a particular program, gave an exciting sense of freedom to program makers. They could work with confidence. An opera producer need not, out of fear of losing those in his audience who do not really like opera, limit himself to one or two popular arias shorn of their recitatives and largely abstracted from their dramatic content. He could, instead, devote the whole of an evening to a single work. BBC-2 has thus already transmitted a studio production of Britten's *Billy Budd*, uncut and running two and three-quarter hours. We have visited Covent Garden Opera House and relayed live and at full length the season's most important new productions—*Traviata*, *Aida*, *Cosi fan Tutte* and the Royal Ballet's new production of *The Nutcracker*.

Another entire evening was devoted to a passionate debate on the assassination of President Kennedy, in which both Mark Lane

and members of the Warren Commission took part. The network sponsored an annual indoor professional tennis tournament, at a time when professional tennis was rarely seen in Britain, and again concentrated it into a single evening. It began at 8:00 P.M. and ran unbroken until past midnight.

Nor have our big-scale specialist operations been limited to single evenings. John Galsworthy's Edwardian masterpiece, *The Forsyte Saga*, was dramatized in twenty-six 50-minute parts. As part of the archaeological coverage that early became one of BBC-2's specialties, we have also initiated a major excavation. The chosen site is Silbury Hill, an immense conical mound, not far from Stonehenge, which is the largest prehistoric monument in Europe and even exceeds in size some of the Egyptian pyramids. No one knows what is in it or why it was made. Its excavation will be conducted over three years with BBC-2 outside broadcast cameras covering all stages. If dramatic finds are made, then the work may well be televised live. Such a project would be uneconomic unless a substantial number of programs derive from the work. No other network is able to devote such time to such a subject as BBC-2.

But these are the obvious and impressive BBC-2 projects. What of the average programs? The schedule varies, naturally, from month to month. At the time of writing, BBC-2 is providing regular weekly programs on motoring, fishing, an arts review (covering recent films, novels, exhibitions and plays), the dramatization as a serial of a classical novel (currently by Henry James, previously by Dostoevsky, Zola, and Balzac), documentaries on natural history, golf matches between the great players of the world, master classes by outstanding musicians (currently Daniel Barenboim, previously Menuhim and Tortelier), the art and architecture of the Far East, jazz, European affairs as seen through the film reports of other European broadcasting organizations, business affairs, foreign films (from France, Italy, Japan, Poland, and the U.S.S.R.), and the business of Parliament. Every weekday it provides a half-hour news bulletin, longer and more detailed than any bulletin provided by either BBC-1 or ITV.

It plays a special role when BBC-1 leaves a long-running event such as a tennis tournament in order to keep an obligation with, perhaps, children, for then BBC-2 takes over the coverage so that the dedicated sportsman, with both BBC networks in his reach, can see the entire match.

Lastly, and very importantly, BBC-2 keeps in mind its obligation

to provide contrasting alternatives. This is particularly important when BBC-1 schedules its more serious and demanding programs. Opposite a series of contemporary (and sometimes harrowing) plays on BBC-1, BBC-2 places escapism in the shape of Hollywood musicals; opposite BBC-1's weekly current affairs survey, BBC-2 places comedy; and opposite the weekly documentary, BBC-2 schedules a Western.

If success in the eyes of critics were the only assessment, then certainly BBC-2 could claim to have succeeded more spectacularly than anyone had dared hope. The network regularly is given more reviews than the other two networks put together. *The Daily Mirror*, the paper with the largest circulation in the country, declared it to be "the world's best television service," and other correspondents at one time or another have been hardly less complimentary. Similar bouquets have been handed out from within the profession for the past two years the great majority of awards given by the Guild of Television Producers has gone to programs by the network.

But it would indeed be a gross failure if a network with such a policy could not win golden opinions from discerning critics and professional colleagues. What has been its success with the general public? The first task had to be to persuade the public to buy UHF receivers. Success here, of course, is dependent on the spread of transmitters and the consequent availability of the signal. At the end of its fourth year of operation in April 1968, there were 16 main stations in operation and twelve relay stations which between them provided a signal to nearly 70 per cent of the population (about 37 million people). Of these, about 13½ million now have UHF sets and antennae. This audience has grown at a rate of about a million a month and shows every sign of continuing to do so. It is interesting to compare this with the growth of the ITV set owners in the four years after the introduction of the commercial network in 1955. It might be expected that ITV sales would be higher since an alternative to a monopoly is a much more attractive and saleable proposition than a third choice. Furthermore, ITV's programming was deliberately designed to have a mass appeal. It is certainly true and not surprising that the proportion of viewers ready to receive ITV on its opening day was higher than those with UHF sets on BBC-2's launching. Subsequently, however, the rate of growth of two-network public was not significantly different from the rate of growth of the three-

network public nine years later. So much for the worries and criticisms by the television retailers that BBC-2's policies would cripple sales.

But persuading people to buy a new set is not enough. Once they had the set, how much advantage did they take of the new network and how did they regard its offerings?

An enquiry was made when the network was two-and-a-half years old and had settled down into approximately the shape and complexion it has today. The sample was 1,200 people who had acquired new receivers and who had good BBC-2 reception, which, in most cases, implied the installation of special UHF aerials. Eighty per cent said they were 'glad' they could get the network; six out of seven would advise a friend that it was worth the cost of an additional aerial. Nearly all thought the network was "worth having for the occasional good programs," and most said they liked the network because "it showed some kinds of programs which never get into other networks." Seventy-five per cent said that when they viewed BBC-2 they usually viewed one program rather than several in succession, and half the sample claimed to turn on BBC-2 more than once a week. There is every reason to believe that were this survey to be repeated today, eighteen months later, all those figures would be found to have increased.

Naturally enough, the most popular programs are those which are of kinds that are most popular on any other network. Thus, the Hollywood Musical is watched by more people who have the choice than are looking at the same time at BBC-1 or ITV. But there is no triumph in this. A more pleasing statistic is that about one million viewers (ten per cent of the people who at the time had BBC-2 sets) watched BBC-2's live relay of *Aida* from Covent Garden from beginning to end.

These findings, as far as they go, match fairly closely the kind of target that BBC-2 set itself four years ago. But though they may be right in kind, they are not yet satisfactory in stature. More people should look more frequently if the network is to truly succeed. Such a radical change in viewing habits cannot be brought about overnight, but change is certainly taking place. Indeed, BBC-2's proportionate share of the available audience is growing steadily and continuously as more and more people become aware of tastes and interests they did not know they possessed. Perhaps the most encouraging reaction of all is the one that is beginning to be expressed with increasing frequency in both letters

and conversations: "BBC-2 has given me a new interest in television."

When the Government decided to give permission for color television to be broadcast in Great Britain, it also specified, as the *Pilkington Report* had recommended, that color should be broadcast on the new high definition standard of 625-lines. Since BBC-2 was the only network broadcasting on this standard, it fell to BBC-2 to pioneer color. Launching programs, deliberately small in number and modest in scope, began in July 1967. The full service started the following December. Currently about 90 per cent of BBC-2's programs are in color. Naturally enough, since BBC-2 is the only network transmitting in color, the retailers' anxiety that BBC-2 should abandon its specialist policies and become a mass appeal network has re-kindled. Such pressures can be resisted at the moment since the demand for sets still exceeds supply.

At the end of 1969 both BBC-1 and ITV are due to duplicate their 405-line VHF output on 625-line UHF and in color. When that moment comes, the agitations from the trade for BBC-2 to change are likely to cease. Meanwhile, however, BBC-2 intends to maintain its now well established character. Were it to do otherwise, it could be accused, with justice, of breaking faith with the millions of viewers who have bought UHF monochrome sets precisely in order to be able to enjoy the kind of programs provided by BBC-2.

BOOKS IN REVIEW

Gene Wyckoff. **THE IMAGE CANDIDATES.** New York: The Macmillan Company, 1968.

The Image Candidates is a *melange* of anecdotes, gossip, pseudo-sociology, and a polemic pay-off that doesn't quite hang together, and yet is worth hanging in for. It is light reading, a glance at the chaotic world of politics and its use of television.

If there is a theme, it is that the image is the thing, not what a man says but how the general impression he makes reinforces or weakens voters' predilections. Before one is too frightened at the prospect of such Machiavellian power, he may consider that the author may have the truth, but not the whole truth. One might wonder whether George Romney believes that image is more important than words. (Of course brainwashing was discussed after the book was written.) The author cites the Lindsay campaign for Mayor of New York as an example of the rule that the stronger the personal image, the less the tendency of the candidate to identify with the political party. A bit naive, it would seem. What Republican, image or no, would want to remind the voters of New York City of his party label?

Nonetheless, Wyckoff breezily takes us in and out of interesting political maneuvering including the Rockefeller win in the 1964 Oregon primary (using the author's film) and his loss in California (when Rocky didn't use his film). It occurs to the author that not only did Rockefeller thereby lose, but he also lost the following primary that would have enabled him to at least back another moderate and thereby prevent the Republican Goldwater debacle across the country that contributed to the fall of Senator Keating in New York and the subsequent entry of Robert Kennedy to elective office. What a difference a film makes!

As to the future, the author tells us that only if the Republicans mismanage their candidate's image can they possibly lose in 1968. The war in Viet Nam, the possibility of Johnson changing his mind and running, the possibility of riots, all these factors are meaningless, apparently, if the image is right.

That's what it says in *The Image Candidates*.

Pamela Hill. **AMERICAN WHITE PAPER: UNITED STATES FOREIGN POLICY.** New York: Random House, Inc., 1967.

NBC produces very good documentaries. There is a question, however, as to whether even the best documentary can be translated into a book. *American White Paper: United States Foreign Policy* is an attempt to do this.

As headline history, the book covers the highlights of the past couple of

decades, reporting major international involvements with clarity. What is present are the facts. What is frequently missing, however, is perspective.

The book is at its best when it quotes extensively from Ambassador John Bartlow Martin in explaining the background of the United States involvement in the Dominican Republic, when it portrays the dilemma of Vietnam by citing the many diverse attitudes. Often, however, it lapses into the traditional textbook recitation of names, places, and dates. The complexity of this era's events would seem to demand more.

The book is generously endowed with photographs, as one might expect. Surprisingly, though, there are only a few outstanding pictures that capture the emotion of the moment; most are mundane and obvious.

A period of twenty years during which the atomic bomb was born, world leaders such as Stalin and Kennedy died, and tens of thousands were killed in Korea and Vietnam, a period in which Great Britain relinquished its empire to the United States and the Soviet Union, is quite a bit for a hundred fifty pages.

American White Paper is a lucid review of the factual highlights. Perhaps in today's terribly complicated world, however, light should be more broadly diffused.

Harrisonscope

Yale Roe

Richard Schickel. **THE DISNEY VERSION**. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968.

To most of us, the notion of a dull book about Walt Disney is almost inconceivable. Was not Walt Disney responsible for many of our colorful childhood memories at the movies and on television since the early 1950's, for our children? How Richard Schickel, usually an intelligent and lively writer of minor criticisms, reversed this attitude about Walt Disney is a mystery, but *The Disney Version* is downright dull.

On second thought, if a writer (like Schickel in this instance) has little or no access to primary source material; if he is denied the right to use any information not already "on the record;" if he finds it necessary to pad historical gaps with dime-store cultural history, sociology, and psychology; if he tries to bolster the authority of marginal observations with curiously irrelevant quotations by heavyweight writers, he is in for trouble. Where matters of art are concerned, when he is unsure of his moral, social, and artistic stance, he is likely to court disaster. That Schickel's unofficial biography of Walt Disney is merely boring—but harmless—is fortuitous.

The main fault of Schickel's *Disney Version* lies in the simple fact that almost everything he tells us about Mickey's godfather (but not, as we know, his creator) has been said, printed or told countless times in bursts of frequently contradictory publicity releases that have, for over 35 years, emerged through various conduits from the Disney fantasy factory. The "facts" concerning Disney's life have been compiled from stacks of studio handouts, of newspaper, and magazine interviews. Schickel does not deny that an "inside story" about Walt may someday be told; enough evidence exists that Walt the impresario was

not Walt the man. But Schickel simply does not *have* the facts, and his decision to publish the volume without them is unwise.

What Schickel is *not* afraid of, however, is *implications*, and the volume is loaded with them, most of them cliches like the bittersweet defeats in victory Walt suffered as the result of his "typically American" rise to wealth and power in his role as the Jay Gatsby of Hollywood culture. We discover implications of grave psychological problems in the essential vulgarity of Disney's command of mass appeal, in the hidden barbarism (of many kinds) beneath the slick Disneyfied universe and even in the anal-withholding traits in Disney's own character as displayed in his puritanism, modesty, authoritarianism and his penchant for mild animated scatology. (Yawn!)

All of this is ancient history twice told to those of us over thirty-five who have lived through numerous periods of Disney disillusionment, either because Walt or we were growing older all the time. We have traveled from the pre-labor union *Silly Symphonies* to *Snow White*, from *Snow White* to *Fantasia*, *Fantasia* to *Saludos Amigos*, from *Saludos Amigos* to the nature series, from the nature series to *Son of Flubber* and to *Mary Poppins*, all on the cinema screen. We have also committed the theme of TV's *Mickey Mouse Club* to memory, have sneered at the video version of Walt himself introducing his *Wonderful World of Color* and plugging his *magnum opus*, *Disneyland*. We have witnessed the dreary terminal of Disney's life-work, his hegemony at that Flushing fiasco, the New York World's Fair, where, somehow, the worst of everything that Walt ever attempted was symbolized by his Audio-Animatronics, the computerized-animated people, including President Lincoln. (Will a computerized Audio-Animatronic Walt one day greet visitors to Disneyland? This is one matter—one of few possible—upon which Schickel does *not* muse.)

The Disney Version hits hard on a surmise to which most of us were already privy: something terribly important went wrong in the life and times of Walt Disney, something sad, perhaps tragic. The life story of a man with enormous drive, magnificent ingenuity and a talent compared by the late cartoonist Davis Low to that of Leonardo, hidden behind a trim mustachioed copy of Louis B. Mayer, must conceal a fall from grace, a disillusionment or a breakdown (or, as Schickel again implies, a series of breakdowns) of enormous dimensions. But where, how and when? Schickel has not discovered the impact of these traumae or their importance, both to Disney himself and to those of us who admired what was brilliant in the career of the man who has provided for Mickey Mouse and his friends a well assured place in the pantheon of mass media minor gods.

Schickel's Disney came across much like Orson Welles' Charles Foster Kane, with whom he shared many superficial traits—superficial because neither the real Disney nor the fictional Kane was ever more than superficially "important." Like Welles' newspaper tycoon, *The Disney Version* of Disney is close enough to life to arouse curiosity, but infuriatingly sketchy and arbitrary in satisfying it. Despite its pose of fearless muckraking, Walt himself might have enjoyed *The Disney Version*. It strives after color and cuteness, more color and cuteness than life usually provides. It is slickly written, varnished with too much technical skill and not enough mortality. It rings as true as a meeting of the *Mickey Mouse Club* on TV.

On one point Richard Schickel is, I think, entirely correct. Attempts to

understand the "American temper" of the generation just passed without understanding Walter E. Disney's role in our cultural life during that period are senseless. Walt somehow gave substance and shape to many significant prototypical images during that era, and Schickel, unfortunately, neither tells us clearly what they were, or how Disney did it—or why.

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