

THE REFERENCE SHELF

**TELEVISION  
AND RADIO**

EDITED BY POYNTZ TYLER

VOLUME 33

NUMBER 6

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# TELEVISION AND RADIO

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## THE REFERENCE SHELF

The books in this series reprint articles, excerpts from books, and addresses on current issues, social trends, and other aspects of American life, and occasional surveys of foreign countries. There are six separately bound numbers in each volume, all of which are generally published in the same calendar year. One number is a collection of recent speeches on a variety of subjects; each of the remaining numbers is devoted to a single subject and gives background information and discussion from varying points of view, followed by a comprehensive bibliography.

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## PREFACE

A television executive, beset on all sides by criticism of his industry, likes to tell detractors of the little girl who was entertaining the rector while her mother prepared tea. "Can you recite the Lord's Prayer, my dear?" he asked. The little girl recited the Lord's Prayer. "Can you recite the Apostles' Creed?" The little girl recited the Apostles' Creed. "And can you recite the Catechism?" he asked. "Look, Reverend," said the little girl. "I'm *only* seven."

Perhaps youth does account for the shortcomings of broadcasting, for radio is scarcely forty years old and television less than twenty, but some critics assert that radio became senile before it ever grew up and that television gets worse with the years.

This book makes no claim to resolve the question of broadcasting's success or failure. It simply presents the findings and the views of thoughtful men in the hope that these views, from both within and without the industry, will guide and encourage the reader to arrive at his own conclusions. To those men and their publishers the editor is grateful for permission to reprint their work.

POYNTZ TYLER

November 1961



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## I. THE WORDS AND THE MUSIC

### EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: THE RISE AND FALL OF RADIO

Radio today is the world's liveliest ghost. It has more sets, stations, and employees than ever in its history and sells more advertising and reaches more people; yet some of its best friends speak of it as a thing of the past (see "Twilight of the Soaps," by Thomas Meehan, in this section) and at present there are not many who will join with William O'Hallaren and C. P. Gilmore (see "Radio Is Worth Saving" and "The Ace in the Hole—FM," in this section) in granting it much of a future.

Radio was born in the twenties and it "died" in the forties. It was born during the Era of Wonderful Nonsense, and made a mighty contribution to both the era and the nonsense. It lived through the great depression of the thirties, and helped make it bearable. It survived the Second World War, and helped win it, and it expired in 1948 (although it doesn't seem to realize it) with the advent of commercial television—dead in its prime from a wound it scarcely felt.

#### *The Land of Imagery*

Radio will never die in the memory of its listeners, for it lived on their imaginings. The girls were always beautiful on radio and the men brave, for each listener could do his own casting and design his own sets. You could picture Allen's Alley on radio and see the puddles, picture heaven and see the saints, picture W. C. Fields and see him dismember Charlie McCarthy with an axe. Or you could watch an invasion from Mars and see it with such horrible clarity that, like a woman in Pittsburgh, you'd swallow poison to escape "the fate worse than death."

The program that drove the lady in Pittsburgh to such extreme measures (she recovered) could never be produced on television, live or taped, sponsored or sustaining or Susskind. Radio needed only a national hookup, Orson Welles in a Halloween spoof, and a highly imaginative audience to achieve a result that, according to the *New York Times* of October 31, 1938, was just south of bedlam:

A wave of mass hysteria seized thousands of radio listeners throughout the nation last night when a broadcast of H. G. Wells's fantasy, *The War of the Worlds*, led thousands to believe that an interplanetary conflict had started with invading Martians spreading wide death and destruction in New Jersey and New York.

The broadcast, which disrupted households, interrupted religious services, created traffic jams, and clogged communications systems, was made by Orson Welles, who as the radio character, "The Shadow," used to give "the creeps" to countless child listeners. This time at least a score of adults required medical treatment for shock and hysteria.

In Newark, in a single block . . . more than twenty families rushed out of their houses with wet handkerchiefs and towels over their faces to flee what they believed was to be a gas raid. Some began moving household furniture.

Throughout New York families left their homes, some to flee to near-by parks. Thousands of persons called the police, newspapers and radio stations here and in other cities of the United States and Canada seeking advice on protective measures against the raids. . . .

Three years later the memory of that hoax was still so vivid in the minds of listeners that thousands of them refused to believe the first radio reports of the bombing of Pearl Harbor—they simply winked knowingly and waited for the commercial that never came.

### *The Beginning*

Few listeners will ever forget the Martian invasion—none will forget Pearl Harbor—and few will forget the thousands of programs, bedecked in imagery, that flooded their homes during radio's heyday. Affection will color their memories, and programs will gain with nostalgia the virtues they lacked in reality; but an uncommon number of those programs—from Dr. Frank Conrad's ham broadcasts from his garage in Wilkesburg,

Pennsylvania, to Fred Allen's "Town Hall Tonight"—were well worth remembering. Dr. Conrad himself is worth more than a backward glance, for he was the father of broadcasting and the first to use the term. As assistant chief engineer for Westinghouse during World War I he had used his experimental station 8XK to test the military equipment built by his company for the government. At war's end he continued his experiments, substituting talks to his fellow hams for scientific testing jargon, and when he got tired of talking he would play records. When his personal supply of records was exhausted he sorrowfully "broadcast" the fact and was immediately offered a continuous supply by the Hamilton Music Store in Wilkinsburg in return for announcing that the records had come from the store. Conrad's acceptance of this offer made Hamilton the world's first radio advertiser.

The rest followed as the night the day. When interest in Conrad's broadcasts became impressive, the Joseph Horne department store placed an advertisement in the *Pittsburgh Sun* of September 29, 1920, announcing that it had receiving sets for sale at ten dollars and up. This ad, too, was a first—the first for home receivers—and it led to still another. Westinghouse, manufacturer of the sets, decided that the market could be enlarged with a more powerful transmitting station than Conrad's and established KDKA (Pittsburgh) in time to use the Harding-Cox election of 1920 as the occasion for the world's first regularly scheduled broadcast. By 1922 there were thirty commercial broadcasting stations in the United States—today there are over four thousand—and a new medium of communication was "on the air."

### *Early Days*

One of the first radio programs is still flourishing after over forty years on the air, and its proprietor still uses the same introduction: "Lopez speaking"—that was all a bad case of mike fright permitted him to use on his first broadcast in 1921.

Vincent Lopez with his orchestra was then playing at the Pennsylvania Hotel in New York and he went on the air solely as a favor to a friend who was program director for WJZ in Newark. Today he is only seventeen blocks further north (at the Hotel Taft), and his program is broadcast from coast to coast.

Other programs followed fast. Paul Whiteman, the King of Jazz, started broadcasting in 1922 and Ed Wynn, the Perfect Fool, appeared in a show called "The Perfect Fool" (whence his sobriquet) in the same year. Wynn, appalled and thrown off balance by the dead silence that greeted his best jokes in the empty studio, brought in the first studio audience. His audience consisted of the station's scrub-women, electricians, and telephone operators, plus anyone else who could be rounded up, and it set a dubious precedent that is still followed in both radio and television—the random, nonpaying audience. Will Rogers followed Wynn's lead, bringing his own audience with him from the cast of the 1922 *Ziegfeld Follies*, and even William Jennings Bryan, the Great Commoner, refused to recite his famous "Cross of Gold" speech unless assured of a claque. President Calvin Coolidge (who probably couldn't have weathered television) used a friendly Congress as his audience when he delivered the first State of the Union message ever broadcast and his defeat of John W. Davis in the election of 1924 has frequently been attributed to the thrifty-sounding New England twang of his campaign speeches. Davis, rich and cultivated and suspected of dressing for dinner, sounded like a spendthrift.

Radio performers in the twenties were considered members of the set owner's family. Billy Jones and Ernie Hare, the Happiness Boys ("We two boys without a care/ Entertain you folks out there/ That's our hap-hap-happiness!"), were actually remembered in some listeners' wills, as was Joseph M. White, a tenor soloist with "The Goodrich Silvertown Orchestra." (This last bequest took a bit of doing, for White masked his identity behind a sterling silver mask whenever he appeared in public). Other shows got other rewards. Guy Lombardo and his Royal

Canadians got tons of mash notes for their Sweetest Music This Side of Heaven; "Spike" Shannon, who first introduced morning setting-up exercises over the air, got tons of bar bells. Most—Alice Brady, Ethel Barrymore, Olga Petrova, Vaughan de Leath (the first woman to sing over the air), Weber and Fields, "Roxy" Rothafel, Jessica Dragonette—got publicity (plus salary), but it was national publicity that newspapers could never have brought them.

### *The Thirties*

L The thirties, possibly because the depression made listening the only amusement people could afford, were radio's finest years. Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll, as *Amos 'n' Andy*, and Rudy Vallee, the Vagabond Lover, built up a following among adults and adolescents alike that embraced over half the population. The stars of the thirties and the shows of the thirties are still remembered with respect. There was Irene Bordoni, the Coty Playgirl, and there was Baby Rose Marie, who was "the five-year-old child wonder" for over six years. There was Alexander Woollcott as the Town Crier ("Hear ye, hear ye!"); Morton Downey, the Irish Thrush; Floyd Gibbons, the one-eyed reporter who could speak 217 words a minute; Charles Winninger, the Captain Henry of "The Maxwell House Show Boat"; Lou Holtz and his dialect stories; Kate Smith ("When the Moon Comes Over the Mountain"); George Jessel ("Hello, Momma?"); and Jack Pearl ("Vass you dere, Sharlie?") as a Baron Munchausen who made the original baron seem truthful. The list is endless—Burns and Allen, Fred Allen, Jack Benny, Fanny Brice, Groucho Marx, Bing Crosby, Bob Burns, Eddie Cantor, Rosa Ponselle, Ruth Etting, Bert Gordon (the Mad Russian), Helen Morgan, Harry Richman, Colonel Lemuel Q. Stoopnagle and Budd, Goodman and Jane Ace (the Easy Aces), Ben Bernie, Joe Penner ("Wanna buy a duck?"), Major Bowes and his "Amateur Hour," "Fibber McGee and Molly," Phil Baker, Mary Margaret McBride, Lionel Barrymore, Milton Berle, "The March of Time" ("Time . . . marches on!"), Kay Kyser, and

even Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia of New York and his spirited reading of the funnies during a newspaper deliverymen's strike in 1937.

*The High and the Low Years*

Death dimmed some of these stars. Others prospered through the forties and the fifties and are still prospering on television, legacies from a bright past. The forties added new names to the list of entertainers—Frank Sinatra, Arthur Godfrey, Ed Sullivan, Ed Gardner, Glenn Miller, Henry Morgan, Red Skelton, Burl Ives, Abbott and Costello—and they saw the flowering of a new and able breed, the newscaster and/or the news analyst. Some of these—Edward R. Murrow, Eric Sevareid, Winston Burdett, Ernie Pyle, H. V. Kaltenborn, George Fielding Eliot, Elmer Davis, and John Daly, among many others—were not only excellent reporters in the field but knowing analysts of politics and international affairs. Others read dispatches in a breathless voice and made wild predictions as to what Eisenhower or the Nazis would do next. The latter breed disappeared without a trace the moment more capable men could doff their uniforms after V-J Day. The former gave America the best-informed public of any warring nation (some paid for their first-hand information with their lives) and among them they developed a following for radio that television itself has never approached.

World War II sent radio to the heights and, by delaying the development of commercial television for more pressing matters, prolonged its life. It was borrowed time, however, for once the little screen lit up, the great days of radio were over. No matter how excellent its programs—and a great many of them in the late forties were excellent indeed—it could never overcome the novelty and the sheer wonder of having a moving picture right in the living room. Perhaps, when that novelty has worn off and those pictures seem more and more to move in the same old rut, radio will stage a comeback. It will not do it with the programs and the programing that William O'Hallaren deplors in "Radio Is Worth Saving," but it might do it with another Fred

Allen or Clifton Fadiman or Dr. Conrad. Or it might, as C. P. Gilmore suggests in "The Ace in the Hole—FM," do it with Frequency Modulation.

### TWILIGHT OF THE SOAPS<sup>1</sup>

The last of the radio soap operas has faded into electronic oblivion. Gone from radio are the daytime serials that once were the staples of the networks, the darlings of the soap and cereal sponsors; that provided empathic drama for twenty million housewives. . . .

But soap opera lives on—on television—although in modified form. There is now a neat afternoon spread to enchant the lives of listener-viewers between the end of the breakfast dishes and the beginning of dinner preparations. And the titles of some of the new favorites indicate a lot of heart still remains—e.g., "As the World Turns," "Search for Tomorrow," "The Secret Storm" and "Edge of Night."

Before looking at soap opera in its new guise, let us consider what it was in its heyday. The programs, each of which was fifteen minutes long, followed a structural pattern almost as rigid as that of the Shakespearean sonnet. The typical specimen began with an electric organ playing the program's theme music, often something vaguely classical, after which a deep-voiced and almost frighteningly reverent-sounding announcer intoned the name of the program and repeated the epigraph which preceded each day's episode.

In the case of "The Romance of Helen Trent," to take one example, this was the solemn statement that the program's heroine had promised "to prove to herself what so many women long to prove: that because a woman is thirty-five, and more, romance in life need not be over, that romance can live in life at thirty-five, and after." (For Helen Trent, who was presumably thirty-five, and more, in 1933 when the story first

<sup>1</sup> From "The 'Soaps' Fade but Do Not Die," article by Thomas Meehan, editor and writer. *New York Times Magazine*. p 27+. D. 4. '60. Reprinted by permission.

went on the air, romance apparently lived in life at fifty-five, and after, for it wasn't until . . . [1959] and 7,220 daily episodes that the program finally bit the dust.)

More often, though, the epigraph was in the form of a question. "Our Gal Sunday," for example, was the story that asked, "Can a girl from the little mining town in the West of Silver Creek, Colorado, find happiness as the wife of a wealthy and titled Englishman, England's richest and most handsome lord, Lord Henry Brinthrope?" (The answer to the question, by the way, was "No." With the possible exception of Stella Dallas, no fictional heroine of our time suffered quite so much continued unhappiness as did Lady Sunday Brinthrope.)

Once the preliminaries were out of the way, the announcer swung into the commercial, usually a message extolling the virtues of Duz, Rinso, Super Suds, or a similar "washday product." Then he lowered his voice and became a narrator, leading into the day's episode with a whispered sentence or two which set the scene: "It's just after dinner in Rushville Center, and Ma Perkins is in her kitchen talking with her friend Shuffle. As we listen in, a distraught and puzzled Ma is saying . . . ."

The plot was then under way and the performers were on for the next ten minutes or so, with occasional shifts of scene bridged by organ music, sound effects and a brief word or two from the announcer-narrator. In the land of the soap opera, people spoke at so astonishingly slow a pace that a conversation which might have taken ordinary human beings a scant three minutes could easily fill an entire day's episode. Time, in any case, had a curious way of standing still in the daytime serials—Ma Perkins might sit for three days talking in her kitchen "just after dinner" and Bill Davidson, the smalltown barber-hero of "Just Plain Bill," often took as long as a week to shave one customer.

The soap opera's plot invariably turned on some excruciating crisis in the life of one of its characters. This might be a financial or marital crisis, but on most occasions it was something a good deal more dire—John's Other Wife fighting for

her life after an automobile accident; Young Widder Brown struck with amnesia; Mary Noble, Backstage Wife, on trial for murder. In the small towns which dotted the map of soap-opera land, there were, on the average, perhaps 300 per cent more automobile accidents, sudden onslaughts of exotic ailments, and murders for which the wrong person was put on trial than there were in any comparable group of small towns in the real world.

A good many of the problems of the residents of soap-opera land were caused by meddling of some particularly unpleasant villain or villainess. Since just about every daytime serial was set in a small town, these meddlers were inevitably from the city, usually New York.

The villains were most often wealthy, arrogant and unscrupulous businessmen (frequently, for some reason, theatrical producers) who had somehow fallen in love with the program's heroine and were out to eliminate her fiancé or her husband. The villainesses, on the other hand, were generally New York divorcées who had somehow fallen in love with this same fiancé or husband and were out to eliminate the heroine. The one certain way to spot the blackguard in the soap opera—just as in the television Western the villain always wears a black hat—was that he or she smoked cigarettes.

The plot sequence of the soap opera ordinarily ran for about twelve weeks. This would be time enough for Joyce Jordan, *Girl Interne*, for instance, to become enamored of a new suitor, to become involved with a malevolent cigarette-smoking producer from New York, and to come down with some mysterious disease which would have her hovering at death's door for a couple of weeks.

It would be time enough, too, for the disease to disappear as inexplicably as it came ("Thank God, the crisis is passed"), for the villain to be killed in an automobile accident, and for the suitor to die of a brain tumor, thus clearing the decks for the beginning of a new sequence.

Once the day's episode was over, the announcer returned with a final commercial, and followed this with a line or two designed to lure the housewife back for the next session of anguish. "Will Helen regain her memory, and what of Aunt Agatha and Gil Whitney?" Then, up organ and out, until "tomorrow at this same time."

There would then be a thirty-second pause for station identification, during which the tortured housewife presumably took two or three deep breaths before plunging into the next serial, which followed immediately. In their heyday, the soap operas dominated radio time from ten in the morning until five in the afternoon, and the dedicated and more masochistic housewife could listen to as many as twenty-eight a day.

No one was ever able to discover precisely why these women enjoyed the programs, although a number of eminent psychologists and sociologists studied the phenomenon for years in an attempt to find a definitive answer.

A number of these students of American subculture pointed out, however, that the soap opera—dealing as it did with ordinary small-town women and endowing their lives with romance, glamour, mystery, and danger—lent vicarious excitement and even a certain dignity to the otherwise drab and degrading life of the housewife, and that this was the reason for the programs' popularity.

There was, too, a second theory that, since the life of the soap-opera heroine was so filled with pain and tragedy, the housewife enjoyed the programs because she then felt less anxiety about her own real problems, which seemed trivial in comparison.

Actually, as many of the psychologists indicated, the programs were continuing morality plays, and had the ancient, atavistic appeal of the morality play and of the fairy tale. In the land of the radio soap opera, good always triumphed over bad, justice over injustice, and all heroes and heroines were totally good while all villains and villainesses possessed

no redeeming qualities. The stories were simple, easy to follow and, in a sense, timeless.

The question, of course, now inevitably arises: What happened? Why did the radio soap opera become extinct? The answer is a complex one, but the demise is principally the result of the rise of television, and not, as many suspect, because the housewives grew tired of the dramas.

Soap-opera misery has undergone some changes, however, in its transfer to TV. The greatest difference is that, because television is visual, the characters and actions have to be more believable. On radio, Thanksgiving dinner would begin on Monday and the turkey and cranberries weren't eaten until Friday, while the characters explained their troubles to the accompaniment of drumsticks dropping and forks banging against the plates. On TV, the whole meal is finished in one sitting.

Again, all those dread diseases and auto accidents and earthquakes obviously cannot take place on camera in the studio. A neat fire in the closet is considered good visual action on TV.

Some of the new plot developments in television would never have happened in radio soaps. A female character on a TV soap, for example, can become pregnant out of wedlock—a crisis that would have been unthinkable in the days of Big Sister and Aunt Jenny. In this respect, the TV stories have followed the frankness that has invaded other aspects of American entertainment in the past decade. And it is even possible for bad to triumph—temporarily—over good in the TV soaps.

The television serial is a good deal more sensible, plausible and dramatically sound than its ancestor—but, many veteran soap-opera fans feel, somehow less fun. Radio's dream world has been invaded by too much reality. On radio, a woman's pregnancy could last for two years; on TV, a baby is born in a mundane nine months. And people grow old on TV, instead of remaining that same indeterminate age for years. Video

heroines smoke and drink and have even been known to utter an occasional "hell" or "damn."

The people in the TV soaps, finally, talk at a normal rate rather than the astonishingly slow pace that characterized radio's people. If a housewife left the kitchen and walked into another room to perform a chore, she would turn up her radio and could still hear what was going on in Rushville Center. The slow action and drawling voices were perfectly adapted to housework travel from room to room—you could miss several minutes without losing the story line.

The TV soaps require visual presence, though undoubtedly some housewives do follow their "Guiding Light" by turning up the set when leaving the living room—audio without video. Because of the general need for presence before the picture tube, the TV soaps are not likely to reach the vast audience that listened to the soaps on radio.

However, there is some comfort for students of soap opera and nostalgic experts on this American subculture. Cannot an argument be made that the so-called "family" programs during the evening are soap operas, too? The June Allyson, Loretta Young, Barbara Stanwyck shows—if these aren't nighttime soaps, then surely they are first cousins.

The girl next door, the kid brother who lies and then gets a lecture from Dad, the Mother who is surprised with the new washing machine, the blonde at the office who turns out to be not a vamp but an honor student at State—all these venerable B-picture story lines now gladden the evenings of the whole family after the supper dishes are done. Thus, what the housewife cannot hear by day, she can see at night.

The nighttime series on television are happy soaps, in contrast to the afternoon soaps, which are sad soaps—and both differ from radio's soaps, which were neighborly, miserable and diseased. The old radio slogan, "It takes a heap of trouble to make a house a home," still applies, but not in spades, in the new era of realistic but happy television.

C RADIO IS WORTH SAVING<sup>2</sup>

It is a common pronouncement at conventions of broadcasters these days that radio is doing nicely, thank you, . . . and their sales managers have a ready explanation for the harvest: "Top music and news—that's the ticket. Get rid of the junk." Over the nation these stations have been getting rid of the junk, junk being defined as drama, commentary, live music, religion (except the Bible-thumping, send-in-your-quarter type sold at premium rates), all special events more intriguing than the opening of an advertiser's new fish counter, and all comedy more subtle than an announcer's malaprops.

The "top music" of the gypsy [i.e., largely musical] formula means the thirty or so numbers leading one of the weekly surveys of taste in this field, and a considerable number of stations actually refuse to use any other music. The "and news" of the formula is hardly more than a pious afterthought and generally consists of a five-minute newscast each hour. After commercials have been deducted from the five minutes, there is a net news time of about two and a half minutes, which is filled by a package of bland headlines ripped from the radio wire of the Associated Press and delivered in a confident shout.

In the past there was a tendency to have great blocks of this programing presided over by highly paid and highly publicized disc jockeys, who tried to add some of their own life-of-the-party personalities to the mélange. Lately owners have been discovering that staff announcers working for minimum scale are just as capable of crying, "Here's a big one, coming up fast!"

Why is such obvious nonsense profitable? Chiefly because gypsy radio is ludicrously cheap. It not only dispenses with program planners, script writers, actors, sound-effects men, directors, and other production people, but it also reduces broadcasting to the point where only a license, a transmitter, and a subscription to *Billboard* are essential. Record pluggers will

<sup>2</sup> From article by William O'Hallaren, author and critic. *Atlantic Monthly*, 204:69-72. O. '59. Reprinted by permission.

gladly supply the top tunes, and the skimpiest announcer-engineer staff can play the records and stuff in the commercials. More and more announcers are "combination men," which means they sit at a simplified panel and do the work of an engineer as well as announcer. There is a place in the Rockies where one man is three radio staffs. He plugs himself in at a console and gives a commercial for a station in one town, then he pushes in another plug and speaks on another station in another community, then he goes on to a third station—all owned by the same firm. Staff turnover is said to be high.

Granted it is cheap, but does gypsy radio have any listeners? Not many, but enough. It does not need masses of listeners because it can sell its spots for a few dollars apiece and still be staggered by the profits. Teen-agers listen in considerable numbers, mainly because they buy 90 per cent of the records sold in this country, and the top music of formula broadcasting is their music. There are many adults for whom radio is almost an unbreakable habit, no matter how surly it gets. These people find it a companionable noise while ironing or fighting traffic. There are always some waiting for the weather, the news, the baseball scores, or the word that the single tax has at last been adopted. There are the blind, the lonely, the people who lug portables to beaches and parks.

These are the core of the radio listening public, long suffering, inured to insult, always available as survey statistics. Their number never grows, but nothing erodes it very much either. To advertisers, the cost per thousand of reaching them through radio is attractive. It doesn't seem to matter that they get reached pretty often.

Leo Guild, while a columnist for the entertainment trade-paper *Hollywood Reporter*, held a stop watch on a half hour's programing of a typical formula operation in Los Angeles. For the half hour he found:

Music	12 minutes 41 seconds
News	1 minute 45 seconds
Commercials	15 minutes 34 seconds

Such a breakdown means a listener hears at least thirty separate commercial messages every hour. A standard procedure is to play one record, follow it with three commercials, sometimes bridging them with the temperature or a one-line weather forecast (this is reported to the FCC as public service), then another record, and so on.

Sometimes the choice of which record will follow the commercial is determined by simple bribery. Record companies, desperately competitive to air their offerings for the malt-shop buyers, have simply been paying disc jockeys to use their releases. Vick Knight, president and owner of Key Records, told a convention of the Southern California Broadcasters Association that pay-offs have grown high enough to force some record companies out of business. Knight said it was time the broadcasters started policing their own employees.

The following day, a number of prominent disc jockeys throughout the country issued virtuous "not me" statements. One such refutation came from a veteran Los Angeles radio personality. A couple of days later an ad paid for by Knight appeared in the Hollywood trade papers. It said:

Dear Al:

I'll take back what I said if you'll give back the money.

Vick

So far there is no record of Knight taking back what he said.

All this being true, a proper reaction might be, why bother? Why not let radio splutter itself out?

One good answer is that the gypsies are destroying something that does not belong to them. Radio frequencies are still public property, and Congress has said that a license to use them should be granted only in the public interest. The Federal Communications Commission has never taken this very seriously, though once, in the Truman Administration, it issued a document called the *Blue Book*, which suggested that stations might restrain themselves in the matter of commercials. Broad-

casters generally scoffed at the *Blue Book*, and in time the FCC shamefacedly pulled it from sight.

Another reason for saving radio is that there are still millions searching for acceptable radio programing. These are the people who listen to the good music stations, the people who will find out about Mort Sahl's evening spear throwings on NBC, who know when to catch Bob and Ray on "Monitor," who listen to Eric Sevareid and Edward P. Morgan.<sup>1</sup> The volume of all such programs in a given week is small, and most of the programs are under constant attack from the formula pitchmen, who know that they could make more money by putting on spots. But programs of merit are still with us, and so are the people who listen to them. Whether the programs will be with us next year or five years from now is another matter.

It is indicative of radio's sickness that worth-while programs, programs with a number of listeners, do not bring in as much revenue as the same amount of time given over to a mishmash of records and jingles. A program of local origin, filled with as many spots as the owner's conscience will allow, will always bring in more revenue than the most brilliantly executed network show.

Yet the struggle to save radio centers on the networks. If the networks were to go under because of the sweep to formula radio, radio sets would simply become coinless jukeboxes. In the past two years, major station after major station has been dropping network affiliation, not because of any serious quarrel with the quality of network programing, but simply because it is more profitable to fill the time with local spots. The networks have also found it increasingly difficult to get the affiliates who remain to carry their programing.

They have sought to placate the affiliates with various plans designed to give the local stations more holes for spots. At the start of 1959 CBS Radio unveiled what it called its Program Consolidation Plan, described by CBS Radio president Arthur Hull Hayes as "a more truly national network service." The

one feature of the plan most quickly noted by CBS staffers was that about half the network's programming was dropped. As Mr. Hayes put it, local stations "now have longer blocks of contiguous time in which to develop and build local personalities . . . and in which to bring listeners top sports and other attractions in the evenings and on weekends." Mr. Hayes knows that the "top sports and other attractions" which the local stations are now inserting in place of his programming are chiefly caterwauling records and barbaric commercials, but there is little that he or anyone else seems able to do about it.

The next feature of the Program Consolidation Plan was a change in the format of most of the surviving network shows so that local stations could jam in commercials. Seven hours of network news a week were opened to local sponsorship. In one way, it is a plan to enable seven hours of network news to survive. In another way, it means that seven hours of the highly regarded CBS news will now be affiliated with the same type of screeching commercials heard on most locally originated tear-it-off-the-wire-and-read-it-cold, skip-the-hard-names newscasts.

Mr. Hayes says that the CBS plan will mean the survival of the network and therefore the survival of ". . . Lowell Thomas, Eric Sevareid, Walter Cronkite . . . and the Metropolitan Opera."

No one can quarrel with this objective, and if good radio must have the dollars and larynges of local used-car dealers in order to survive, so be it. But it is doubtful if the CBS plan will really be a solution, because it does not alter the fact that a local station can make more money by jamming spots into a record program than it can by carrying any kind of network program.

NBC set off on a slightly different tack some years ago with its weekend programming service, "Monitor." There are many radio men who believe that "Monitor" is better than anything NBC did in network radio's palmiest days. It is in essence a relaxed variety program which begins on Friday night and continues through Sunday. It is anchored on news which seems to have been prepared by responsible people, and it uses

comics briefly but frequently, like whiffs of oxygen. It is the home of such as Bob and Ray, whose acid levels were too high for television. There are a mild amount of music, some pleasant interviews . . . and enough sports to placate the fancy.

"Monitor" has been a success not only for these reasons but also for its loose formula, which allows the network to sell its features individually (sponsors buy the news, interviews, comics, even the weather). Local stations can then fill the leftover time with spots of their own, and they can drop out of the show at will in favor of purely local programing. (This sometimes means that a listener hears the call of a race but never learns the official result.) "Monitor" is about the best thing on network radio today and would be close to ideal if it could be heard without fear of unexpected and prolonged interruption.

Another argument for saving radio is that it is the last refuge of the commentator. Television fears rational comment more than blasphemy, and local stations usually cannot be bothered. Granted that some of the commentators were, and are, outrageously bad, even the worst can hardly be as annoying as an equivalent number of minutes of whimpering about lost love and screaming about laxatives. Radio still offers . . . [commentators] who usually have something to say, and there are numbers of people who will be either exalted or outraged to hear them say it.

Probably the most heroic fighters to save radio are those individual station owners who think their licenses call for something more than self-enrichment. These are the men who will stoutly carry six hours of a critical UN debate or even put a school board meeting on the air. In Los Angeles, stubbornly individualistic Earle C. Anthony, owner of 50,000-watt KFI, for years devoted fifteen minutes of choice time each night to a poetry program, with live musical accompaniment. It had many listeners and was sustained. Critics say that Mr. Anthony is a wealthy man and could devote twenty-four hours a day to sustaining poetry programs if he wished. He is still one of those rare owners who has meditated about the duties inherent in a license to broadcast.

The good music stations are often cited as examples of radio's finding itself. The good music stations certainly deserve credit for not being bad music stations, but the fact is that they are not doing much that could not be done by a record player. There is a world of difference between playing a symphony record and broadcasting an on-the-spot report by a capable correspondent from a scene of trouble in Algeria.

The problem of saving radio, then, is to create conditions whereby programs are forced to compete on their merits. The FCC could create these conditions overnight by taking the simple step of limiting the number of commercials that can be broadcast in any given time period. A limit of three minutes of advertising in each fifteen minutes of broadcast time would clear the airways at once. It would mean that all stations would have to fill their air with something besides commercials and that owners would find themselves asking directions to the program department.

Complaints from radio spokesmen would be sure to wring congressional hearts, and there would be dire tales of hardships. It is also a hardship on the lumberman forced to stop despoiling the forest, on the lobsterman made to throw back the little ones.

In the long run, radio would be saved, and every license would be more valuable for it. The owner limited in the number of commercials he could sell would soon be selling them for a higher price. There might even be buyers for offerings like the "Stan Freberg Show" of a few seasons ago, which drew critical huzzas, a good audience, and a yawn from Madison Avenue.

Radio in which the volume of commercials was limited would be certain to flourish, perhaps spectacularly. Television has probably reached a leveling off in its audience, and may even be heading for a decline if a tenth of the people who say they are tired of it really mean it. The decline of television would create still more of an opportunity for a revitalized radio. Not that radio is ever going to gather the family into the living room again, but it can reach individuals, individuals who want to hear Eric Sevareid as well as those whose chemistry bubbles

for Elvis. With a little prodding and a little encouragement, radio would still be capable of doing handsomely by a great many individuals.

If the FCC were to find the courage to save radio from the gypsies, there would almost certainly be a national debate covering the whole question of federal authority over broadcasting. That might be a good time to discuss why broadcasting licenses, radio and television, are *given away*. [See "Scandal in TV Licensing" in Section II and "Licenses and Programs" in Section III.]

FCC action to rein in destructive radio commercialism would provoke the angriest type of opposition, and there would be a rallying around the local enterprise clichés such as man has seldom witnessed. Perhaps the gypsy is too deeply in radio's soul ever to be exorcised. But those who think that radio is worth saving would at least like to give it a try.

### THE ACE IN THE HOLE—FM<sup>3</sup>

Today, FM—frequency modulation radio—is expanding more rapidly than either AM ("regular" radio) or TV. The sale of FM receivers, which can be had today for less than thirty dollars, has soared from fewer than 200,000 in 1955 to some 2 million in 1960. New FM stations are going on the air at the rate of one every two and a half days. In Detroit, Boston, New York, San Francisco and at least eight other cities all available channels are already taken. In many other areas the competition is hot for those remaining.

The reason for this development is not only that FM's sound is static-free, clearer and more lifelike than AM's; the programming is more varied and more imaginative on the independent FM stations.

Music, which originally spurred the FM boom, is just the beginning. Drama, commentary and discussion fill the airwaves.

<sup>3</sup> From "Tune in on the FM Variety Show," article by C. P. Gilmore, journalist and author. *Reader's Digest*. 78:193-8. Je. '61. Copyright 1961 by The Reader's Digest Association, Inc. From *Today's Living*. Reprinted with permission.

WDTM, a Detroit station, broadcasts "World Press Review," a daily program that compares editorials in leading foreign newspapers with those in the U.S. press. New York's WBAI aired the widely differing views of Christian W. Prinsloo, an information officer in the South African government, and novelist Alan Paton on apartheid, South Africa's policy of racial discrimination.

Good programs, of course, don't have to be serious or "longhair." KBIQ in Los Angeles kicked off a series of two-hour "FM Spectaculars" with a history of modern popular music called "From Benny Goodman to Gerry Mulligan." KPFK in the same city broadcast a program in which taxi drivers sounded off in spontaneous, in-the-cab recordings on such subjects as psychiatrists, traffic and holdups.

To provide their listeners with even more varied fare, FM broadcasters have set up systems of program swapping: a station in Denver gets a recording of a UN meeting made in New York; Seattle receives a program of baroque music produced in Detroit; Boston hears a tape made on a western Indian reservation.

Cooperation among stations extends overseas, enabling U.S. audiences to hear programs no individual station could afford to produce: Shakespearean plays performed for the British Broadcasting Corporation, by outstanding companies of English actors; full-length recordings of the famous Bayreuth festivals.

FM's new approach to programming—putting on a variety of programs to attract special-interest audiences rather than catering only to the majority—has been called by one industry executive "narrowcasting," instead of "broadcasting." WBAI in New York selected Wagnerian-opera lovers as the target of a spectacular narrowcast last February 22. The entire cycle of four "Ring" operas, one after the other, was broadcast for seventeen hours—from 7 A.M. until midnight—and drew a wide range of comment from listeners. "I stockpiled food by the radio so I wouldn't miss a note," said one. Another, clearly not entranced, was more succinct. "You're nuts," he wrote.

Not the least of FM's attractions is its relative freedom from high-pressure commercials. Most FM operators rigidly restrict the number and control the quality of the commercials they allow on the air. WRFM in New York broadcasts a maximum of four commercials per hour during its nightly concert. KGMJ in Seattle allows an average of only four an hour throughout the day. Six per hour is typical.

Even the ultimate of non-commercialization—no commercials at all—has been realized on FM. Many colleges and universities support non-commercial, educational FM stations. But more revolutionary was an experiment started in 1946 in California by Louis Hill, a former newsman who set out to sell subscriptions to radio listeners just as magazines sell subscriptions to their readers. Of course, there was one big difference: anyone would be able to listen, subscriber or not. But Hill thought most people would like the station enough to want to support it.

By 1949 he and his associates, who had formed Pacifica Foundation, had raised enough money to go on the air with station KPFA in Berkeley. Enthusiastic fan mail poured in—but unfortunately most people, accustomed to getting radio free, just couldn't believe that they would have to subscribe if they wanted KPFA to continue. After fifteen months, broke and discouraged, Hill was forced to shut down the station.

KPFA, though, had made more of an impression on the community than Hill knew. When it went off the air, Berkeley citizens organized a mass meeting and raised \$2,300 on the spot, later collected another \$30,000. The Fund for Adult Education, convinced of the worth of Hill's idea, gave him \$150,000 more. Today, a decade later, some 7,500 subscribers mail in the annual \$12 subscription fee, and scores of larger contributors make up any deficit. So successful has been subscription radio that Pacifica Foundation recently started two more subscription stations, KPFK in Los Angeles and WBAI in New York.

FM's cleaner, clearer sound has been a big factor in its meteoric rise. It has a wider dynamic range than AM: the soft sounds can really whisper while the loud passages crash and roar

without distortion, making it a "natural" for music. FM stations broadcast both the highest and lowest sounds the human ear can hear, an accomplishment difficult, if not impossible, for AM.

Nevertheless, FM has always been radio's "problem child" ever since the brilliant electronics pioneer, Major Edwin H. Armstrong, developed it in 1933 in his search for static-free radio. Broadcasters, with millions tied up in AM equipment, and manufacturers with their AM patents, simply weren't interested in any new system. In spite of Armstrong's enthusiastic campaigning, it was not until 1940 that the Federal Communications Commission authorized commercial FM broadcasting. Then, before more than a handful of new stations could get on the air, the war came along and stopped construction. After the war, TV swept the country and FM, according to most people in the business, was dead. Only a few stations continued to operate their FM transmitters, and these broadcast the same programs as AM.

Throughout this dismal period, about the only FM listeners were a handful of people who insisted on better sound quality. But gradually more and more people found out that the same musical programs sounded better on FM than on AM. Then, just as high-fidelity recordings were becoming popular, FM receivers started to move from the dealers' shelves. Broadcasters became aware of this new quality-conscious listenership, and a few decided to program especially for the new set owners. The boom was on.

FM's excellent sound quality will soon be even better, with something engineers call "multiplex stereo." Until now two transmitters have been needed to broadcast stereo. Usually, the sound from one microphone goes out on FM, from the other, on AM. (Several hundred stations now occasionally broadcast FM-AM stereo.) To hear the program in stereo, you tune in on both AM and FM radios at the same time. Because of the difference in quality between FM and AM, however, the final stereo sound is not as good as it could be. Multiplexing will allow *both* signals to be transmitted by *one* FM transmitter. A

decoder in your receiver will unscramble the two and send each to a separate speaker for perfect stereo.

The FCC is studying several systems by which multiplex stereo can be sent and received, and will license one, probably this year [1961]. Scores of stations will be on the air with full-fledged multiplex stereo shortly afterward.

You won't like everything on FM. Nobody does: the range of programs is far too wide. The point is, there is *something* for *everybody*. FM's new-found vigor is, as critic John Crosby recently observed, "a success story for the public, which is supposed to have such terrible taste."

## II. THE PICTURES

### EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: TELEVISION IS WORLDWIDE

There has been so much talk about television in the United States, for it and against it, that many viewers are under the impression that it is strictly an American institution and an American problem. It is not. Russia, where a TV set costs the equivalent of \$800 and programs are broadcast only an average five hours daily, has over four million sets, and the British Isles have over ten million. Canada, whose proximity gives it a share of our own programs and problems, has nearly six million and Italy and France have a million and one half each. What the owners of these sets hear and see varies greatly from nation to nation but today there are few people in the developed countries of the world who are not viewers or potential viewers of television. It is a fearsome medium of communication, a powerful political and economic weapon for those who control it, and each of the fifty-six nations that currently have broadcasting has adopted a basic system of exerting that control.

There are three such systems. One is government-owned TV, whereby all stations are owned and operated by the government. This system is used in France, Italy, Colombia, Scandinavia, the Middle East, and all the Communist nations. Another is the American system, followed in most of Latin America, Korea, and the Philippines, whereby commercial stations are licensed by the government and regulated by it. The third is a mixture of these two, exemplified by the British system and followed in Canada, Australia, Peru, Uruguay, West Germany, and Japan.

The American commercial system of broadcasting is described in the section that follows. The British system—affectionately known as "'alf-and-'alf" after a popular English mixture of ale

and beer—is described as “a triumph of compromise.” The vintage half consists of the British Broadcasting Corporation, owned and operated (“o & o” in the argot of *Variety*) by Her Majesty’s Government. Founded in the early days of radio, it can boast that no listener has ever heard a singing commercial, watched an aspirin tablet dissolve in a stranger’s stomach, or seen Brand X held up to scorn and ridicule. The viewer pays for this immunity. Electronic detectors roam the countryside in trucks to see that no thrifty Briton listens in on BBC broadcasts without paying the prescribed fee of \$8.40 a year (plus a government tax of \$2.80) for the privilege of tuning in on three radio stations and one TV channel. The programs are worth the money. Free of advertisers’ pressure the BBC can aim at all cultural levels rather than aiming always at the lowest common denominator in order to get the largest possible audience—and market. Its greatest handicap is lack of money (income from set owners is about \$90 million a year, but rising), which prohibits the use of “names” and “TV personalities” that contribute so greatly to the cost of programing in the United States.

It was a nationwide demand for such expensive entertainment fare that led to the compromise which gives England both state and commercial broadcasting. In 1957 the government set up eleven regional networks, equivalent to one national network, and leased each to a commercial broadcaster with the right to sell advertising. This right is severely limited. An advertiser can buy only time for his advertisement. He cannot sponsor an entire program, nor stipulate at what hour his ad will appear during the eight hours daily that the commercial network is allowed to broadcast. The desired and planned result of this policy has been to keep the commercial networks as free of advertisers’ pressure and control as the BBC itself, and the restrictions have not adversely affected business. Advertising revenue for 1961 is projected at \$266 million, a small figure compared to the tremendous incomes of American networks (see “The Economic Squeeze,” by Robert Horton, in this section) but sufficient to warrant the belief that a second national

commercial channel (matched by a second BBC channel) will be in operation by 1964.

Television in other parts of Europe varies with national boundaries. Spain, with fewer than 200,000 sets and one government-operated network, gets bullfights, propaganda, and bullfights. France, with government-owned Radiodiffusion Française as its only network (another is planned) gets some of the best programs in the world and some of the worst. Supported solely by a twelve-dollar annual tax on 1.5 million sets, RF is hampered by lack of funds but immeasurably strengthened by its ready access to the magnificent talents and skills of the French national theatre. The result, in programing that is half film and half live, is that a B picture will be followed by a televised play that, even in America, would drop the Westerns out of the ratings. Some countries with government-owned or monopoly networks allow advertising. Italy, where the government licenses a monopoly, allows fifteen minutes of advertising every evening but demands that each thirty-second commercial be preceded by two minutes of "entertainment." The result is an advertising period that—although competing with opera from La Scala, excellent news coverage, and fine motion pictures—is one of the most popular on the screen and the source of heavy pressure from Italian manufacturers to extend it both in length and throughout the day. The government, feeling that half a loaf is better than gluttony, has resisted this pressure so adamantly that some industrialists are threatening to set up stations across the border in France or Austria and broadcast commercials right over the monopoly network's head. (Shipborne transmitters, operated by enterprising Americans, are already doing this to the British.) In West Germany and Finland, which follow the half-and-half British system, advertising is allowed on the government networks for exactly seven minutes a day. In Holland the network is actually owned by the set owners and operated in accordance with their expressed preferences.

Television in all Communist countries is government owned and operated and the programs in each, with one notable

exception, are dreary compounds of propaganda and proselytizing. The notable exception, oddly enough, is Russia, and although Ivan is subjected to more propaganda and exhortations than he really cares to hear, and more views of Khrushchev than he really cares to see, he is also the beneficiary of some of the finest programs being broadcast today. They come to him over a chain of nearly two hundred regional stations and they consist of the best and newest films (for comparable American film fare see "The Celluloid Jungle," by H. G. Foster, in this section), excellent on-the-spot news and sports coverage, and outstanding telecasts of live musical, dance, and dramatic presentations. And he is beginning to get commercials. Since the state is the only vendor in the land there is no need for the hard sell nor the odious comparisons with Brand X, but the Russian consumer is being increasingly titillated by ads that are euphemistically described as "displays of new merchandise." The products may not actually be available in the state-owned stores and the advertising technique would make grass grow on Madison Avenue, but it is an encouraging crack in the curtain.

Broadcasting throughout North Africa and the Middle East is hampered by the general poverty that limits ownership of receiving sets and the quality of programming is reduced by the state-owned stations' proclivity for propaganda, and even vicious attacks on neighboring governments of differing political or religious faiths. The Union of South Africa has refused to license TV stations on the grounds their programs might have a deleterious effect "on children, less developed people, and other races," and across the Atlantic, in Cuba, the programming on the five formerly commercial stations taken over by Castro seems to have become one long harangue by Castro.

Television in all of Latin America, state-owned or commercial, is limited in both quality and scope by the general poverty that limits the ownership of sets and the resulting inability of broadcasters to pay for good programs—a taped American show that will bring \$6,000 in England will bring only \$50 in South America. TV in Canada suffers more from confusion than economics. Its twenty-four stations are a mix-

ture of government "o & o," commercial, and both, and a rising nationalism is demanding a restriction on the use of American shows. Canadian stations must devote 55 per cent of their time to home-made programs and no Canadian station may join an American network. This last restriction irritates both the Canadian stations and the American networks for it allows viewers in the rich southern tier of Canada to receive American programs without payment—direct or indirect—to either. Television waves do not recognize national boundaries.

These American programs—good, bad, and indifferent—and the industry that produces them are described in the section that follows.

### TV: THE BIG PICTURE <sup>1</sup>

There is no single inventor of television, no Robert Fulton, Samuel Morse, or Alexander Graham Bell. Rather, television is the product of widely spaced discoveries by many men from many nations. Some of the busiest pioneers actually hampered progress because they dramatically trumpeted new discoveries that turned out to be barks up the wrong tree.

In 1817 a Swedish professor named Jöns Berzelius discovered that selenium, a substance coming from sulphur, could conduct electricity. In 1873 a British telegrapher named May discovered that selenium could be used to transmit light by electricity. In 1884 a German named Paul Nipkow made the first TV set, using what he called a scanning disc: a disc that picked up the picture bit by bit through peepholes and re-etched it to a light-sensitive tube.

The race for TV was on. Six years after Nipkow first transmitted his crude shadows, two other Germans, Julius Elster and Hans Geitel, built the first photoelectric cells which were the key to TV cameras. In 1907 a Russian, Boris Rosing, and an Englishman, A. A. Campbell-Swinton, working unaware of each

<sup>1</sup> From the book *TV: The Big Picture*, by Stan Opatowsky, reporter for the *New York Post*. Copyright © 1961 by Stan Opatowsky. Reprinted by permission of E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc. This selection is from Chapter I, "Everybody's Doing It," p 15-24, and Chapter II, "It Took 131 Years," p 25-35.

other, both came up with a tube in which to store light for the camera.

This should have put the world on the brink of practical television, but it didn't. Not wise enough to move from the world of mechanics and the mechanical disc to the world of electronics and the cathode tube, the scientists continued to fiddle and fumble with the basic principle they inherited from Nipkow.

But the 1920's brought the turning point. The decade was important to TV in several ways. For one thing, it saw the search for television—and for other scientific progress—move from the shack laboratory of the penniless inventor into the bosom of wealthy companies like the Radio Corporation of America and General Electric. For another, it determined who would operate television once it was developed.

Had the motion-picture companies taken it upon themselves to perfect television, TV today probably would be a substitute for the movies as we now see them in theatres. Had the Broadway impresarios perfected television, the medium might today be basically a means of transmitting plays from the New York stage to theatres in other cities throughout the nation. But it was the radio industry that took upon itself the task of making television work, and so it became inevitable that TV, when developed, would operate within the image of commercial radio.

There were numerous attempts to commercialize TV prematurely. A young Scot named John Baird received considerable financing in England by promising imminent TV on sets using the Nipkow mechanical-disc principle. Charles F. Jenkins did the same in the United States. They even put some sets on sale in the late 1920's, but their pictures, usually orange and black instead of black and white, were much too small and reception much too uneven for any kind of success.

It was a Russian immigrant to the United States, Dr. Vladimir Zworykin, who was responsible for the major breakthrough that guaranteed a successful future for television. Doing research for Westinghouse Electric, he picked up the old Campbell-Swinton cathode-tube principle, moved on after some im-

provements by Philo T. Farnsworth, and in the latter 1920's patented the iconoscope. Furthermore, he switched his allegiance from Westinghouse to the Radio Corporation of America. Television at last was nearing the living room.

The nation's first major telecast was not, however, put on by RCA, General Electric, or Westinghouse, despite their pioneering. It was staged by the American Telephone & Telegraph Company. On April 7, 1927, Herbert Hoover, then Secretary of Commerce, made a speech that was telecast from Washington over two hundred miles of AT&T facilities to New York.

The first voice on American television outside the experimental laboratories was that of J. J. McCarty, an AT&T vice president who spoke from Washington. His immortal words were: "I am instructed to make a little conversation while they are getting the loudspeaker ready. They are having a little power trouble."

In New York Walter Gifford, the AT&T president, replied by saying: "You screen well. You look more handsome over the wire."

"Does it flatter me much?" McCarty asked, and thus he set the pattern for all TV performers who would ever follow him. TV produces more hams than Armour's.

After the power trouble was remedied, Secretary Hoover spoke briefly on his pride in participating in such a historic occasion. The scene then switched to a studio in Whippany, New Jersey, and from there a comedian, recorded for history only as A. Dolan, provided TV's first actual entertainment: he told stories in dialect. . . .

Most of the people at Bell were thinking in terms of TV telephones . . . [but] the business world watched the development of TV with other ideas in mind. As early as 1931 the H&W Corset Company conducted the first closed-circuit TV experiment, using telephone-company equipment. H&W displayed its models before the cameras in the Bell Laboratories in downtown New York while a buyer for Franklin Simon & Company viewed them at receiving sets two miles uptown. The buyer bought \$5,000 worth and said it was a fine way to shop. At least two large

department stores immediately applied for TV operating licenses on the theory that eventually people would shop the electronic way rather than visit the stores in person.

As early as 1926 the William Morris Agency made the first show-business use of television. A cumberstone set was built for use as a vaudeville act. It was strictly a stunt, sending the picture from one side of the stage to the other for the amazement of the audience. The act went over big, but so did the set: it was so heavy that one day it plunged of its own weight through the floor of a Baltimore theatre. No one bothered to rebuild it, although the Morris agency remained a pioneer show-business believer in TV and has since made millions of dollars representing performers in the medium.

However, for all these guessing games about the future of TV, the men in commercial radio knew that the baby eventually would grow up to support *them*. For example, Edgar H. Felix of the staff of radio station WEAf wrote in the late 1920's:

Television will find a complete structure ready to commercialize it. Broadcasting stations have organized personnel and established contacts in the advertising field, the advertising agencies have specialists in handling radio programs for their clients and the advertiser is already accustomed to radio as a medium of approach to the public. Consequently there will be no long period of adjustment and development. Advertising will be ready for the visual medium before the medium is ready for advertising.

These tantalizing forecasts began to intrigue the public, and in the late 1920's and early 1930's the subject of television became regular fare in the newspaper Sunday supplements. Sometimes the headlines would read "Television Is Just Around the Corner" and sometimes they would read "Television for the Home Will Never Be Practical," but seldom a month went by that some story didn't find its way into print. Most people thought the age of TV would be magnificent, but there were exceptions. The bishop of St. Alban's, Dr. M. B. Furse, wailed that his bath was the only private thing remaining in the world and that TV would soon take care of that. "I view with great trepidation the coming of the day when my morning ablutions

will be reflected on the screens of New York for the entertainment of the American public," he said. This never came to pass. He died before the launching of the Ed Sullivan Show. . . .

In 1936 the British Broadcasting Corporation, heir to Baird's floundering attempts at commercial TV, began the world's first regular television service. The programs went on three times a day, for a total of three hours; the picture was ten by twelve inches, received on sets which amateurs built for themselves. The Americans sniffed huffily that the British were going into business too soon, and time seemed to prove them right. By 1938 British TV-set manufacturers, who were producing sets to sell at about \$300, were ready to call it quits. They had sold only 3,000 sets in two years.

Many had become convinced that TV was for the theatres, not the homes.

The BBC urged them to hang on, promising that the thing would fly eventually. Surely the fare had been enticing during the limited hours of telecasting: the BBC had shown the coronation in 1937, the Wimbledon tennis matches, the operas, top plays, newsreels.

In the United States, \$10 million had been spent on experimentation with still no regular telecasting in sight, and David Sarnoff of RCA said there would be no regular TV until 1939. He was right. The experiments continued, once even inadvertently telecasting a suicide. (An experimental camera, on the air, happened to be pointed at an eleventh-floor window from which a young woman took her last leap.)

But it was the predicted 1939 before America got regular TV. That's when NBC's W2XBS went on the air on a scheduled basis, beginning on April 30th with President Franklin D. Roosevelt's dedication of the New York World's Fair. On the same day RCA put its first sets on sale to the public; the prices ranged from \$199.50 for the smallest set to \$600 for the ten-by-twelve-inch screen. Three days later regular studio programs began with Fred Waring and his Pennsylvanians presenting the

opening show. Waring said after the broadcast: "There is nothing very new about television showmanship. It's just the same old showmanship in a new setting."

From that point TV started a slow grind. Only 400 sets were sold in New York the first five months RCA offered them. In 1940 the prices were cut as much as \$200 per set, bringing the range to \$100 to \$395, but the public remained wary.

The bright lights required for these pioneer TV shows made for brutal working conditions. An actor in a TV play reached for a bottle of cool beer as per the script, and then dropped it immediately; the lights overhead had made it too hot to hold. A woman giving a cooking demonstration couldn't understand why the studio crew wouldn't taste her goodies after the show went off the air; she didn't realize the men had seen her perspiration cascading down onto each cookie. The studio temperature was never less than 92 degrees.

On July 1, 1941, NBC's W2XBS, renamed WNBT for the occasion, and CBS's WCBW went commercial. NBC's first program was a Brooklyn Dodgers-Philadelphia Phillies baseball game. Its first commercial was a Bulova clock showing the time. Its first sponsor was the Sun Oil Company, which presented Lowell Thomas with fifteen minutes of news.

There was considerable adventure to staging these early TV shows. Gilbert Seldes, who headed CBS programming from 1937 to 1945 and was the entire programming department for a good portion of that time, recalls such mishaps as the sudden appearance of a microphone on "a deserted desert island" during a drama of the South Seas. He recalls, too, that closeups of the actors had to be planned hours in advance because it took so long to move the heavy and cumbersome cameras.

Many top performers were entranced by the possibilities of TV, however, and donated their services for the experiment. Jimmy Durante dropped in on one CBS show just for the fun of it and put on a hilarious impromptu performance for free—just the kind of performance that cost NBC thousands of dollars a few years later. One tragedy is that these early TV

shows were not preserved, because there still was no kinescope to record them for posterity.

These TV pioneers were willing to try anything. On the day after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor there came the rumor that German planes were on their way across the Atlantic to bomb New York. Did the CBS-TV boys flee to the safety of the hills? They did not. They laboriously hauled a camera over to the window and prepared to televise the bombers as they came in over Park Avenue. "Then it occurred to us," recalls Seldes, "that a transmitter is like a beacon. The bombers could use this beacon to zero in and raid New York. We were only twenty minutes before program time but we loyally scuttled this big spectacular. And a little while after our decision we got the word that the raid rumor was false."

World War II was an important time for TV. While ostensibly all experimentation stopped, actually the great progress made in radar was also progress for TV. Wartime radar work, as a matter of fact, hastened the arrival of practical home TV by about five years. Thus when the Japanese surrendered, the broadcasting industry made immediate preparations to shift from sound to sight.

Only New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and Schenectady had stations in operation on V-J Day and these could be received by but 7,000 sets (5,500 of them in New York). However, a manufacturers' survey turned up 4 million families which said they were ready to buy a set sight unseen. Hearn's Department Store in New York offered a few sets showing a postcard-sized picture late in 1945, and these were sold out at \$100 each within a few days. The public was ready. The great rush was on. The networks began to form when the coaxial cable first went into operation in 1946.

In 1947 the big programs began going on the air—"Kraft Television Theater," "Meet the Press," and "Howdy Doody," to name three. But most of the TV industry considers 1948 the year that big-time TV was born. Some twenty-five new stations began operation throughout the nation that year. The manufacturers reached the point where they were turning out 140,000

sets a month and selling all of them. The coaxial cable worked its way halfway across the country. And Milton Berle went on the air. [Coaxial cables have a central conductor with tubular stranded conductors laid over it concentrically. Those used as television network links are wide-frequency-band cables that transmit both sight and sound from the originating station through numerous booster amplifiers to regional stations for rebroadcast over the area such regional stations are capable of serving with a single antenna.—Ed.]

Berle was the first big-time entertainer to appear on TV regularly, and for a number of years he indeed *was* television. There had been something like this in radio: During their heyday in the 1930's Amos 'n' Andy held the American public in such a grip that it was possible to hear their entire program simply by walking down a quiet residential street and catching the broadcast from each house passed. Now the same was true of Berle.

The TV stations had operated heavily in the red as experiments. The advertisers had no hope of return because of the small audiences. But in 1948 TV got down to business literally as well as figuratively. As the audience size leaped, so did the fees for time. Some stations raised their rates as much as 50 per cent that year. The Federal Communications Commission was engulfed with applications for television-station licenses even though the number of channels was sharply limited, and CBS President Frank Stanton warned, "You can't pay for television transmitters with jellybeans."

By 1950 there were one hundred stations operating, playing to 4 million sets. Many of these were in saloons as customer lures, and Henny Youngman came up with the gag advertisement: "Bartender Wanted. Must Be Able to Fix TV Set." There were four networks now, the American Broadcasting Company and Du Mont having joined the NBC and CBS pioneers. But most performers were working purely for the experience. An ABC program called "Hollywood Screen Test" paid such fees as \$51.85 for Grace Kelly, \$175 for Faye Emerson, and \$60 for

Teresa Brewer, Kim Stanley, and Anne Bancroft. Daytime TV became important because of a former Washington news announcer named Arthur Godfrey.

Since the 1930's everyone had foreseen great world events as a major TV attraction. In 1951 as the coaxial cable reached California the American public got its first taste of this somewhat by surprise. The Kefauver hearings were launched, and more with a why-not? attitude than anything else, the TV cameras were permitted within the hearing room. It was days before Senator Kefauver and his public-relations people knew what had hit them, or what they had hit. Suddenly the nation was staring at the hands of Frank Costello. A year later the Democratic and Republican national conventions were televised; these were not the first, for NBC experimentally had telecast a convention as far back as 1940; but these were the first to be seen by a large audience. No convention was ever to be the same again. The political parties knew that thereafter they must embrace show business, and must concentrate their major activities during the prime viewing hours of the evening when the family was gathered around the living-room set.

In 1948 CBS announced it had developed a system for color television, and in 1949 NBC announced it had developed a *better* system for color television. They engaged in a long, bitter, and costly struggle, with the FCC as referee. CBS won.

In a way this fight was history repeating itself. The NBC color system was based on the mechanical-disc principle. The CBS system was based on an electronic tube. Furthermore, only the CBS system was compatible—that is, CBS color transmissions could be received in black and white on existing sets. It was inevitable that the CBS system would prevail, but the plodding FCC did not endorse this method until 1953.

### *The Big Story*

You can tell the story with statistics: 88 per cent of the households in the United States have television sets. These sets are in use on an average of five hours per day.

You can tell the story with an anecdote: Michael Flanders reports visiting a British beach. Everyone within sight was clustered around a hut. Behind them was the sea. In front of them was a television set. They were watching a BBC telecast of the sea.

Or you can tell the story with a dire forecast: Because of television, predicted Fred Allen, "the next generation will be born with four eyes and no tongue."

You can tell the story in countless different ways, but the conclusion is always the same: An electronic box that has been in popular use scarcely twelve years has become a mighty social force dipping into all aspects of American life. Its impact has been felt on everything from law and education to romance and the design of cigarette packages. Leonard Goldenson, the chairman of the American Broadcasting Company, told Congress:

In television in this country, we have in twelve short years, created and put into operation a communications medium that furnishes sight and sound and is capable of simultaneously reaching virtually our entire nation. It is a medium with an impact and a communication opportunity unparalleled in the history of mankind.

Researcher A. C. Nielsen put it more succinctly: Americans, he said, spend more time watching TV than doing anything else except sleeping. And that, he added, includes working.

The eagerness with which the American public grabbed at the opportunity to become hollow-eyed zombies is graphically demonstrated by television's growth. It took 62 years for electric wiring to reach 34 million homes. It took 80 years for the telephone to reach the same number of homes. It took the automobile 49 years and the electric washer 47 years. But it took television only 10 years.

In 1950 there were 104 TV stations in operation. By 1960 there were 431. Between 1948 and 1950 alone the amount of money spent by advertisers in TV leaped 229.2 per cent, from \$8,700,000 to \$90,629,000. By 1959 the expenditure was \$1,151,560,000. The public, meanwhile, had spent \$23 billion buying TV sets. . . .

Survey after survey has shown what a slave the set owner is to his set. Sindlinger & Company says its research indicates that on a typical day 72 per cent of the adolescent and adult population of the United States watches TV and that the average person spends 131 minutes in front of the set. Yet, as if that isn't enough, the Du Mont Laboratories are working on a device that will permit a single TV set to receive two programs at the same time.

John Mason Brown has said, "People who deny themselves television deny themselves participation in life today. . . . They are self-exiled from the world." John P. Cunningham, chairman of the Cunningham & Walsh advertising agency, said, "Television has become a firmly established member of the American family. It ranks with the automobile (and even with the home itself) in terms of family concern." Neither Mr. Brown nor Mr. Cunningham is an unbiased commentator. Mr. Brown has had a television program of his own and Mr. Cunningham has lots of them. But no one can dispute the accuracy of their observations.

In a sense television is even responsible for the government, for there is scarcely an elected official who did not campaign via TV. Former President Eisenhower said, "In many ways the effect of television in swaying public opinion particularly about burning issues of the moment may be even greater than the press. You introduce personality as well as cold fact."

Sig Mickelson, president of CBS News, has written:

Television's ability to create national figures almost overnight means that the choice of candidates does not have to be largely limited, as in the past, to the very few hopefuls who had achieved some kind of national status in a period of years. In that sense, television has made our electoral processes more democratic; it has brought high political office within reach of a larger segment of qualified persons.

TV has certainly produced great political problems. Congress passed a Solomonish law guaranteeing political opponents equal time on TV, but not even this assured everyone of a fair shake. A candidate for the Texas legislature, William

H. Brigham, complained that *his* opponent, Jack Woods, was on TV *every night*. This was true. Woods was the KWTX-TV weather forecaster and he was also running for office. Brigham conceded that the weather forecast was nonpolitical, but he maintained that Woods was so charming on television that his appearances on the weather show gave him a political advantage. Brigham demanded as compensation a fifteen-minute program of his own every night, but the Federal Court ruled that this was going a bit too far, and rejected his appeal for equal time. . . .

The impact of television on the mind of America has created many difficulties. One is in maintaining proper court procedure. Municipal Court Judge Carl D. Kessler said in Dayton, Ohio, that jurors who watch courtroom dramas week after week come into a real courtroom convinced they are experts. It is getting increasingly difficult, he said, to find jurors "who will listen to the judge's instructions in order to reach intelligent decisions." He was backed up in this by Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, who said TV is giving Americans a "distorted" view of how criminals are caught and tried.

Religion, too, has felt the impact. An Episcopal minister in Mississippi gave up the practice of making morning calls upon his parishioners because he found there was no time for talk, only time for sitting beside them as they watched vintage movies. "I might as well stay in the rectory and see the whole movie rather than miss parts of it traveling from one house to the other," he said. A priest in Philadelphia suggested quite seriously that members of his congregation give up TV for Lent. (None did, he reported.) Even the Pope had to reckon with TV, first by establishing a station in the Vatican and then by finding the Latin word for television. (He decided on *televisio*, which means "sight from afar.")

However, people still do go to church, leading ad man Cunningham to comment, "Watching TV is lowest on Sunday morning, and one can literally thank the Lord for that."

Television has affected education—not so much as one might hope, but there have been strides. An educational TV network

films special programs for some fifty stations throughout the nation. Countless thousands have been rising with the sun (or before it) to listen to lectures on Elizabethan literature at the incredible hour of 6:30 A.M. Scarcely a school operates without a TV set today, and at least one educator envisions the time when a fifth-grade teacher will catch a boy surreptitiously doing math problems, and scold him with, "Johnny, what do you mean doing your homework when you should be watching TV with the rest of the class?"

TV has had a strange effect on the publishing world. Fewer people are reading more books. More people are reading fewer magazines and newspapers. Television eats into the time a person might allot for reading, yet the mere mention of a publication on TV will multiply its sales. Steve Allen recommended *Brotherhood of Evil* in a casual thirty-second spiel, and the very next morning four thousand copies were sold. The day after Alexander King appeared on "The Jack Paar Show," his *Mine Enemy Grows Older* sold out of the bookstores.

Libraries report that book borrowings have increased, not decreased, in the television age. However, the readers' tastes have been revolutionized. Once novels were the staple. Now the readers prefer nonfiction. . . .

It is, of course, the entertainment industry which has suffered and benefited most from television. Within three years after TV sets reached mass production, the mammoth motion-picture industry was on its knees: Movie attendance tumbled by 30 per cent, thousands of theatres—fifty-five in New York City alone—closed their doors forever, and multiacre Hollywood studios surrendered their facilities to the infant giant. Within five years after TV became big business it owned the biggest hit on Broadway: *My Fair Lady* was financed by the Columbia Broadcasting System on the grounds that it might eventually make a nice TV show.

Television killed small-club boxing and all but killed minor-league baseball. Television ate into anything and everything that required people to leave their living rooms. After the

automobile industry's monumental effort to make America a nation of go-outs, television turned the tide and made it once again a nation of stay-at-homes. One writer was moved to call TV "America's modern fireside."

Is this good? The Anti-Saloon League says Yes and the Saloon Owners League says No. In between there are all ranges of opinion, some even medical. Doctors began worrying about TV spines for people who slumped motionless in front of the set for too many hours and TV eyes for people whose gaze seldom left the flickering screen from dusk to dawn. A Tokyo pediatrician even blamed an increase in bed-wetting on TV. In Los Angeles a woman was so entranced with a movie she was watching that she delivered her fifth baby without calling her husband from the next room.

TV can provide escape and even cure for the sick. A psychiatrist, Dr. Eugene D. Glynn, has written of therapeutic television: cases where the ignored child finds a substitute for mother love, where a hospital for schizophrenic adolescents finds the TV set the most practical tranquilizer in the institution, and even where an alcoholic found cure by substituting television for liquor.

It has become impossible even to poke fun at TV without surrendering to it. As *TV Guide* magazine pointed out, the big laugh in Broadway's *Flower Drum Song* came when Miyoshi Umeki said her father could fall asleep in front of a TV set even when it was turned off. But, that gibe recorded, the show went on seriously to develop a plot in which the heroine learns how to get her man by watching a movie on television.

Yet TV can complicate romance. The National Union of Townswomen's Guilds in England passed a resolution deploring the fact that too many youngsters were staying home in front of the set instead of going out courting. "If there is no courting, there will be no marriage, no children and in the end—no nation," the Guild's resolution said.

As early as 1948 TV smashed a marriage. A New York woman got a separation on her complaint that her husband spent his evening hours in front of the set "oblivious to my

presence." There have been many such cases since, some of them delayed in final settlement until it was determined who got custody of the family set. Some of these divorces have a desperate twist, such as the Chicago case in which the wife complained that her husband took the set to work with him every morning. (It was the only way he could be certain there'd be dinner prepared when he returned home, he said.) . . .

A few hardy souls have fought back as the television madness swept the world, lonely Don Quixotes flailing at the windmill. It took a court injunction in Chicago to restrain Arthur Anderson from smashing his wife's third TV set after he had done mayhem to its two predecessors with an ax. And a sympathetic jury in Atlanta freed L. L. Crosby with a nod of understanding even though he admitted he fired a .22 caliber bullet into the set which his neighbor played full-volume every night until past midnight. But mostly the world has learned to live with TV, and a mineworkers union in England actually sought a pay raise for night-shift workers purely on the grounds that they missed all the good evening TV shows.

In addition to the TV that most of America sees, there is the lesser-known world of closed-circuit TV, that which transmits pictures only to authorized sets. Already these systems have caught bank robbers, demonstrated new operating techniques for surgeons, linked four cities for a single art auction, and become a bulletin board in the search for missing persons. The army uses TV for forward observation posts, and David Sarnoff, the chairman of the board of the Radio Corporation of America, has predicted that the next war will be telecast in its entirety (if it lasts long enough to get the cameras in position).

With its tight and massive grip on the time and attention of the people, it becomes obvious that television can be worked to do great good or great harm. In America, at least, it has done neither. And scarcely in the second decade of its existence, the U.S. television industry found itself beset by the bitterest of criticism for failing to become an instrument of uplift. . . .

The answer to this type of talk has come most frankly from Dr. Frank Stanton, president of the Columbia Broadcasting System. In testimony to Congress he said:

If I am correct in my definition of the basic nature of television, we must face the fact that it is a major part of our function to try to appeal to most of the people most of the time. Some of the criticism, at least, is really a quarrel with the fact that television is a mass medium. It is not an elite medium. We can help education, but we cannot be education. We can give the pulpit a wider range, but we cannot be religion. We can help the American home, but we cannot be parents. This is not to say that we cannot at times lead or make contributions to society. But it is to say that the very nature of our being a mass medium operating in a society which is as we find it places some real limits on what we can do to improve society, to elevate tastes and to change the face of the world. We cannot force people to like what they don't like, to want what they don't want.

In other words, television will give its mass audience what it deserves, no less and certainly no more.

### THE ECONOMIC SQUEEZE <sup>2</sup>

Unique among American industries, broadcasting was conceived by its founders not as an adventure in profit-making but as a new opportunity for high public service. In 1926 David Sarnoff, who had come to RCA from American Marconi, saw the role of broadcasting "as a public institution in the same sense that a library, for example, is regarded." He was flatly opposed to "direct advertising on the air" and fondly believed that radio manufacturers would in their own interest pay some of the costs of station operation.

Such views were not peculiar to Sarnoff. The first annual conference of commercial broadcasters, held in 1922, solemnly resolved not only that direct advertising be absolutely prohibited but "that indirect advertising be limited to the announcements of the call letters of the station and of the name of the con-

<sup>2</sup> From "The Economic Squeeze on Mass TV," article by Robert Horton, freelance writer, formerly Washington correspondent for the Scripps-Howard newspapers and news editor for the Office of War Information. *The Reporter*. 22: 14-20. Ap. 28, '60. Reprinted by permission.

cern responsible for the matter broadcasted, subject to such regulations as the Secretary of Commerce may impose." Herbert Hoover, then Secretary of Commerce, had already made it clear where he stood: "It is inconceivable that we should allow so great a possibility for service, for news, for entertainment, for education, and for vital commercial purposes to be drowned in advertising chatter."

Some thirty years later, Richard Salant, a CBS vice president, was to give an accurate statement of the philosophy and practice that had evolved. Describing television as "just about this quarter century's brashest entry on the American industrial scene," he urged his colleagues to admit frankly and "out loud that ours is a business which depends on revenue—dollars—from advertisers for survival."

Because radio used the public domain—that is, the air waves—it was understood from the start to have some of the character and responsibility of a public utility, a principle embodied in the original Communications Act of 1927 and carried over to the 1934 act, which established the Federal Communications Commission. The spirit of the basic law lay in "the assertion . . . that the right of the public to service is superior to the right of any individual to use the ether." . . .

Broadcasting has acknowledged its responsibilities to the public with impeccably stated precepts, all recognizing the public stake in the air waves. In the absence of other income, however, commercial broadcasting has had to rely exclusively on advertising for its revenue. It is also the only mass-market industry to which the mass consumer *directly* pays not a single cent. To stay in business and flourish, it must sell not its own end products, its programs, but the product of other industries—the soaps and the cereals, the drugs and the cigarettes, the coffee and the dog foods.

Richard Salant makes the point that "We in broadcasting have never really sat down to think out what our story really is. We have never stopped to figure out what we are and what we are trying to do." Any attempt to make good on this failure will have to begin by examining the economics of the industry.

For the most striking aspect of TV's plight is that the economics of broadcasting, as presently organized, run directly counter to the basic law that governs the industry.

### *Gargantua Takes Over*

Detailed figures on the finances of television are not easy to come by, but even a sampling of those available shows how the industry grew.

As recently as 1949 the networks and the fourteen stations they owned outright had modest revenues of \$19.3 million and showed a loss of \$12.1 million for the year. The other eighty-four television stations combined had total revenues of only \$15 million and reported to the FCC aggregate losses of \$13.5 million. In 1958, by contrast, some 520 stations, practically all affiliated with the networks by then, grossed more than \$1.25 billion, realized profits estimated at \$170 million before taxes, employed about thirty thousand people, and were able to show a 17 per cent return as compared with the 12 per cent average for American industry. That is an impressive nine-year record for any industry. Of the total gross revenues, moreover, the three networks and the fifteen stations they owned outright in 1958 accounted for fully 44 per cent.

Of those who keep the screen aglow, the biggest spenders are the food companies, which laid out \$109.2 million in 1958 to promote their goodies, from coffer coffee to instant dog food. Next in the order of their patronage of the arts via television came the makers of toiletries and toilet goods, \$98.9 million; smoking materials, \$62 million; medicine and patent medicines, \$58 million; automotive accessories and equipment, \$52.5 million. The list then tapered down to agriculture and farming, which contributed a mere \$63,454.

To these advertisers the cost of using the air waves is formidable. To plug the drug Anacin, for example, \$740,627 was spent in a single month just for time on the air, apart from talent and production costs. One competitor, Bayer Aspirin, spent \$527,855 and another, Bufferin, \$455,934.

The cost of TV time, like that of any other advertising, is based on the size of the audience, or what is believed to be the size of the audience, and such are the estimates on this score that time has never had so high a dollar value placed upon it. According to the statistical outfits, bred by the TV industry to produce figures for the ad agencies and the sponsors, about 50 million TV sets in 45 million American homes are tuned in for thirty-five to forty hours a week. As if that were not awesome enough, Sindlinger & Company, one of the busiest statistical bureaus, came up with the finding that during a single week . . . 126,564,000 Americans over twelve years of age spent 2,231,600,000 hours watching television and only 474,000,000 hours reading newspapers.

However sound these figures may be, the public must in truth make a staggering use of its television sets, since it pours out a vast fortune just to keep them in working order. Trade statistics show that in 1958 Americans spent \$2.5 billion for parts and services, which was roughly five times the investment of the industry itself in broadcasting facilities. In addition, enough sets are on enough of the time to run up a year's bill of some \$300 million for electricity.

### *Free Licenses Cost Big Money*

Television's massive structure of public and private investment rests in the first instance on two devices: the Federal license, without which a station cannot operate; and the networks, which by their nationwide coverage open the door to the mass markets required by the advertisers. The pressure on those responsible for both these features of the business is stupendous and begins to operate from the moment a prospective station owner applies for a license.

In the early days of TV it was possible for a reasonably well-heeled citizen to present himself to the FCC, to pledge himself, as required by law, to operate his station for the "public interest, convenience and necessity," and after submitting a prospective schedule showing a satisfactory balance between

public service and entertainment, to walk off with the precious license. . . .

With 520 TV stations now on the air and very few unassigned channels left, licenses are harder to come by. For the most part they are acquired by transfer, a transaction in which the station is sold without the new owner's having to undergo the scrutiny imposed on an original licensee by the FCC.

Among the bigger deals of recent years was the transfer of a CBS-affiliated property in Philadelphia that cost some \$5.5 million and was sold for \$20 million (radio station included). Another CBS affiliate in Sacramento, California, that had cost \$750,000 brought \$1.5 million. And an NBC-affiliated station in Kansas City that had cost \$2 million sold for \$7.6 million.

In most of these transfer cases only some 25 to 30 per cent of the sale represents the physical properties of a station, such as tower transmitters and studios. The question then arises, What is the remainder of the money paid for? A good slice of it, of course, is the inflated cost of buying into a seemingly sure-fire growth industry with the prospect of a high rate of return and large capital gains. Another substantial slice goes to pay for the network affiliation, without which, as we shall see, a TV station can hardly hope to break even.

Not least, a sizable, though unspecified, part of the purchase price must be considered by any realistic judgment as payment for the transferred license, without which there could be no deal at all. For a broadcaster's basic stock in trade is the public air, which he sells, along with program and talent, to the advertisers, and he can do that only by virtue of holding a Federal license. . . .

### *Then You Need a Network*

Next to its physical facilities and its license, the most valuable asset a station can have is a contract with one of the three major networks. According to FCC figures, nine out of ten stations depend on network affiliation for survival. Except for a few independents in big metropolitan areas, stations with

such contracts can also figure on enjoying the steepest markups over the original price when their owners put them up for sale on the transfer market. An independent station in Milwaukee that cost \$700,000 and was barely breaking even sold recently for \$5 million just because the seller knew that the buyer already had a CBS affiliation contract in his pocket. Conversely, a half interest in a CBS affiliate in Charleston that had cost more than a million dollars brought only \$650,000 when it became known that the network was withdrawing its affiliation.

Behind these fluctuations lies the simple fact that network affiliation often means the difference between healthy profit for a station and intolerable loss. Government figures show, for example, that while thirty affiliated stations in markets with four or more outlets enjoyed an average income of \$1,462,000, sixteen independent stations in the same market were suffering losses averaging \$78,000.

With an average broadcasting week of one hundred hours, an independent local station could not possibly afford to fill its schedule with live shows even if the material and talent were available, and they are not. Signing a contract with one of the networks, it agrees to turn over its best viewing hours, usually in the form of an "option" on nine or more hours of its best time divided into three daily periods. In return it gets a steady supply of sponsored and sustaining programs free of charge; a guaranteed income from national advertisers, usually about 30 per cent of the total time charges; and big-name shows that greatly enhance the value of its non-network hours, which it sells to local and national advertisers for spot commercials.

True, by the FCC's interpretation, a station is required to devote a reasonable part of its schedule to sustaining programs and to "local live programs" of direct benefit and interest to the community in which it operates. The FCC has further directed that "such programs should not be crowded out of the best listening hours." And it has ordered that the individual broadcaster or licensee must maintain control over his own programming and may not surrender this responsibility to networks, agencies, or other program-producing organizations. Yet

this is precisely what has happened. The same pressures that force the individual station to rely on the network for survival force the networks into an incessant scramble to control more time in more markets in order to be able to offer the national advertiser the biggest possible audience at any given hour.

At hearings held in New York . . . [in 1959] the FCC heard some blunt testimony on this score. Robert L. Foreman, executive vice president of Batten, Barton, Durstine & Osborn, replied when asked about the individual broadcaster's responsibility for programing:

I am afraid that is an unrealistic situation. My understanding is that that onus was placed upon the local stations many years ago and the situation today is such that the individual stations really do not have that authority, and if they really exercised it the economics of the situation is such that they would not long be in business.

### *The Tyranny of Ratings*

The three networks have in effect taken over the programing of all but a handful of the 520 TV stations scattered about the country. The networks' overriding concern from the start was, and probably had to be, incessant pursuit of the fickle mass audience. Mr. Salant put it clearly enough in a talk . . . to the St. Louis Rotary Club:

The fact is that broadcasting is a truly mass medium; it has to be. Unless it can enlist and hold the interest of most of the people a good part of the time, it is just too expensive a medium to survive. It must, in its spectrum of programing, have something—even the great majority of its material—that will appeal to not just thousands or hundreds of thousands but to millions and tens of millions.

Coinciding by chance with the emergence of polling techniques, the preoccupation with numbers has given birth to an esoteric science that purports to tell a sponsor all about his television "market"—its size, location, and composition—along with comparable data about his competitors.

TV marketing has a basic unit of measurement, called the CPM, which is the cost of presenting the sponsor's message in

a thousand homes. Since the total cost of a program is fixed, the greater the number of sets tuned in to it, the lower the CPM. A cost of \$3.50 per thousand should not make the average sponsor wince—unless he discovers that a competitor is getting good sales results at \$1.95. In that case, the first show will have a very short life, and the chances are good that what replaces it will be a close imitation of the \$1.95 show. So it turns out that 50 to 60 per cent of each season's weekly shows are failures and are dropped at the first opportunity available under the contract.

To arrive at the vital CPM, advertisers and networks must first determine the "circulation" of a given program. Unlike newspapers and magazines, which have specific figures on copies sold (though not on total readership), the broadcasting industry must rely on market-research organizations and the rating services they provide. These firms, which have developed into flourishing enterprises in their own right, compile the fateful circulation statistics that determine the nature of TV programing. Using sampling techniques, the rating services obtain their raw information from telephone interviews, from "diaries" listing the programs viewed by a small number of persons selected as a cross section, by meters recording the operation of sets in selected homes, or by a combination of these methods. [See next article, "TV Ratings."] . . .

Whatever their technical validity, the sensitivity to this data in the industry is all-pervasive. If a sponsor's goal is a family of five or more in which the age of the adults ranges from thirty-four to forty-nine, he is acutely upset to learn that his show is probably attracting youthful parents with one or two children and with blood that is not yet tired enough to require the sponsor's product. If the Audimeter tape indicates that the audience is increasing toward the end of the show, the sponsor interprets this to mean that people are tuning in for the next program. His best bet, therefore, is to save his hardest sales pitch for the closing commercial in order to take advantage of an augmented audience that wasn't interested in his program in the first place.

It is such considerations as this that spur the networks to acquire what is called "audience flow." This involves the corralling of a whopping audience for an evening show at seven o'clock and holding it, with whatever is thought to be required for mass attention, right up to ten-thirty or eleven. Hence all the blood and thunder in what is considered prime evening time. . . . Hence, too, the illustrative fate of "The Firestone Hour."

It was believed, from the ratings, that as soon as this music hour started, several million viewers regularly switched their dials for lustier fare and failed to return to NBC. Accordingly, the sponsor, who was paying for the time, the talent, and the production, was told in 1954 that NBC could no longer accommodate the show in the Monday evening slot to which its established minority audience had long been accustomed. The network, he was told, was losing about a million dollars a year from the program's comparatively low rating and had to "maintain a competitive position in the fight for circulation." ABC, then a struggling network trying to catch up, considered Monday a "throw-away" day, and gladly signed the Firestone show for its accustomed hour. But four years later, ABC was prospering enough to compete with the other networks on Monday evening and with "audience flow" in mind, contrived to rout Firestone's music hour once more—and this time the music never came back on.

#### *He Who Pays the Piper*

Worse than the outright extinction of shows is the insidious effect of ratings on programs that survive. It is strange indeed for broadcasting officials to raise the fear of government censorship when they permit private business to exercise a steady and unremitting censorship of its own. At . . . [the 1959] hearings held by the FCC, Dan Seymour, vice-president of J. Walter Thompson, was explicit on this point:

We will object to controversial matter in dramatic shows from time to time on the basis that our clients are investing millions and

millions of dollars in the TV medium. They are doing this to create good will and where we find there is the possibility that ill will will be reflected on the sponsor . . . by and large we have been able to delete the controversial line.

A few examples suggest the level of taste and imagination sometimes involved in such deletions. One executive of an ad agency handling a major cigarette manufacturer previewed a pilot show on the Hungarian revolt and recommended: ". . . This is our feeling. Don't have too many Russian officers smoking cigarettes." Another agency, handling a filter cigarette, demanded that villains be shown smoking only nonfilters. . . . Even the Dead Sea Scrolls came in for tampering. When nervous executives realized that the cast of characters in a dramatic show about their discovery was almost exclusively Jewish, they arranged to cast an actress identified with Irish roles as the Jewish mother and a Scandinavian boy as the Jewish son. . . . On the same level was the Ford man who ordered a shot of the New York skyline eliminated because it gave prominence to the Chrysler Building.

If there is any doubt about the reasons behind such pressures or about what television can mean to a sponsor, a few examples of TV's advertising potency should dispel it. Among several cases cited in *Television and Radio*, a standard textbook on the subject by Chester and Garrison, is that of Saran Wrap, a long-neglected product that the Dow Chemical Company started to promote on network television in November, 1953. By October of the following year, sales had jumped from 20,000 cases to 600,000. Another instance was the boom enjoyed by the Hazel Bishop lipstick manufacturers once they took to the air waves with a drippy show called "This Is Your Life." From a gross annual take of \$50,000 in 1950, sales rose to \$4.5 million in 1952, to \$10 million a year later, and to \$12 million in 1954, by which time the company was spending \$6 million a year on television advertising and doing 25 per cent of the nation's lipstick business.

The war that followed between Hazel Bishop and Revlon was one of the more sordid classics of advertising history. When

Hazel Bishop's contract for "This Is Your Life" expired in 1955, Raymond Spector, who handled its advertising, hit upon the new "\$64,000 Question" as a likely successor. In the cloak-and-dagger atmosphere then prevailing in the cosmetics trade Charles Revlon and his colleagues contrived to seize "Question" for Revlon before Spector could close a deal. In three years that show boosted Revlon's cosmetic sales from a sizable volume of \$33 million in 1954 when the "Question" went on the air to \$110 million and some 40 per cent of the entire market by the end of 1958. Hazel Bishop lost most of the gains it had made, and Coty, an innocent bystander, was forced into the red.

Testimony at congressional hearings on the quiz shows made it plain that their corruption flowed from the single-minded attempt to stimulate ratings. [See "TV's Tarnished Image," in this section, below]. . .

#### *Passing the Buck*

The history of television is the history of a responsibility that never came to rest. The law appeared to distribute it in unequal measure between the FCC and the station owners. But neither has proved capable of dealing with the unforeseen economic pressures generated by the industry's dizzy growth. The individual stations were committed, by the terms of their license, to serve the public interest, but in order to survive, as we have shown, they soon surrendered the best of their time to the networks. And along with the buck on programing, they passed the financial squeeze.

For the network that squeeze comes, quite simply, from the cost of producing entertainment and the advertiser's judgment of what a program is worth in selling his wares. Nothing much can be done about "below-the-line" costs—studio, stage, sets, equipment, crew, and the like—which are fixed, but the price of talent can vary from the low-cost quiz show to the "spectacular." . . . [A recent] season's most ambitious venture, the Ford series of thirty-nine spectacles running ninety minutes each, cost \$15 million. Ingrid Bergman's services in just one of these shows, *The Turn of the Screw*, cost \$100,000 plus European

rights. But it is worth noting that Miss Bergman's price would have been modest for a Hollywood movie, which is a comparatively stable commodity compared with a one-shot performance on television. The networks constantly face the fact that, with Hollywood paying \$500,000 or even \$1 million for a dramatic lead and Las Vegas paying comedians \$25,000 a week, prominent stars are going to exact the maximum that television can afford to pay.

At the same time, with sponsors demanding high ratings, and ratings supposedly demanding stars, the squeeze continues with mounting pressure.

In the case of broadcast operations there is an exceedingly slender margin between satisfactory profit and devastating loss [CBS president Frank Stanton told a congressional committee in 1956]. The balance between profit and loss in the case of networks is so delicate that the failure to sell one hour between 7:30 and 10:30 each night for a year . . . would, in 1955 have turned the CBS Television Network's profit into a loss.

. . . [Three years later] Stanton testified at FCC hearings that failure to sell a single half hour a week had cost the network close to \$3 million—\$1.3 million in time revenue and \$1.6 million to fill the gap with sustaining programs.

### *Sheep and Golden Geese*

According to Stanton's testimony in 1956, "Anything that is done that puts an inordinate burden on the advertiser could kill the goose that lays the golden egg." Given this dependence on the advertising sponsor, the next question, obviously, is how far the network can afford to insist on program control in spite of Stanton's statement that "We and we alone will decide not only what is to appear on the CBS Television Network, but how it is to appear." The simple fact is that if an advertiser does not care for the particular shows offered by a network, he can buy one from an independent packager or even have one produced, and then simply buy the network's time, although the networks are showing increasing resistance to this practice. If neither CBS nor NBC cares to run the show he wants to

put on, he can go to ABC, which has made it clear that it is out for ratings rather than the compliments of television critics. And what if a show rejected by CBS should turn out on another network to have the drawing power of the "\$64,000 Question"—capable of killing off competing shows not only in the same time period but in the half-hour slots preceding and following?

The rewards and costs of TV advertising being what they are, it is inevitable that the sponsor will want a considerable say in the use of the time, talent, and production for which he has paid. . . .

Robert L. Foreman, executive vice president of BBDO, has said: "I think this is the only advertising medium today in which the advertiser has any say over the editorial content." He was right, of course. Advertising agencies have not dared to poach on the editorial preserves of newspapers and magazines to anything like the same extent. The admitted seduction of TV should give pause to those who have taken at face value the broadcasting industry's plea to be allowed to stand equally with the press under the protection of the First Amendment. The fact is that the tussle between the network and the sponsor (together with his ad agency) for the final say-so on programing has for years been a standard feature of the industry's family life. The one commands the dollars, the other the time on the air, and the balance of power has oscillated between them roughly according to the laws of supply and demand. Put more brutally in the words of no less a person than Robert S. Kintner, president of NBC: "The ultimate responsibility is ours, but the ultimate power has to be the sponsor's because without him you couldn't afford to run a network."

### BEHIND THE SCREEN <sup>3</sup>

Television has been called the twentieth century medicine show. There could scarcely be a more apt description. The idea

<sup>3</sup> From the book *TV: The Big Picture*, by Stan Opatowsky, reporter for the *New York Post*. Copyright © 1961 by Stan Opatowsky. Reprinted by permission of E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc. This selection is from Chapter V, "The Man From Madison Avenue," p 65-76, and Chapter VIII, "As Easy as Rolling Off a Horse," p 105-15.

behind television is not to entertain, but to sell sponsors' products. The entertainment is only the lure, and in the final judgment a program rises or falls not on the applause it draws but on the sales it produces. Pat Weaver, when president of NBC, told his staff in no uncertain terms, "We are first of all in the advertising business, for that is where our revenue comes from."

The result is a continual clash between the show-business people who put on the entertainment and the advertising men who pay for it. Every TV program is watched over by the man from Madison Avenue, the representative of the advertising agency that is, in turn, the representative of the sponsor who foots the bill.

Show people quite often turn bitter at the interference. Comedienne Betty Hutton said, "Ad men know nothing about our business, yet they're running a fantastic medium. Their agencies are destroying this wonderful field." Movie director William Wyler says he avoids casting in his films any actor who has appeared in a TV commercial because the actor has degraded himself publicly. Yet neither Miss Hutton nor Wyler (nor anyone else) has suggested another means of financing free television. And when actor Tony Randall was asked if he'd be so disdainful of advertising agency men if he had a regular TV show of his own, he replied, "Certainly not. I may be a hypocrite but I'm not a fool."

The advertising agency is hired by the manufacturer to prepare and supervise all his advertising. The manufacturer pays the agency nothing. Instead, the agency collects a 15 per cent commission on the space or time rates of every newspaper, magazine, radio station, and television network with which it places an ad. But although it is the newspaper or TV network that pays the agency, the agency's only loyalty is to the manufacturer. The big accounts are worth millions of dollars in commissions each year, and for every agency with such an account there are ten competitors lurking nearby with promises of shrewder ads and brighter ideas.

For this reason the agencies hover with nervous nellyism over: the programs they buy, constantly on guard for things they

fear might work against the sponsor's best interests. Quite often, of course, these agency men become overzealous. The late Fred Allen defined an advertising agency vice president as "a fellow who comes to his office at nine in the morning, finds on his desk a pile of molehills and has until five P.M. to make a mountain out of them."

The agency men are not deliberate destroyers of art. The evil, if any, is not in their deeds but rather in the system that makes advertising TV's only source of revenue. Many of these agency men are themselves trained in show business and they are shrewd judges of what the public wants to see on the home screen.

↳ TV advertising is, of course, a heritage from radio. Yet in radio's first days a station that carried commercials was considered in very poor taste.

Commercial radio first began to consider advertising in the early 1920's. There were immediate objections to the idea. . . . However, as an experiment, an actor and lecturer named Bruce Reynolds bought up fifteen-minute segments on station WEAF in New York for \$100 each and resold them for what he could get. WEAF kicked him off the air because too many listeners complained. Reynolds moved over to WAAM in Newark, where the station owner would take his cash but no checks because he didn't want written evidence he was selling time on his station.

By 1925, however, it was obvious that someone had to pay for the radio entertainment—and only the advertiser volunteered. The advertising agencies moved in and became radio-show experts. As early as 1939 the National Broadcasting Company was issuing booklets on the prospects for TV advertising. When TV went big time ten years later, advertising—and the advertising agencies—were ready.

It is the job of the agency to buy for its client, not necessarily the best show available, but rather the show that will best sell the product. . . .

Once the TV show is bought, the agency's job is only beginning. It must then prepare the commercials that will run on the purchased show and also as spot announcements on local

stations throughout the nation. These commercials are of the greatest importance. After all, the only purpose in buying the show in the first place was to provide audience for the sales pitch.

The advertising industry itself is of several minds as to what constitutes a good commercial and what constitutes a bad one. There are rules of thumb, of course. One advertising man says, "The really effective commercial sets up a problem, settles it quickly through use of the product and then ends quickly."

This is the basis of the hard sell—the pitch being that the viewer dare not go another moment without purchasing the product in question. There is also the soft sell, based largely on humorous commercials, designed to convey the idea that the sponsor is a pretty nice guy and so obviously his product must be nice and, what the hell, why not buy it?

One of the big problems with TV commercials is good taste. What is it? Nobody knows, but everyone thinks he knows. One advertising executive says that the problem with TV is its very power as a selling medium. "You see a one-inch truss ad on page 38 of a newspaper and you think nothing of it because the ad is not very powerful," he says. "But if you see a twenty-second truss ad on a local station at 11:00 P.M.—and that's the TV equivalent of a one-inch newspaper ad on page 38—it seems in horrible taste. That's only because the TV ad automatically has more impact than the newspaper ad." . . .

There is no doubt that TV ads are sometimes in terrible taste. They can actually be frightening. Two days after south Texas was ripped by a hurricane, one advertiser was booming over the airwaves: "There's another hurricane coming. (*Pause.*) A hurricane of values at—" His ad did, of course, attract the attention of the jittery community. He's lucky it didn't also attract a lynch mob. . . .

There has been considerable publicity given . . . to faked commercials: dropping Alka Seltzer into a glass of beer instead of water to give it more fizz, icing a cake with shaving cream to make it seem frostier, slicing the cake in advance and then gluing it back together so it will seem to cut perfectly, photo-

graphing the model's "after" hairdo first and then mussing it up for the "before" shot. "Dishonest advertising is here," wrote agency executive Fairfax Cone in a memo to his staff. "It is real. And whatever the percentage, it is large and is not diminishing."

Why this trickery? Are the products impossible to sell in an honest way? The fault almost always lies with the ad writer's anxiety to produce a different commercial, a more exciting commercial, a commercial that will be more arresting than the commercial for a rival product. When this trickery is exposed, the excuses are apt to be ludicrous.

An agency turned out a commercial to show how the Libby-Owens-Ford glass used in General Motors automobiles was so much clearer than the glass used in rival cars. It turned out that the window was rolled down—there was no glass at all—in the shot that showed Libby-Owens-Ford's "flawless glass." The excuse for this? By using no glass we saved money, the agency producer told the Federal Trade Commission.

Another agency turned out a commercial to show that Rise shaving cream always remained moist but that Brand X dried on the face. The FTC proved that Brand X wasn't a shaving cream at all, but a special compound made for the commercial so that it would certainly dry up on the face. The excuse for this? "The need to speed up the pictorial effect was necessitated by the time limit imposed by the length of the television commercial," Carter Products told the FTC. . . .

These TV commercials, honest or otherwise, are expensive. It costs about \$2,500 to produce a full-color advertisement for insertion in magazines, but it costs about \$10,000 to produce a black-and-white TV commercial. And General Motors once spent as much as \$35,000 on a single commercial: the first scene was in the snowy north and the final shot was in sunny Florida.

"You can never tell exactly what they'll cost," says Stuart Ludlum of the Kudner Agency. "We had an awful experience on a commercial featuring skiers. We went to one location and there was a thaw. We went to another and there was a thaw. We went to a third, and it rained. Finally we went to

the studio and set it up. We should have done that in the first place." . . .

The business of making TV commercials is so extensive that it has become an entirely new facet of show business. Young actors and actresses trying to break in find great experience in commercial work. The agencies employ full-time casting directors. And commercials have even developed their own stars, such as Betty Furness, who has made more than 2,000 advertisements for Westinghouse, and Julia Meade, who toils for several companies.

The TV commercial girl has become a little industry unto herself. She carries an agent, a lawyer, and tax adviser, she belongs to two or three unions, she pays as much as \$1,000 a year to a hairdresser, she needs a telephone answering service to catch appointments, and she spends thousands per year on clothes. (The Internal Revenue Service has issued what it calls "the Dinah Shore ruling"—a dress can be deducted from income-tax returns as a business expense if it's too tight to sit down in.) . . .

Partly because of the exposés by the Federal Trade Commission and partly because business is good enough to permit an independent attitude, the networks in 1959 tightened up their restrictions on commercial copy.

CBS took special pains to point out that a commercial that is acceptable for entertainment programs may not be acceptable in the more serious context of news programs. CBS also went into the area of good taste. It ruled that live models cannot display undergarments. It ruled that you must stress the pleasantness of relief and not the discomfort of the ailment when advertising cold and headache remedies. . . .

NBC and ABC have taken generally the same attitude as CBS on the clearing of commercials, although CBS always has been the most finicky of the three networks.

The agencies have resisted these tighter standards. Some network officials reported that the agencies began playing one network against another, threatening to take their business "across the street" if a borderline commercial were not accepted. The networks have pretty much remained firm against this sort of

pressure, secure to the knowledge that any commercial can be tailored to meet their standards. Some agency people think that the three networks should combine to open a commercial-clearing bureau. The present practice, however, is for the agency to submit the commercial idea to the individual network in advance if there's any doubt about whether it will be cleared for use on the air.

Grace Johnson of ABC, Joseph Ream at CBS, and James A. Stabile at NBC are the people who finally rule on the acceptance of ads. They are "continuity acceptance directors." They reject such commercials as one that compared the human colon to a railroad roundhouse (bad taste), one that maintained that a beer was noncaloric (not true), [and] one that showed too much of the model taking a shower (too risqué). . . .

Despite these minor setbacks, the ad agencies continue to prosper. The biggest in the nation, J. Walter Thompson, spent \$110.5 million of client money in TV alone in 1959 (and collected 15 per cent in commissions), McCann-Erickson spent \$90 million, Young & Rubicam \$89 million, BBDO \$73 million, Ted Bates \$90 million, Leo Burnett \$55.7 million, Benton & Bowles \$73.7 million, N. W. Ayer \$35.8 million, Kenyon & Eckhardt \$39 million, and Dancer-Fitzgerald-Sample \$51 million.

All these agencies have huge TV departments (the Thompson office is headed by Dan Seymour, who once was better known, if poorer, as a top radio announcer), which reflects the industry's strange mixture of show business and advertising business. The agency men agree that the best combination is an ad man who learned a little about show business, rather than a show-business man who learned the advertising business. They get, of course, caustic arguments from the show-business side of this theory.

But, at any rate, they are there, poised with their snake oil after the crowd has formed to see, direct from the Casbah, Salome and her dance of the seven reinforced-fiber tear-proof veils. It may be a medicine show, but it's a living, a very good living indeed.

*It's a Living*

Somewhere amid all these advertising men, network vice presidents, and Federal commissioners you will find the actors. They are quite necessary, if only to introduce a brief message from their sponsor.

For all the ulterior motives that guide the men behind TV, the man in front of the set switches it on for only one reason—to be entertained. And for more than a dozen hours a day there are ingénues weeping over unrequited love, Indians tumbling off horses, and dopey fathers being outwitted by shrewd mothers in order to provide this entertainment.

Some of it is good and most of it is terrible but the whole of it keeps an awful lot of actors busy.

The classic dramatic actors of the stage are inclined to sniff haughtily at TV's routine fare, but they do perform in television's better plays. Helen Hayes summed up the feeling when she told an interviewer: "Technically TV is marvelous. But it does not bring out your soul the way theatre does. One thing that TV can show well is violence, but that is not always good drama."

There are very few actors today who refuse to appear on TV. The reason, of course, is money. It's not that television salaries are so high, for both the stage and the movies pay more, but the TV pay is earned quickly and the work is comparatively easy. Greer Garson likes the one-shot appearance on shows such as the "Hallmark Theater" because they permit her to perform when she chooses and permit her to lay off as long as she chooses.

The actors trained on Broadway and in the movies found little difficulty adapting to television. There are two principal differences: the TV work must be done faster than in the movies and it must be done in a more natural manner than on the stage. The exaggerated motions of the stage actor, calculated to attract notice in the upper balcony, look ridiculous when magnified on the home screen.

In the world of TV these top-rung actors of stage and screen are a decided minority. The staple is the series program, and

the majority of performers play the same characters week in and week out for twenty-six weeks of the year. They are the heritage of the B picture, schooled in the Hollywood system of wringing a single idea and a single characterization dry before turning to something new.

It is in the series that the actor finds his most comfortable work. For the hired hand it is steady work, a great rarity in the acting profession. For the true star it is a special financial bonanza. For either, it is the easiest of acting work, as easy, as Roy Rogers said, as rolling off a horse. . . .

One great staple of TV is, of course, the Western. The craze began with the Lone Ranger in the earliest days and has never waned. Roy Rogers is now in his second decade on television, still going strong as he enralls an entire new generation of fans. The somewhat more sophisticated Westerns, the so-called adult Westerns, are perhaps a little less durable, but there will be cowboys and Indians chasing each other across the TV screen as long as there is adventure in the young American's heart.

Some actors object to the type casting that a series show demands. Henry Fonda rejected offers for years because, he said, "These TV actors are better known by their character names than by their real names. Even when they appear as a guest of another show, doing something different, they're identified as the series characters." But like them all, Henry Fonda finally succumbed to the money and the security of the television series.

Apart from the usual show-business divisions of actors, singers, and comedians, television has produced a new type—the personality. These are men like Ed Sullivan and Dave Garroway and Arthur Godfrey and Jack Paar who don't really do anything outstanding. They just sit or stand and get famous.

How? Why? There are many explanations. The simplest is that these men are believable, pleasant-appearing human beings and that their true vocation is salesmanship. . . .

Nonperforming Ed Sullivan is one of the most durable characters on TV. He feels that his success actually is not on the screen but off, in the selection of guest stars for the program.

While most of show business is forever devoted to reproducing yesterday's hit, Sullivan constantly strains to produce something new. "It's my training as a newspaperman," he explained. "We are looking for news, for scoops, to show something different from yesterday." . . .

What Garroway needed to make the grade was a chimpanzee. His warm personality, his obvious friendliness had attracted attention when he starred in a charming low-budget show out of Chicago in TV's earliest days, but when he first started on "Today" the show was a bust. . . . Within six months the chimp, J. Fred Muggs, hoisted the audience from 2.5 million to 11 million. The advertisers flocked in. J. Fred Muggs got invitations to everything from Sugar Cane festivals to marriage. Garroway came to be famous. He also came to hate all chimpanzees, and J. Fred Muggs in particular. With the audience finally built up, J. Fred Muggs was sent back to his trees and Garroway stayed on to charm the audience this chimp had given him.

One phenomenon of this personality cult is that each of the major successes was developed by television on television. None came from the stage or the screen as proved stars. Furthermore, those motion-picture stars who attempted to match this success have invariably failed.

No one in TV can explain the how or why of this. Carl Lindemann, while in charge of day programming for NBC, tried for years to find a personality who could rival CBS's Godfrey. Money was no problem. Resources were unlimited. But Lindemann never could produce a formula, much less a man, to make the grade. He reached the desperate point where he would give an on-the-air audition to practically any likable male who walked into the RCA building. "I found many who I thought would make it, but never one who did make it," he said. On the other hand, NBC threw in Paar, a perennial show-business flop, as host of its "Tonight" show in a gesture of desperation. Paar turned out to be an overwhelming success.

Though these personalities somehow must exude warmth, even forgetting all signs of talent, seeking a warm human being is hardly the answer to the search. Paar particularly is . . . a worry wart who lives in terror of a poor program. Yet he comes through the screen as a warm lackadaisical sort of guy who just wants to have a little fun each evening.

And although these personalities have the least discernible talent, they are the most durable people on the air. Meanwhile the singers and comedians, the performers with the most obvious individual talent, die quickest. Perry Como and Dinah Shore and Jack Benny could go on forever, but they are exceptions. Generally, among the comedians, the bigger they were, the quicker they fell.

As a pioneer Milton Berle lasted seven years, but then even he was gone, not to return except as MC of a bowling program. Jerry Lester was once one of the biggest stars on television; today he plays small night clubs. Jackie Gleason, Lucy and Desi, Sid Caesar and Imogene Coca, George Gobel, Steve Allen all rode high and then fell off the bandwagon.

It is generally a matter of overexposure. The public just sees too much of them. At the start of Berle's seventh season on TV the advertising man behind the show, Myron T. Kirk, said: "As soon as I saw his first show I knew this was the last year. I got interested in Jackie Gleason." The comedian seems to wear out his welcome. Bob Hope remains a perennial simply by refusing to take the risk. He refuses to do weekly or even monthly shows. He appears only a few times a year, and his shows are taped a bit at a time, in leisurely fashion.

Veteran comedy director Leonard Stern says that the big comedy TV shows run in three stages as far as the viewer is concerned:

In the first stage the comedian's act is all new and the viewer is charmed. In the second stage there's a feeling of pleasant anticipation. The viewer knows what's coming next, but he's proud of it—he likes to tell his wife, "Now watch him do so and so." Then in the third stage there is only boredom, and that's the end of the road.

Stern, like all students of comedy, devotes considerable time trying to explain to himself and to others just why Jack Benny outlasts all the comedians and all the rules of thumb. After all, there has been the stage of pleasant anticipation on the Benny show for ten years. When does the boredom arrive?

Stern says:

Benny's success is basically due to the fact that he created a successful family—the regular supporting characters like Rochester—in the days of radio, and has kept the family intact ever since. The family is important. In television comedy the family is the distraction that keeps you from becoming bored with the star, it is the magician's left hand that diverts your attention for a moment. Red Skelton is good too, because of the family—only, in his case he's his own family, playing various characters but, you'll notice, the same characters all the time. . . .

TV has made show business easier to crash for those hopeful youngsters forever converging upon Hollywood and New York. The reason is the volume. Television chews up so many actors and so many scripts in a single day. It took Charlie Chaplin three decades to produce seventy-eight movies, scarcely enough for two years of TV as a regular program. But despite the never-ending need for talent, there is no open-door policy. Youngsters struggling for a chance to get experience are always told to come back when they have experience.

Sooner or later, though, they usually get that break. It's not a big one but it is a job. There are so many girls working in TV at salaries running \$125 and up that Broadway and nightclub producers have experienced a shortage of chorus girls. The youngsters just won't work those long night hours for \$100 a week when they can get more pay and better hours on television.

Despite the good money in TV, however, the long-term contract is a thing of the past. Milton Berle was given a thirty-year contract by NBC. Eddie Fisher, Jimmy Durante, Jackie Gleason, and Martha Raye got contracts for fifteen to twenty years. They continue to draw the pay even when they're not on the air.

These contracts are mainly the result of a big talent raid that CBS radio staged on NBC radio back in the 1940's: it took away Jack Benny, Edgar Bergen, and Amos 'n' Andy in one swoop. When Pat Weaver took over NBC television, he was determined that the like would not happen again. He pinned down the stars to long-term agreements as soon as they made good. But he didn't anticipate the short life of a TV star, and today NBC and CBS are paying off many of these agreements long after the star has left the air waves.

Without the long-term contract, a star's big salary can shrink pretty rapidly. A pay check of \$3,000 a week seems tremendous. But in the first place it is delivered, not to the actor, but to his agent. It has already been shorn of withholding tax and the other usual deductions, and the agent clips off another 10 per cent before sending the balance to the performer. The check is now down to \$2,000. The withholding tax is not enough to account for the income tax on a salary this large, so to keep out of trouble later the actor has to put aside another few hundred dollars for payment to Uncle Sam at the end of the year. He still has over \$1,000 a week left—but he doesn't work all year. At best he'll work twenty-six weeks. More often he'll work thirteen. This salary has to pay living expenses for the entire year.

The real money in TV is in those series residuals—the money paid for rerun shows. William Bendix stands to make \$500,000 from the reruns of "The Life of Riley" series because he shares ownership in the show. . . .

The pay checks of the TV actors vary greatly, of course. In the dramatic shows the prices run from about \$5,000 to \$10,000 for the top stars, although June Allyson once got \$50,000 for a single appearance. Dinah Shore pays her guests \$10,000 tops.

The giants of TV like Bob Hope and Bing Crosby will get a flat fee of about \$250,000 to put on a single one-hour show. They pay all expenses and salaries out of that and keep whatever is left. One way they save expenses is to swap guest appearances with one another for free. This is also a status symbol

in television. Singer Bobby Darin was invited to be a guest on a Bob Hope show, and he was asked his price. He said he'd do it for free, but that Hope would have to make a return appearance on a Darin show. The agents for the two men dickered and finally came to this arrangement: since Hope is twice as important as Darin, Hope would appear once for free on Darin's show and Darin would appear twice for free on Hope's show.

#### TV RATINGS <sup>4</sup>

A unique index of cultural preferences was discovered about eight years ago by an engineer in the Chicago Department of Water and Sewers. Scanning a panel of dials with disbelieving eyes one night, he lifted the phone and called the home of his supervisor.

"It's happening again, same as last week," he reported. "The water pressure is building up something fierce. It's as though everybody in the city shut off their faucets at the same time."

The two men speculated, then the supervisor said, "I wonder. Could it be that almost everybody's doing the same thing I'm doing?"

"What are you doing?"

"I'm watching Milton Berle."

A few minutes later, the dials showed a sudden plunge, then a minute later the pressure zoomed. The engineer called to report again.

"Then I think I was right," the supervisor theorized. "The commercial was just on. My wife ducked out to put on a pot of coffee and the kid ran off to the bathroom. Must be that that's what everybody did."

The men at the water pumping station thus had gained a new insight into the nation's minute-by-minute absorption

<sup>4</sup> From "TV Ratings; What They Really Mean," by Bernard Asbell, lecturer on writing and American folk music at the University of Chicago and radio-TV correspondent for *Billboard*. *Harper's Magazine*. 217:66-71. S. '58. © 1958 by Harper and Brothers. Reprinted by permission of the author.

in television. But their system was far from precise. It couldn't distinguish those faucets shut off by CBS from those by NBC or ABC. In the fierce competition of TV, this distinction is fundamental.

So the industry puts its faith in other, more expensive procedures to measure its success. The end product of its researches is a statistic called a rating—a number which purports to tell what portion of America, down to a tenth of one per cent, watched a particular program.

"Television," says Don Coyle, the American Broadcasting Company's youthful vice president in charge of research, "is the most researched medium of all time. Most of our work goes into finding out how many people watched a show. If we can't deliver eyes and ears to an advertiser, we can't sell."

Coyle spends about \$250,000 a year, mostly to get a count of eyes and ears. Each of the other two networks spends about the same. Sponsors and advertising agencies, too, are customers.

The mechanics of counting these eyes and ears are handled by independent firms that do an aggregate business of about \$5 million a year. It's a paltry sum, not much more than Americans spend on live earthworms for fishing bait. But in 1957, advertisers spent exactly four hundred times that amount—\$2 billion—to buy shows on television and radio. And the \$5 million tail clearly wagged the \$2 billion dog. More than any other single consideration, ratings kept programs on the air or knocked them off.

The upshot is that "what most people want is what all people get." This neat summation was coined by Representative Emanuel Celler of New York, in a scolding delivered . . . [in 1957] to the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. Mr. Celler disapproves of ratings. He called them "the soulless evaluation of the artistry of a human performance." The soulless villains, in his view, are the quartet of leading rating services, "the four horsemen of the coaxials."

When one of the four horsemen, Dr. Sydney Roslow, proprietor of The Pulse, Incorporated, read Celler's speech, he

protested: "I'm evaluating the artistry of a human performance? All I do is add up a column of figures and sell the answer."

It was an uncomfortable time to be running a rating service. The heat was on. The New York *World Telegram & Sun* had just "exposed" these small companies in a series titled "Murder by Decimal Point." *Time* magazine had quoted Ed Sullivan about the fateful phone call he makes the morning after every show:

"I tell you I die a thousand deaths in that thirty seconds between saying hello and hearing my rating. . . . Your rating is the only expression of your work." Stars, disemployed by low ratings, were sounding off everywhere—even on TV.

All of them complained that a kind of Gresham's Law had set into television: bad programs (i.e., those with high ratings) tend to drive the good ones off the air. Meanwhile, indignant patrons of the popular arts hooted that you can't tell what *all* the people want unless you ask *all* the people, "and nobody ever called me about a rating, nor anybody I know." A few dug out Goodman Ace's wisecrack:

"Polls are fascinating. They are read by everyone from the farmer in the field all the way up to Tom Dewey, President of the United States."

[In 1958] the "four horsemen of the coaxials" were hailed before a one-man Senate subcommittee, in the person of Senator Mike Monroney, to recite again how come they claim to know so much about public taste. A. C. Nielsen, owner of the biggest rating service, answered wearily that those who question how a sample of one thousand can describe the viewing pattern of more than 40 million families betray their ignorance of sampling techniques.

"We are amazed," Nielsen testified, "at the alacrity with which laymen, having no knowledge whatever of this highly technical subject, often presume to pass judgment on the quality and size of the samples used by experts who have devoted their lives to a study of the subject." . . .

*The Men Who Make the Numbers*

We must take at least a brief, perhaps oversimplified look at the "four horsemen of the coaxials" and each of their techniques.

*A. C. Nielsen Company.* This Chicago firm, with a long, prosperous background in researching the food and drug markets, runs the biggest and most expensive rating service. It takes on . . . all the 43 million television homes in America. To measure it, Nielsen tallies the viewing of a cross-section sample of about one thousand homes. In each of these homes, Nielsen wires an electronic gadget, called the Audimeter, to the TV and radio. The gadget records a minute-by-minute history on a roll of film of how the set is tuned (but not of who is watching it). Every two weeks, someone in the family extracts the film (and when he does so, two quarters drop out to pay for his trouble) and he mails it to Chicago. The compiled results are dispatched to subscribers about a month later. Nielsen claims in reliability what he might lack in speed.

"The chief use of Nielsen data," says a company official, pronouncing the name of his product like that of a gilt-edged bond, "is for long-range strategic planning."

*Trendex, Inc.* If "Nielsen" sounds like the name of a bond, "Trendex" is spoken with a crackle. It's the only service that can deliver, on special order, an overnight rating. (When A. C. Nielsen appeared on Ed Murrow's "Person to Person" . . . Trendex telegraphed its rating to Nielsen early the next morning.) Trendex . . . is limited to twenty major cities, chosen because all three networks have stations in them. Since these major cities have more programs, each network gets a smaller share of the audience. So a show's Trendex rating, compiled only where competition is full-force, is likely to run lower than its over-all national rating.

The Trendex approach to time depresses the figure even further. To compile a Trendex, researchers call up numbers in the phone book, completing about a thousand calls per half-hour

show. They ask how many men, women, and children are watching TV, what program is tuned in and who the sponsor is. Thus, while Nielsen's minute-by-minute Audimeter can calculate how many families watched *some portion* of a certain show, Trendex gets the number watching only at the moment the telephone rings.

A TV trade magazine, *Sponsor*, recently calculated that Nielsen ratings average 34 per cent higher than Trendexes, then posed the question: "Can you predict your Nielsen from your Trendex?" (Even though the article concluded that you can't, it intimated that "the game of Trendex-to-Nielsen-to-chance is being played every day of the week.") One reason you can't predict a slow Nielsen from a fast Trendex is that Nielsen mixes country folk and city slickers all into one statistic, while Trendex surveys only the cities. An urbane show like "Person to Person" may do well in a Trendex. But its Nielsen may sag after all the country dwellers are averaged in.

Trendex likes to avoid the word "rating." It calls its figure a "comparative report in program popularity," chiefly useful for gauging the strength of a show under the stress of competition. Because it's fast, a sponsor can estimate quickly whether his producer ought to be fired before he botches up next week's program.

*The Pulse, Inc.* Dr. Sydney Roslow, who owns Pulse, specializes in cultural reports on a city-by-city basis, polling 161 TV markets. His ratings are important to local stations, and to national advertisers worried about special local marketing problems. Pulse employs middle-aged women to ring doorbells, bearing a questionnaire. They ask the family to recall what programs it caught during the previous twenty-four hours. The interviewer helps her subject reconstruct the day's activities: "Were you home for dinner? What did you watch? . . . And then, I suppose, you did the dishes? What was the family watching while you did the dishes? . . . And then you sat down to rest? What did you see?" As each activity is recalled, the interviewer displays a schedule to aid the recall of programs. So the Pulse

rating will credit a program if someone watched a part of it, or if he thinks he did, or if he says he did because he wishes he had.

*American Research Bureau (ARB).* This firm selects a national sample of 2,200 homes. . . . Its main distinction is that its method enables ARB to identify which members of the family were watching, while Nielsen's Audimeter does not. Each home is equipped with a "diary." The family is asked to keep a running log of what it watched on TV, and which members did the watching. To answer criticism that the diary method is too "subjective" to be reliable, ARB says that it conducted an eight-city telephone survey to compare against its diary results, and that both surveys came out "virtually identical."

### *The Stories They Tell*

Once you understand how each service works, it's easy to see why they often produce disparate ratings for the same show. But even the professional researcher develops a twitch when he's called upon to explain a case like this: Nielsen's rating for Fireside Theater recently fell from 27.5 one month to 23.0 the next. During the same pair of months, Trendex reported a boost from 18.4 to 27.0.

Such a case corresponds, the researcher informs the sponsor with a thin smile, to breaking the bank at Monte Carlo. It's one of those rare and intriguing marvels of the laws of probability, a wrong rating.

When a rating service sets out to ask a thousand families what 41.2 million families are supposed to have watched, ninety-five times out of a hundred the rating should be within one rating point of being true. But in the remaining five cases, they're apt to run mildly berserk. That's a mathematical fact, worked out long ago by the astronomers and gamblers.

This is not the limit of accuracy. The margin for error can be cut in half by quadrupling the sample from one thousand

families to four thousand. Shaving the error less than half a rating point, however, multiplies the research cost by four times and is not worth the price.

But if the buyers of ratings want more accuracy without spending more money, why can't they get together on one, grand-scale, all-encompassing, single-universe rating system and be done with all the discrepancies?

First, the researcher prefers to rummage among four rating services and get answers to more questions. He can take this one for speed, that one for the most reliable sample, this one for socio-economic separations of homes, that one for learning which members of the family were watching, this one for urban viewers, that one for farm families, this one for a market-by-market report. He can even build one case for keeping a show and another case for dropping it, depending upon the sponsor's whim.

Besides, no two industry experts agree on what an ideal system would be. CBS President Frank Stanton says he would like a Nielsen rating with Trendex speed. ABC's Don Coyle says:

"In an ideal survey, there'd be a good national sampling, like Nielsen's, with a seeing-eye camera over the TV set to show us who was sitting there, which of them were actually looking, and which were just keeping the others company. Then we'd want all this information compiled the next morning, or, better still, instantaneously." Coyle lets this dream settle a moment, then he adds: "But we're getting as much of the ideal now as we'll pay for." . . .

### *Is Anybody Really Sold?*

Ratings measure the advertiser's success in capturing homes. Some even measure what kinds of homes. But they tell him less about which members of the family watched. Still less about how attentively they watched. Still less about whether they watched the commercials. For these finer details, the advertiser might be wiser to check the water pressure. But then, neither

the water pressure nor a rating tells him whether the commercial sold any merchandise. . . .

No medium costs as much as television. Therefore none produces such compulsion to round up a mass audience. In a mass magazine, an advertiser can buy a page for ten or fifteen thousand dollars. He can buy it once or twice or thirteen times, as he wishes. But in TV, a single half-hour show may cost a hundred thousand dollars. To get prime time, the sponsor might commit himself to thirty-nine or fifty-two weeks, \$4 or \$5 million a year.

At these prices, the sponsor, while he might stiffen at Representative Celler's tone, is inclined to endorse his words: "What most people want is what all people get."

Yet neither the advertiser nor the network vice president finds that a rating, even a high one, will relieve all his anxieties over the enormous stakes. For when the rating finally comes, nobody seems to know for sure what it means. But a cultural decision-maker has got to base his decisions on *something*—and there is no denying that when you don't know what a number means, a big number is more comforting than a small one. And anyhow, nobody—not even the Department of Water and Sewers—has devised a more enlightening measure of just what happened while the sponsor was blowing all that cash.

### TV'S TARNISHED IMAGE <sup>5</sup>

Never before had television's "image" (as Madison Avenue likes to put it) been so tarnished in the public mind. It was plain from the hearings on the quiz fixes that the scandal had not been isolated; both NBC and CBS, all quiz shows in general, and hundreds of individuals were deeply involved. A more disturbing note on U.S. morals, 1959: of 150 quiz witnesses who appeared before the New York County grand jury and swore before God (or on their affirmations) to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, no less than 100, said District

<sup>5</sup> From "Tarnished Image," cover story. *Time*. 74:72-4+. N. 16, '59. Courtesy *Time*, the Weekly News Magazine; copyright Time Inc. 1959.

Attorney Frank Hogan, had lied, or to put it in legal language, perjured themselves.

In these decadent circumstances, network brass pleaded that they had been as much duped as the viewing public, but it became fairly well evident that, if they did not know about the quizzes, it was because they had not wanted or had not tried to know. The whole affair, wrote the *New York Times*, focused attention

on a shocking state of rottenness within the radio-television world and on the "get-rich-quick" schemes through which so many people were corrupted and so many millions deceived. What has been revealed is deplorable in respect to the level of public morality both in the industry and in the individual. . . .

### *Clerics and Children*

[What had been revealed was that] entertainers, admen, producers—everyone played along.

"Most of us have a great deal of larceny in us," drawled the Reverend Charles ("Stony") Jackson of Tullahoma, Tennessee. "The fact that I am an ordained minister [Disciples of Christ] does not make me a saint." In 1957 Jackson wrote to "The \$64,000 Question," said he planned a book about quizzes (working title: *Hucksters and Suckers*), asked for help. The producers took the hint. Back came an invitation for Stony to audition as a contestant. The category chosen for the pastor: great love stories. After producers fed him the romantic answers in "screening" sessions, he rolled up \$20,000 on CBS's "\$64,000 Question" and "\$64,000 Challenge." What happened to the money? The minister spent some on himself, gave \$12,000 to a home for orphans. Said he: "I wanted to be a Protestant Father Flanagan."

Even children were taught to cheat. The probing congressmen [House Subcommittee on Legislative Oversight] summoned child actress Patty (*The Miracle Worker*) Duke, a "Challenge" champ. Her manager, John Ross, testified that answers were fed to her by associate producer Shirley Bernstein, 36, sister of conductor Leonard Bernstein. In the popular-music category, elfin

Patty tied with child actor Eddie (*The Music Man*) Hodges, 12, split \$64,000 with him. Manager Ross admitted that he gave \$1,000 of his share to the show's "People-Getter" Irving Harris, pocketed \$3,800 of Patty's prize himself as his manager's fee.

Aging stars played the same disreputable charade. Band-leader Xavier Cugat, 59, testified that he topped warbler Lillian Roth in a "Challenge" match on Tin Pan Alley only because producer Mert Koplin supplied the answers to him. "Cugie" won \$16,000—and slipped 10 per cent to his publicity man, who arranged his spot on the show for the press-agentry value of the thing. Cugie was no exception. On the "Question" and "Challenge" shows, 60 per cent to 70 per cent of the winners got help, testified producer Koplin, and so did practically every winner who scaled the \$32,000 plateau.

Many were the kinds of fixes, testified Koplin. Among them: the Area Fix, i.e., questions were pitched within the contestants' strong and specific areas of knowledge. (This was usually the case, declared Koplin, with "Challenge's" Teddy Nadler, who won \$252,000.) There was also the Playback (questions had been asked in pre-game tests) and the Emergency (questions and answers were given the contestants, usually just before the show). "Emergencies" produced some Keystone Cops fiascos; often the fixer had to spring down to the celebrated bank vault, where the questions were held, quickly slip in the rigged question before air time.

As a witness, producer Koplin went on to violate one of the cardinal rules of TV: he bit the hand that sponsored him. Really to blame for the "\$64,000" rigging, he said, was Revlon, Inc. and its hard-reigning bosses, the Revson brothers, who rank as Madison Avenue's most feared and jeered clients. At weekly meetings, sometimes attended by President Charles Revson, Executive Vice President Martin Revson made pointed suggestions as to which contestants were to rise or fall. Yet contestants were so unpredictable that about 20 per cent of them did not win or lose on schedule. After such snafus, Koplin was roasted by the sponsor "in the form of lectures, or just veiled looks." Worse,

the Revsons were constantly threatening to withdraw their sponsorship.

Angrily last week the terrible-tempered Revson brothers denied any complicity. But their testimony was sharply disputed by Revlon's former advertising chief, George Abrams, who also attended the weekly meetings. Abrams thought that the producers "were living between the mixed values of show business and advertising, and moral values were lost sight of." . . .

### *The Ultimate Responsibility*

"My name," began the husky-voiced witness, introducing himself like any quiz contestant, "is Robert E. Kintner. I am president of the National Broadcasting Company."

There should have been excitement in the words, for a network president is a man who has the power to bring to 130 million Americans the world's history as it happens, to teach them cooking or astrophysics, to expound the word of many religions, to give them Shakespeare, O'Neill and Wyatt Earp—and "Twenty-One." But as he faced the House subcommittee [on Legislative Oversight] the man who was personally responsible for bringing most of its quiz shows to NBC ("And I'm not ashamed of it") reflected little of television's potential magic. The same witness chair had been occupied for four days by a tawdry succession of fixers and *schlockmeisters*, corrupters and corrupted. Bob Kintner had gone to Washington with the difficult task of showing that (1) NBC had done everything that could be reasonably expected to prevent or detect fraud on the quiz shows, and (2) the quiz scandals did not reflect a sickness in other areas of television. In three and a half hours of testimony, Kintner notably failed to prove either point. . . .

More significant even than the question of the networks' culpability or negligence about the quiz shows was the question of what the whole affair suggests about the TV industry in general. "It could happen to anyone," says NBC Board Chairman Robert Sarnoff. But it seems plain that the special TV environment, with its relentless pressure for higher ratings and

higher profits, was at least in part to blame. Newly aroused by the Washington hearings, critics of television began looking for other kinds of coaxial fraud.

They did not have far to search, for television is shot through with major and minor forms of corruption. There are the phony commercials: the foam in the beer glass, which is often really soap suds; the home permanent on the pretty model, often the result of a two-hour session with a hairdresser. . . . There is the blatant, organized sale of plugs, i.e., set under-the-counter fees for mentioning firms or products on the air (the field in which the devious *schlockmeister* works). There is TV's own form of "payola," which means that relatively few songs are played on the air unless the song publisher is willing to share performance fees with a production official. Not all these practices are confined to TV. But nowhere else have glossy Madison Avenue hucksterism and clamorous carnival showmanship combined with such crass results.

Yet the trouble lies even deeper than that. The quiz hearings served to focus a general discontent with TV, a widespread feeling that its masters do not allow the medium to live up to its great promise. In defense, TV's top men could and did say that they have enormous problems, chief among them the vast and amorphous audience. Where a newspaper or magazine can address itself to one kind of audience, television must play to all. Nevertheless, TV could not escape the charges of mediocre imagination, too much shoddy programing, too much imitation of established formulas. . . .

### *Programs and Telephone Wire*

Who is to blame? In trying to answer that question, critics are baffled by the fact that television is a shapeless giant that often seems to be functioning without a head. Viewers who hear the familiar NBC chimes and see the familiar linked initials are apt to think of "the network" as a solid entity. But few know what a network really is. Strictly speaking, as Bob Kintner puts it, it is "programs and a lot of telephone wire." The wire

(44,000 miles, rented from AT&T at \$17.4 million a year) loosely holds together NBC's five wholly owned stations (by FCC ruling, no individual or corporation may own more than seven radio or TV outlets), plus 207 independently owned affiliates with which NBC has contracts to furnish a certain number of programs. The network's 165 cameras in 31 Manhattan and Hollywood studios, its 6,500 employees, its fluctuating horde of performers, directors and writers provide NBC's share of the U.S. televising audience with up to 140 hours of programing weekly. Theoretically, all this goes on in the "public interest, convenience or necessity" under three-year FCC licenses (granted to individual stations, not to the network as a whole).

But the tables of organization do not show, the rented cable cannot encompass, the reality of television, which is an ever-fluctuating relationship between three powers: network officialdom, sponsors and their advertising agencies, and the program packagers.

### *The Package Business*

During the early 1950's, NBC produced 90 per cent of its own shows. But as broadcasting hours stretched out from pre-dawn to long past midnight, the networks gradually turned to outside packagers to fill up the schedule. Partly this was due to pressure from the Justice Department, which in 1956 threatened antitrust action unless the networks gave independent producers a better share of good TV time. More significantly, in cutting back network-originated production 20 per cent between 1956 and 1959, NBC was able to slice its "creative" payroll, slash overhead.

Now [1959] the network produces 40 per cent of the shows that light up its channels, compared to 30 per cent for CBS, 5 per cent for ABC. . . . Madison Avenue's top-drawer advertising agencies have followed the trend; five years ago, agencies spawned 10 per cent of all network shows, now also save on overhead by shopping for their clients among the packagers. The

ubiquitous package firms range in size from giants, e.g., Revue Productions Inc., dog-wagging tail of the Music Corporation of America [see "Package Store—MCA," in this section, below] which grossed \$38 million on its filmed series ("M Squad," "Wagon Train") last year, down to one-shot independents. The range in programs is qualitative as well: independent Robert Saudek has won Emmys and Peabody Awards for "Omnibus," while Warner Brothers ground out ephemeral, low-budget shoot-'em-ups.

Highbrow or low slung, virtually all packagers operate with small flexible staffs, hire equipment and actors only as needed, produce completed films or live shows to order. This year [1959] some 300 packagers are providing 70 per cent of the regularly scheduled network shows, a fact that to some critics explains many of TV's ills. With so much programing in the hands of outsiders, networks have little control; every rigged quiz started out as a packaged product. Some cozy alliances have been formed between the nets and packagers: NBC has traditionally catered to MCA products, ABC to Warner's imitative Westerns.

The situation has given rise to a dangerous new breed of editorial irresponsibility: the purchase of shows sight unseen. . . . [When] packager Don Sharpe sold "Mr. Lucky" to CBS, . . . he had neither cast nor pilot—only a script that was later discarded. Independents can sucker networks into financing even the shabbiest of productions. NBC spent \$1.3 million to bank-roll twenty-six episodes of a dreary filmed comedy called "Love and Marriage," managed to get some of its money back only by plopping the show into a favorable time (Monday, 8-8:30 P.M. Eastern Standard Time), and selling it to an advertiser (Noxzema) that had long been panting in the wings for such a time spot. Says onetime (1953-55) NBC President Sylvester L. ("Pat") Weaver . . . : "The networks today have abdicated to the Hollywood studios and to MCA." . . .

But should the packagers be sent packing? Few think so. Tax-haunted Hollywood talents savor the capital-gains advan-

tages of independent production. Adds NBC's Kintner: "We simply haven't enough creative brains and personnel to supply all the programs." Undoubtedly, there should be far more network-produced shows, but the real trouble is not that the networks buy from packagers, but that they do not exercise enough care in what they buy. Example: ABC bought the disastrous "Adventures in Paradise" from 20th Century-Fox, "Alaskans," "Bourbon Street Beat" and "Hawaiian Eye" from Warner's—all without even seeing a pilot film.

### *The ABC's of Broadcasting*

The packagers could never have risen to their present power were it not for the fact that, as packager (Screen Gems) Harry Ackerman puts it, "the networks are run by businessmen, not showmen." Robert Edmonds Kintner, 50, has no quarrel with that situation. A Swarthmore graduate, he started out as a New York *Herald Tribune* Wall Street reporter in 1933. Son of a Stroudsburg (Pennsylvania) schoolteacher, cub Kintner, a lean, spectacled Hall-of-Ivy type at the time, at first "didn't even know where Wall Street was." But he learned quickly. Though an ardent New Dealer and F.D.R. favorite, able newsman Kintner developed and retained a high regard for big business. For five years in Washington, he wrote a column, "The Capital Parade," in partnership with doom-crying columnist Joseph Alsop ("Joe tended to destroy the world every time I was out of town"). After a wartime career in Army intelligence and public relations, Bob Kintner became an assistant to Edward J. Noble, who had bought up RCA's second-string Blue Network in 1943, turned it into ABC. By 1949 brusque, hard-driving Bob Kintner had risen to president.

At ABC, Kintner established his reputation as a skillful and relentless peddler of air wares. He set up the kind of crassly commercial operation so successfully carried on by his successor, Oliver Treyz, after Kintner left in a quarrel with ABC board chairman Leonard Goldenson in 1956. Says Kintner now: "If I were still at ABC, I wouldn't have carried the pattern that far."

But while he was there, the pattern was clear: crowd-pleasing filmed series, Westerns, cops, crime. Kintner feels that he had no alternative if he wanted to save ABC from being crushed by its two bigger competitors. During Kintner's presidency, ABC added sixty stations, boosted ratings. Kintner signed up "Disneyland" (for \$2 million), built a good newscasting staff, including John Daly. He also turned down a chance to sign up "The \$64,000 Question": "It didn't seem to make sense—not, I hasten to add, because of moral grounds."

Within forty-eight hours after he quit ABC, Kintner had an offer to join NBC as executive vice president in charge of color coordination ("I didn't know a damn thing about color"), took charge of TV operations in February 1958. That July he was named president, with a ten-year sliding-scale contract that pays him upwards of \$150,000 yearly. Kintner frankly admits that he applied his ABC formula: canned series, Westerns, private eyes—plus quizzes. He knifed "Wide Wide World," "Omnibus," live dramatic shows (including "Kraft Theater"). Says he: "I had to catch up with front-running CBS." . . .

Throughout the quiz crisis, husky Bob Kintner (5 feet 10½ inches, 178 pounds) has maintained, at least outwardly, a massive calm and his usual appearance of a battered but unbowed Buddha. From his apartment on Manhattan's fashionable Sutton Place (nine rooms, five TV sets), Kintner Cadillacs to work in the RCA Building by 8:10 each morning, spends at least half of his twelve-hour day group-thinking with the network committees populated by his thirty-nine vice presidents. Few below NBC's top level know Kintner; unlike his chic, gregarious wife Jean, 42, he is not fascinated by his on-camera employees, rarely attends company parties for talent. He keeps a neat, boomerang-shaped desk in an office adorned by a mottled abstract, a wifely gift that he describes as "either an oil geyser or a quiz show going up in smoke." At night Kintner disposes of dinner with a sandwich and watches TV; he tries to catch every NBC show at least once a year.

On the whole, Kintner likes what he sees, has little patience with the various prescriptions that are being suggested to cure

TV's ills. One proposal that Kintner & Co. disposed of convincingly is an industry-appointed TV "czar" with power to enforce balanced programing. "The concept," said Kintner, "is not workable for [television] any more than [for] the newspaper industry or the magazine industry." Kintner did not add the most plausible argument against the idea: the hard-lobbying broadcasters might hamstring a TV commissioner as easily as they have the FCC.

Kintner and all other top TV men are equally opposed to the far more serious proposals from pundit [Walter] Lippmann for an independent TV network, devoted to "civilized entertainment," and the *Christian Science Monitor's* plea for a network modeled roughly on the British Broadcasting Corporation . . . Kintner, staunch defender of television's status quo (and of Madison Avenue's creative contributions), asserts that the U.S. networks themselves can take care of whatever is wrong. But his view of network responsibility is qualified. Says he: "The ultimate responsibility is ours, but the ultimate power has to be the sponsor's, because without him you couldn't afford to run a network."

#### PACKAGE STORE—MCA <sup>6</sup>

In a trade that is known for its colorful phraseology, MCA [the Music Corporation of America] is called The Octopus. Its importance is in its ubiquity. MCA has more big-name clients than any other talent agency. Its list includes such stars as Gregory Peck, Kirk Douglas, Jimmy Stewart, Tony Curtis, Marilyn Monroe, and Shirley MacLaine; such personalities as Jack Benny, Ralph Edwards, and Ed Sullivan; producers and directors of the caliber of Alfred Hitchcock, John Ford, Leland Hayward, and Mervyn LeRoy; and such writers as Tennessee Williams and William Inge. MCA represents probably 60 per cent of the motion-picture industry's "bankable" talent—i.e., those whose names alone are adequate security for a bank loan to make a

<sup>6</sup> From "There's No Show Business Like MCA's Business," article by Edward T. Thompson, formerly associate editor of *Fortune*, now a member of the editorial staff of *Reader's Digest*. *Fortune*. 62:114-19+. Reprinted from the July 1960 issue of *Fortune* magazine by special permission; © 1960 Time Inc.

picture. If a studio can't get talent of this caliber, it just doesn't make big pictures. And the situation is not very different in the theatre or in nightclubs: here too, big productions require big names, and MCA is where the buyer most often has to go to get them.

MCA does not often throw its weight around. "You expect outrages," says Hollywood producer George Stevens, "but the outrages are rare. They are very adept with the velvet-glove technique." Obviously, the velvet-glove technique is enough when you represent so much of the cream of show-business talent that everybody in the industry fears your slightest frown of displeasure.

MCA's position as a talent agent is the key to its power. But this side of MCA is now dwarfed by its production and sales of television film series. MCA gets some sort of cut from no less than 45 per cent of all TV network evening shows. In the 1959-60 season, MCA produced or co-produced more film series than any other company—a total of sixteen . . . [and] was the selling agent for at least a dozen other series made by independent producers. . . . In short, MCA is the leading employer of show-business talent, as well as the leading agent for such talent. In this dual role it often hires its own clients, a practice that is considered unethical by practically everyone else in the entertainment industry and that has provoked some interest at the Department of Justice.

MCA's power is not matched by its size. It has assets of only \$71 million, compared, for example, to CBS's \$248 million. MCA employs some 3,000 people, and its 1959 gross income was \$58 million. Of this, \$9 million was in commissions paid to it as a talent agent; an estimated \$39 million came from rental of television film series; \$6 million or so was realized from rental to TV stations of some ancient (pre-1948) Paramount feature films, which MCA now owns; and the company probably took in an additional \$3 million from rental of studio facilities at the former Universal-International lot, which it bought [in 1959]. . . .

Until . . . [1959] MCA (founded as Music Corporation of America) comprised five separate companies, all commonly owned and managed. Then it was reorganized. . . . A new parent company was organized as MCA Inc., with Revue Productions set up as a division to make TV film series. Under the parent are some twenty subsidiaries, the most important being these three: MCA Artists, which handles its stable of theatrical talent and has on its staff about fifty agents, each of whom "sells" the whole list but has a special responsibility for a group of clients; Music Corporation of America, which represents talent in the variety and nightclub fields; and MCA TV, the sales agent for TV films. . . .

### *Filling in the Holes*

A Hollywood saying has it that "if MCA isn't God, nobody in the company knows it." It would be hard to blame MCA executives for playing God occasionally, for that's how many important entertainment-industry executives treat them. Consider President Robert Kintner of NBC. One spring night in 1957, Kintner and Chairman Robert Sarnoff called a meeting of the network's programing executives. After they had assembled, the door opened and in walked MCA Vice President David A. (Sonny) Werblin. Without any preliminaries, Kintner said to him, "Sonny, look at the schedule for next season; here are the empty spots, you fill them." The rest of the evening the NBC executives meekly watched Werblin rearrange their schedule and insert new shows. When finished, the schedule showed fourteen series (eight and a half hours a week) in prime time that MCA either had produced or sold. And that was the way it remained. Last season MCA's share of NBC's weekly prime-time programing was still at eight and a half of the total twenty-four and a half hours. MCA sold two of its new 1959-60 shows—"Riverboat" and "Laramie"—to NBC without making a pilot (a film made to show prospective customers what the series would be like).

Kintner has stated publicly that he deals so much with MCA because he thinks MCA produces the best shows. A lot of people in and out of the industry, and not only television critics, would demur, although, as film series go, the ones that come from MCA are probably no more mediocre than any other company's.

For all its power, few people outside the entertainment industry have ever heard of MCA, and few insiders really comprehend its position. The company is a shrinking violet by long-established policy, and both Lew Wasserman {president} and Jules Stein {board chairman} work hard at implementing that policy. . . . MCA's full client list has never been seen by more than a few top MCA executives. The company will not say for publication which television film series it represents as sales agent, despite the fact that a sign proclaiming "MCA TV, Exclusive Distributor" is prominently displayed on the screen when many of these series are broadcast. It will not even say how many series it handles.

Wasserman has his reasons for this secretiveness. For one thing, he says, MCA has a fiduciary relationship with its clients, and therefore cannot discuss clients' affairs—or even reveal their names. This is a valid argument so far as it concerns individuals, but Wasserman extends this "fiduciary relationship" to cover television sales activities too. Second, and perhaps more to the point, he says that he sees no good reason to disclose his methods to his competitors.

No MCA "fiduciary relationship" is better hidden than the economies of its TV activities. MCA frequently sets up its own clients—mostly actors—in the TV film business, sometimes as fifty-fifty partners. Rules of various artists' guilds prevent the company from taking the normal 10 per cent agent's commission from its clients when it has a financial interest in the production that employs them, or when it is the selling agent of the production. Nevertheless, MCA usually manages to get a very sizable share of any show's income.

To see just how MCA works, let us break down the figures for a hypothetical but typical half-hour Western series, which we'll call "Water Pistol." First-run rights to the show are sold in advance to a network for a fee of \$40,000 a week, which will be pretty close to the show's average weekly production costs. The show will be produced at MCA's Revue Studios. The star, an MCA client, gets a salary of \$3,000 a week, and owns half of the show—i.e., half of the profits.

Out of the \$40,000, MCA TV gets 10 per cent (\$4,000) as "sales commission" for, as one star puts it, "putting the film in a can and shipping it to New York." Next, Revue takes 20 per cent of the remaining \$36,000, i.e., \$7,200, as "overhead" and about \$20,000 for studio rental, camera crew, film, etc., etc. The rest—\$9,000—is paid out in artists' salaries.

Thus, out of the original \$40,000, MCA has kept \$31,000. In a thirty-nine-week season this totals approximately \$1.2 million. Assuming that MCA earns before taxes as big a percentage on this show as it does on its over-all operations (18 per cent in 1959), "Water Pistol" earns the company some \$220,000 the first year, even though the series itself has merely made back its production costs. The co-owner (the star) has got nothing out of his 50 per cent interest, although he has, to be sure, received \$117,000 in salary.

Suppose "Water Pistol" is successful and runs three years—what then? In the second and third years MCA would gross \$2.4 million more. But after that, the series is likely to gross as much in reruns as it did in initial showings, i.e., another \$40,000 per weekly episode, and at practically no additional cost to the producers. Now the show is making a profit, and the star will begin to cash in. But profits are determined only after MCA takes varying slices off the top. As sales agent, it gets 40 per cent off the top of any income from network reruns, 30 to 50 per cent from other earnings in domestic syndication (non-network showings), and 50 per cent of any money from overseas showings. (MCA also get half of any income from

tie-in merchandising: "Water Pistol" water pistols, raincoats, galoshes, and the like.) Thus MCA would slice off something in the neighborhood of 40 per cent of the \$40,000 per episode on reruns, leaving \$24,000 per episode to be split equally with the star.

In all, MCA has grossed about \$7 million (on \$3 million of which it earns considerably more than its usual 18 per cent), compared to its partner's pretax earnings of \$1.8 million. Had the star produced his own show, his take would of course have been much higher. But few actors have the acumen or the courage or the capital to do this.

For a successful hour-long show, the figures would be far higher. The first three years of "Wagon Train," . . . which is budgeted at about \$100,000 a week, may well bring MCA \$17 million. Earnings of this magnitude explain why production is so important to MCA. For the company to gross \$17 million in agency commissions it would have to get 10 per cent of \$170 million of client salaries. MCA clients Marlon Brando, Gregory Peck [and] Jimmy Stewart . . . combined will probably not earn that much in commissionable income in their entire lifetimes.

#### *For Kindergartners Only*

MCA is the only company that is a talent agency, a producer, and a selling agent, and leases out production facilities to boot. This does give it an advantage. It attracts new clients among actors who figure that if they use MCA as their agent they stand a better than even chance of getting parts in MCA's Revue series. At the same time, or so competitors complain, Revue has first crack at the MCA list of top clients. Wasserman disavows any connection between MCA Inc. division Revue Productions and MCA Inc. subsidiary MCA Artists. He points out that some Revue series haven't a single MCA star and that some MCA stars appear in some series that MCA TV does not sell. Virtually nobody outside of MCA is impressed by these protests. "I'd have to be a kindergartner not to know that

MCA offers everything to Revue first," says one Hollywood executive. "And when MCA offers me a show, I just know that Revue has turned it down." TV film producers and packagers say there are only two ways they can get top stars from MCA: by letting MCA TV "sell" the show for 10 per cent of the gross, or by somehow sewing up the star before MCA gets wind of the deal—but even this dodge doesn't always work.

For example, last winter Joseph Shaftel, a producer, found a story called "Dr. Kate," which he thought would make a good film series. His agent, William Shiffrin, suggested Jane Wyman, an MCA client, for the starring role. According to Shiffrin, an ABC sales subsidiary tentatively agreed to pay for a pilot film; if it were sold, this subsidiary was to get the sales commission. Shiffrin took the script to Miss Wyman, who was enthusiastic about it. But so was MCA. The upshot was that MCA TV emerged as the sales agent. Says Shiffrin: "MCA stands to get richer because they have used their fiduciary relationship with Jane in a very weird way."

Many people in Hollywood feel that MCA's dual role works to the disadvantage of some of its clients. An agent's chief responsibility, after all, is to do what is best for his client. But is it possible for an MCA agent to drive as hard a bargain for his client at Revue as it would be, say, at Screen Gems or Desilu? So far as salaries are concerned, the MCA client probably does better at Revue; his price is pretty well established anyway, and he doesn't have to pay any commission to MCA. But suppose an MCA actor has been offered two series, one at Revue and one elsewhere. He turns to his agent at MCA for advice. The MCA man might feel that the non-Revue show would be better for the client's career, but he knows that MCA stands to make a lot more money from the actor if he goes to Revue than if he goes elsewhere, and he knows that his own annual bonus is based, in part, on over-all company profits. The kind of scrupulous, self-abnegating integrity that would force the agent to recommend the non-Revue show under these circumstances is thought to be very scarce in show business.

*He Tells You How to Make It Pay*

MCA is the production of two men: Jules Stein, who built it from an insignificant booker of bands into the world's strongest talent agency; and Lew Wasserman, who, in 1946, at the age of thirty-three, succeeded Stein as president. Stein still influences policy, but Wasserman runs the show. . . .

Both Stein and Wasserman like to say that MCA's biggest asset is its "manpower," a word to which Wasserman is greatly addicted. Accordingly, MCA men are handsomely paid.

For years MCA executives received a salary of \$100 a week; their real pay came in one lump sum at the end of the year in the form of splendid bonuses based on personal performance and the company's over-all profits. Recently there has been less emphasis on the bonus, but it still often equals salary, which now more closely conforms to normal corporate patterns. A typical senior agent (of which there are perhaps thirty) earns \$40,000 a year in salary and bonus. Since 1945 the company has had a pension trust to which it contributes 15 per cent annually of the salaries of all officers and all employees of the three major subsidiaries. The fund is now worth over \$18 million. In addition, the company often takes care of unusual medical bills and keeps ailing executives on the payroll for years. Until last year it also loaned money to executives for practically any purpose. None of this policy is humanitarian by design: Stein simply believes that the fewer worries a man has about money the more productive he is.

To keep its men productive, MCA relies on a system of internal competition and pressures that is apparently tough to live with. Most of the top men at MCA look fifteen years older than they are, and a number of outstanding executives have slammed the door of MCA behind them because they were . . . tired of (1) working seven days a week; and (2) worrying more about what the man in the next office was doing than their outside competitors. Every MCA executive's work is subjected to intense scrutiny and continual criticism. Second-guessing is the rule, and no reasons for failure are ever accepted.

One former executive remembers vividly a meeting at which he reported that a certain agency was ready to buy a program but there was no network time available. "No time available!" his boss yelled. "You jerk! All you have to do is move Jack Benny to Thursday, and then you'll have time available." Moving Benny's time slot, of course, would have been as easy as budgeting Gibraltar with a crowbar.

For the most part, MCA's executives are MCA trained. The company prefers to recruit only for the bottom rung. Typically, a bright youngster, fresh out of Harvard, Yale, Princeton, or the University of California, is hired as a mail clerk at about \$50 a week. For perhaps six months or a year he distributes mail, runs errands, delivers scripts and contracts around Hollywood or New York. Through this period he is expected to pick up as much knowledge of the industry as he can; nobody objects if he reads scripts and contracts on the way to deliver them. Those who are thought to show promise—seldom more than one out of ten—are promoted to assistant agent; and the rest are fired.

An assistant agent is still largely an errand boy, but one with more opportunity to learn the business at first hand. From this point on, a man can progress rapidly. A couple of clever suggestions might be enough to warrant his becoming a full-fledged agent in, say, three years (at perhaps \$8,000 to start). If he doesn't make the grade soon, he probably won't make it at all. According to many ex-MCA employees, the period of grace is five years at most. . . .

The mere fact that MCA is the biggest agency in the field lures clients. And being the biggest, MCA knows more about what's going on in the industry than any other agency. It has a resident agent at every major studio, who sees that MCA clients working there are kept happy. The resident agents stay in close touch with every producer and casting director on the lot to find out what pictures are coming up and what talent will be needed. MCA also has the knack of laying hands on scripts well before casting begins (a number of people suspect

that MCA has a spy in every typing pool in town). All casting information is correlated every morning at a meeting of MCA studio representatives and other important agents—"Fagin meetings," one amused producer calls these get-togethers.

Smaller agents complain that they take new and untried talent, develop it, and then, just when the artist is about to get into the big money, he goes over to MCA. MCA certainly does what it can to entice promising clients. Occasionally it will perpetrate an out-and-out raid: Rock Hudson told a friend recently that MCA had offered to build him a house if he would switch. He didn't. More frequently it employs the obvious technique of making friends with the quarry, pointing out, in horrifying detail, how his present agent is bungling his affairs, then showing him what MCA can do. What MCA agents often say they can do, although Wasserman denies it, is sign the artist into movies with other big MCA names, or into TV shows. This last is very appealing, even to stars who have no desire to do a series: guest spots on regular shows often bring \$15,000.

Perhaps the most serious charge against MCA is that it uses its top stars to pressure motion-picture studios into taking other, less wanted MCA clients. . . . Like any other agent, MCA tries to cast as many pictures with as many MCA artists as possible. Many motion pictures, Broadway plays, and TV shows that star an MCA client also have other MCA talent in them. But considering the number of MCA clients, this is not surprising. . . .

#### *The Man Who Was Nuts*

MCA has had a history of taking gambles that competitors would not take—and profiting immensely by its daring. The best case in point is its decision, in 1949, to become a producer of television shows. At the time, TV was just beginning to hurt the motion-picture industry. The financial outlook for movie talent, and consequently for talent agencies, was far from heartening. Karl Kramer, an MCA vice president, suggested that the company form a subsidiary to film a TV show called "Stars over Hollywood," which would give jobs to a lot of actors, in-

cluding, of course, many of MCA's clients. "We all thought he was nuts," recalls a former MCA agent, but Wasserman told Kramer to see what he could do. What Kramer did was to sell Armour, the meat packer, on the idea, and Revue Productions was in business.

It soon became apparent to MCA that filmed shows, particularly series, were bound to become a TV mainstay. And since the major motion-picture studios were refusing to make films for TV, a vacuum was building up, one that a company with courage could find very profitable. At first MCA confined its sales efforts to the major networks, but in 1952 it began to sell reruns of "Stars over Hollywood" directly to local stations and advertisers, and soon after produced its first syndicated show, an anthology called "Chevron Theatre." In 1953 an MCA subsidiary paid \$5 million for the once used negatives of "Dragnet," and the following year the company bought United Television Programs, a syndicator with about sixteen properties, mostly reruns. By 1954, MCA's income from television film rental exceeded its agency commissions.

In February 1958 MCA bought the Paramount backlog of pre-1948 features and a year later it bought the Universal lot. MCA paid \$10 million cash for the Paramount backlog, and gave a note for \$25 million more to be paid in annual installments of about \$2 million over twelve years. In addition, the company agreed to pay up to another \$15 million if proceeds from rental agreements made prior to 1974 exceeded \$51,250,000. MCA has already sold some or all of the films in at least eighty of the hundred major U.S. TV markets for a total of about \$60 million, the money to be paid as the films are actually shown. By the time the company gets to the remaining domestic markets and the untapped foreign markets, its contracts seem sure to top \$100 million.

The Universal deal may be even more valuable in the long run. MCA paid Universal \$11,250,000 in cash for its 367-acre lot, the largest in the United States, and all its facilities and equipment. In turn, Universal agreed to rent back a portion of

the lot for ten years for a minimum of \$1 million a year. MCA is now spending \$5 million on additional sound stages and equipment. The lot is a gold mine for MCA. For one thing, its terrain is ideally suited for the type of Western and adventure series that Revue normally grinds out (it has at least six complete Western streets). Second, Revue no longer has to depend on rented space; MCA is now a landlord and can channel into its corporate pocket a greater amount of the income from TV shows than ever before. Finally, before very long, the land is almost certain to be worth more than the purchase price simply as real estate.

Some knowledgeable Hollywood executives believe that MCA may next try its hand at producing and distributing feature-length motion pictures. It is fully equipped to do so, but the odds are slim that the company will make the move, at least very soon. For one thing, the capital requirements would be enormous, and MCA has its available capital pretty well tied up for the present. And practically speaking, MCA represents so many independent motion-picture producers, from whom it gets a 10 per cent commission, that it would be pointless to risk its own capital.

### THE SCANDAL IN TV LICENSING <sup>7</sup>

The trouble with the Federal Communications Commission begins with the statute under which it operates. Originally it was passed to take care of a crisis: the courts had decided that the Secretary of Commerce was without authority to limit the number of broadcasters. As a result many programs could be broadcast at the same time on the same wave length, and their chaotic interference with each other threatened to destroy the usefulness of radio. Consequently, in 1927 power was conferred on the Radio Commission (later the FCC) to limit the number of broadcasters. But Congress gave the Commission no

<sup>7</sup> From article by Louis L. Jaffe, Byrne Professor of Administrative Law at the Harvard Law School. *Harper's Magazine*. 215:77-84. S. '57. Reprinted by permission.

guides whatever to enable it to choose among rival applicants, or to regulate the performance of those who were licensed. The statute simply provided that a license should be granted to an applicant if "public convenience, interest, or necessity will be served thereby," and, very generally, that the Commission should "study new uses for radio, provide for experimental uses of frequencies, and generally encourage the larger and more effective use of radio in the public interests."

Perhaps Congress failed to see the difficult problems that were to arise in licensing and regulating broadcasting—a not unlikely assumption since the legislation was first adopted in 1927 and re-enacted in 1934. But the problems have since become glaringly acute, and though Congress has unceasingly criticized and investigated the Commission, it has not in all these years made a single contribution to policy, except through threats of committees and pressure exerted over the telephone.

When faced with two applicants for the same broadcasting facility, therefore, the Commission had to devise some technique for determining which one should get the license. . . . The Commission decided that the choice should be made on grounds which were relevant to the effective use of the broadcast medium. Gradually it developed criteria which purported to enable it to choose, in the first instance, from among two or more applicants, and then to decide, at the end of three years, whether the licensee was entitled to a renewal.

In devising these criteria it was treading on treacherous ground. What, indeed, are good radio and good TV? If the people want cakes and ale, does it lie in the mouth of a public authority to state that they shall have only so much cakes and ale and the rest physic? And if good radio can be defined, what kind of organizations and persons are best fitted to provide it? It takes little imagination to sympathize with the predicament of an agency which is called upon to answer such touchy and unprecedented questions without any guidance whatever from Congress, the authorized voice of the people.

Yet, up to a point, the Commission did not hesitate to grasp this thorny nettle. It started with the large concept that radio has public functions—of both entertaining and educating the citizenry; of providing a platform for the dissemination of the arts, the discussion of public questions, the propagation of news, and—somewhat more delicate—for religious observation and worship. . . .

### *Who Gets the Plums?*

A more controversial and difficult task was the formulation of criteria for choosing among applicants. It is elementary and basic that the applicant must be decent and law-abiding, with sufficient intelligence and integrity to fulfill the public responsibility placed upon the broadcaster. He must also be required to make a tolerably concrete demonstration that his proposed program will have the necessary variety and interest, and that he has the means for delivering what he promises. The Commission has further indicated that an applicant whose management and proposed personnel are intimately connected with the community and prepared to devote most of their time to a study of the community's needs will be preferred to an absentee owner.

Most controversial of all the Commission's criteria—and the one in which it is today foundering most dangerously—is the so-called diversification policy. It is a commonplace that the current trend is toward fewer and fewer newspapers and other outlets of communication. Many American cities are already one-newspaper towns. Newspapers were quite understandably interested in radio in its earliest beginnings, and have been successful in securing an important number of the most valuable AM and TV licenses. Furthermore, a newspaper licensee may own a number of newspapers, sometimes within a well-defined region, as well as a number of AM and TV stations—since the rules of the Commission which prohibit the ownership of more than seven AM and TV stations say nothing about other media.

The dangers of this concentration of communication facilities are obvious. A monopoly of channels of communication is a monopoly of the approaches to the mind of the citizenry. The lack of competition may produce a deterioration in the tone and extent of the service provided, and so ultimately of the cultural level of the community. And in those communities in which there are still two or more newspapers, a grant of a TV license to one may spell the doom of the other. Because a TV license is by its nature a monopoly, the profit is out of all proportion to the investment. The favored newspaper may offer special advantages to advertisers and readers below cost, and retrench its losses from its TV earnings. Ultimately its rival will be compelled to withdraw.

Because of these various considerations the Communications Commission has formulated a so-called policy of diversification. Thus, if two applicants are equal in other respects, the applicant who is not affiliated with other newspaper or communications media will be preferred. . . .

These, then, are the purported criteria for making choices among competing applicants. They are, in my opinion, relevant criteria. They further important social and economic interests. They have secured the approval of the courts.

But they are unfortunately extremely imprecise, and they are capable of infinite manipulation. They can become—and, in my opinion, the record shows that they have become—spurious criteria, used to justify results otherwise arrived at.

It is, of course, obvious that a charge of this sort cannot be demonstrated with the kind of certainty that would be necessary to hang a man. But two cases decided by the Court of Appeals of the District of Columbia . . . must cause any thinking man, any man who looks hopefully to government, acute discomfort.

#### *The Clarksburg and McClatchy Cases*

The first is *Clarksburg Publishing Company v. Federal Communications Commission*. In this case, the Clarksburg Publishing Company, a publisher of a newspaper in Clarksburg, West

Virginia, protested the grant of a TV license to the Ohio Valley Broadcasting Corporation. If Ohio Valley's application were granted it would have direct or indirect ownership interests in two television stations serving Clarksburg. It already had similar interests in nearby radio stations. News Publishing Company, an affiliate, published morning, evening, and Sunday newspapers in Wheeling, fifty-eight miles away, and papers in eight other cities in West Virginia. Nine communities in West Virginia, including Wheeling, Parkersburg, and Fairmont—the third, fifth, and sixth largest cities, respectively—were completely dependent on Ohio Valley for their local daily newspapers. . . .

Originally there had been a rival applicant for the TV license, and the two applications had been set down for a comparative hearing. Then the rival withdrew, after being paid \$14,390 by Ohio—purportedly its out-of-pocket expenses in pressing the application. The next day an award was made to Ohio, without reference to the Commission's policy of diversification and without investigation of whether or not the payment to the rival applicant covered merely bona fide expense.

Clarksburg Publishing Company protested the grant of a TV license to so formidable a rival in the communications field, and asked for a hearing. This request was denied by the Commission. The Court, reversing the action of the Commission, found nothing in the record to justify the Commission's disregard of its own announced policy: "Nothing in the . . . record dispels the strong impression that, on the concentration of control issue alone, the grant would not be in the public interest." The matter was returned to the Commission for, at the very least, a hearing and a statement by the Commission justifying its departure from its announced standards.

Compare this with the actions of the Commission in the *McClatchy Broadcasting* case. McClatchy was the owner of a chain of newspapers and radio stations in the Central Valley of California. It applied for a TV station in Sacramento. Another company, Telecasters, made a rival application. Initially Telecasters was permitted to amend its application to increase

the height of its antenna so that its coverage might be equal to that proposed by McClatchy.

Following the usual Commission procedure, the hearing was conducted by a so-called trial examiner. The examiner found that McClatchy was superior to Telecasters in all respects except "diversification of control of the media of mass communication." He discovered, however, that McClatchy had never engaged in the practices frequently associated with monopolistic conduct in the public-information field, e.g., cut-throat rate-slashing or personnel pirating. He noted also that there was a multiplicity of mass-communication media in the area to be served. He awarded the license to McClatchy. The Commission, reversing him, disagreed as to the relative superiority of McClatchy and Telecasters and then rejected McClatchy almost solely on the diversification issue.

McClatchy appealed to the Court of Appeals, which, holding that the Commission had acted within the legitimate area of its discretion, upheld the decision. But during the appeal curious things were happening. Immediately upon receiving its construction license, Telecasters petitioned the Commission to permit it to reduce the height of its antenna, and the Commission forthwith agreed. McClatchy protested and asked for a reopening of the comparative hearing. This the Commission denied. And all this time the case was on appeal! McClatchy appealed a second time, and the Court stated indignantly that it was "unseemly for the Commission without the knowledge or permission of the court to substitute another grant for that which is being judicially examined on appeal." It ordered the Commission to reopen the hearing.

Thus, in the *Clarksburg* case the Commission refused even to consider diversification; in the *McClatchy* case diversification became the controlling consideration. . . .

### *What Can Be Done*

These are not isolated instances. But by their striking character they cast a strong light on much that has been ambiguous,

and bring into focus a pattern of administration which has been growing steadily more disturbing. . . . Standards are announced only to be ignored, ingeniously explained away, or so occasionally applied that their very application seems a mockery of justice.

There are, unfortunately, no immediate or easy remedies for the situation. The present modes of regulation and the existing structure of broadcasting are powerfully entrenched. It might have been possible at an earlier time to have taxed the monopoly profits of broadcasting; to have levied, for example, an annual license fee proportional to profit, and thus to have reduced the pressures for administrative irregularity. But the enormous investments which have been made preclude such a drastic revision of the legal structure.

Congress might, to be sure, clarify and reinforce the already developed licensing criteria, most of which are in themselves quite sound. Statutory enactment would somewhat strengthen the hand of the courts in reviewing and controlling wayward administrative activity. But it must be confessed that such legislation would not substantially narrow the range of administrative discretion. We must face the fact that the nature of the broadcasting problem does not lend itself to solution by formulas which would eliminate the need for official judgment. . . .

Though Congress has been notably weak during the past few years in providing policy guides, strong administration would have in some measure filled the void. But in our administrative, as in our legislative, life, compromise, camaraderie, and trafficking are eating away at the fabric of the legal structure. This is a massive trend and can be fought only if there is a public opinion aware of this threat to effective government.

The challenge is a tremendous one. In our present context it will require an unwonted discipline and restraint in many quarters. We must reestablish the notion that commissioners when they have a case before them are quasi-judicial officers. Congressmen, high officials of the Administration, and party politicians must refuse to approach commissioners. The commis-

sioners in their turn must close their doors and ears to everything except the record made openly before them. A litigant would not dare procure his congressman to intercede with a judge. We must establish a tradition which makes the show of influence equally unthinkable in an administrative proceeding. It would be an important step in the building of such a tradition for Congress by statute to give authoritative expression to these principles.

### TV AND POLITICS<sup>a</sup>

His jet stubble masked and sunken eyes artfully brightened by make-up, his frame natty in a gray, single-breasted suit and blue shirt, Vice President Richard Nixon moved confidently on-stage in a Washington TV studio, settled gingerly into a gray leather chair, and proceeded to face the music, the blinking cameras, the hovering mikes, and NBC's court jester Jack Paar.

What ensued was a thoroughly professional performance by the [1960] GOP candidate for President—a sure-footed forty minutes of give-and-take with Paar, an astonishing display of political TV technique that combined humor, . . . forcefulness, and forensic adroitness in uncanny measure. . . .

TV, which reaches 46 million homes (and unnumbered saloons), is obviously the new key to any successful campaign. During . . . the conventions [of 1960] 38 million TV households spent an average of eight hours watching the proceedings at each occasion. And whatever its effect upon the stanch party loyalist, television does seem to influence the "swing vote," that vast body of independents (estimated at 10 to 35 per cent of the electorate), 10 per cent of whom do not make up their minds until the final week of politicking. As Malcolm Moos, administrative assistant to President Eisenhower, remarked: "TV has become a supermarket for personality projection."

<sup>a</sup> From "Television and Politics; Who Projects the Image of a Winner?" by Bill Ewald, former radio and television editor of *Newsweek*. *Newsweek*, 56:18-21, S. 5, '60. Reprinted by permission.

The key to a successful TV performance lies in the word "image"—the sculpting of a candidate's public figure to satisfy the quixotic whims of the public's eye and mind. Image is not a new concept in American politics—Charles Evans Hughes trimmed his beard in 1916 to shuck a slightly unkempt look; advisers of Al Smith in 1928 briefly considered ditching the Smith derby hat with all of its big-city-smart-alec connotations; Abe Lincoln grew a beard after his election in 1860 to add stylishness to his homespun countenance.

(Button-down comic Bob Newhart has built a whole routine around the way a Madison Avenue adman might nurture the Lincoln image: "Abe, sweetheart . . . You're thinking of shaving it off? Abe, don't you see that's part of the image? Right—with the shawl and the stovepipe hat and the string tie!" . . . CBS's Edward R. Murrow [now chief of the United States Information Agency], an old hand at the furrowed brow, chain-smoking television technique, has sized up three American Presidents and one mighty contender. His views:

Of Abraham Lincoln: "He wasn't a handsome man. All reports indicate that he had an abrasive voice and a wife who was not a political asset. The critics probably would have given him hell for not using his allotted time at Gettysburg."

Of William Jennings Bryan, three times the Democratic candidate and the most flamboyant orator of them all: "After he did the cross-of-gold speech twice, people would have said he should have got a new writer."

Of Woodrow Wilson: "A lot of people would have found him too pedantic. But if he had had radio or TV, he would have brought us into the League of Nations and definitely changed the course of history."

Of Franklin Delano Roosevelt: "Probably he would have been as good on television as he was on radio. He was good because of his timing, his simple language. There was no condescension, even with the Harvard accent. As for the boys on Madison Avenue trying to create an image for him, he probably would have felt he was better than any of them.")

*The Way the Experts Figured*

What of the images of Kennedy and Nixon? Ernest Dichter, president of the Institute of Motivational Research, has just completed a survey on the subject, plumbing the deep waters of unconscious feelings among 1,000 Americans. "People have been failed by the father image," he reports in his best motivationese. "Roosevelt died—this was being abandoned, a thing a father never does. Eisenhower has become dimmer as a father . . . Truman was not dignified enough, could not be put on a pedestal."

As a result, says Dichter, voters are settling this time for a brother or son image—roles which both Nixon and Kennedy fulfill. "Kennedy is the smoother of the two and that will undo him. He is too slick, too perfect, too good-looking. . . . They don't trust the image." As for Nixon: "He is hard angles, like a triangle. This is where foreign policy comes in—we want someone hard on the outside who can cut."

Dichter, a registered Democrat, picks Nixon as winner, saying he will beat Kennedy even though many of the voters don't seem to like him. Comedian Mort Sahl perhaps summed up this popularity paradox best when he observed: "Neither candidate is going to win." [Sahl's prediction came closer than Dichter's. Kennedy won by a popular majority of 118,263, less than two tenths of one per cent of the total vote cast, and a majority of less than one vote in each of the nation's 166,064 voting precincts. Some 600,000 votes went to minority party candidates.—Ed.]

There is little doubt that both men—the winner will be the first President born in the twentieth century—are tremendously aware of the impact of the twentieth-century medium. Nixon's so-called "Checkers" speech in 1952 may rank as the single most dramatic use of the medium in politics. [Checkers, the Nixon family's cocker spaniel, was brought on camera to demonstrate the warmth and affection of the candidate's home life after charges of unethical financial support had endangered his place on the ticket. The speech saved Nixon from being the first

candidate on a national ticket to be dropped in mid-campaign as an embarrassment to his party.—Ed.] True, it was criticized as corny, a slice of political soap opera, but it was something more: It clearly established Nixon as an asset to the party and a master of the intimacies of the camera. Movie magnate Darryl Zanuck, who telephoned Nixon after the speech, commented: "It was the most tremendous performance I've ever seen."

Nixon himself has told close associates that TV is a relentless medium which shows up a phony. One can only be himself, he has said—the camera digs below the surface and shows what's inside. Nevertheless, there is a certain irony about Nixon's view because his public personality has undergone a marked change in recent years—more marked perhaps than has occurred in his off-camera personality. In the old days of his anti-Communist campaigning, Nixon appeared as a righteously angry man. He was all serious business.

The TV image Nixon now projects is still a sober one, but something has been added—that of the "regular fellow" with vast experience who studies each problem seriously, weighs it, and then makes up his mind. Once a fiery hatchetman, he now bends over backward to avoid the appearance of blind partisanship. The image he seems to be trying to create can best be summed up this way: Here is a man you can trust.

In the Kennedy camp, there has also been much discussion of their candidate's image. Nothing better illustrates the picture Kennedy has been trying to build than a twenty-minute film he used in his pre-election campaign. It opens with a PT-boat piercing the darkness of the Pacific night (courage), continued with shots of Kennedy campaigning in Massachusetts (hard work), showed Kennedy talking to miners, farmers, factory workers (concern, maturity, democracy-in-action), included a shot of him warning against tax cuts (responsibility). . . .

#### *Packaged Candidates*

Perhaps the most unsettling aspect of the new interweaving of TV and politics is the work of advertising and public-relations

firms in helping to shape the images of candidates. There was, for example, some criticism of the glossy Eisenhower campaigns [of 1952 and 1956] for the use of one-minute saturation spots developed by the GOP ad agency, Batten, Barton, Durstine & Osborn. Some critics—including Democratic loser Adlai Stevenson—have charged that the one-minute spot is manufactured for an emotional impact only, that in a nation which badly needs education on major issues this need is disregarded. To this, Carroll Newton, a BBDO executive who now heads up the GOP's own temporary ad agency, Campaign Associates, replies: "The more exposure of a candidate, the better candidate the people will choose."

The ad-agency technique encourages a kind of bland standardization of candidates—there is a danger that, as in the selling of toothpaste or soap, candidates will be flattened out, attractively packaged, presented so as to offend absolutely no one. "I have an extremely low opinion of ad agencies and public-relations men," snaps actor-director Robert Montgomery, who . . . smoothed out President Eisenhower for TV.

Has TV had any beneficial effect on politics? Almost everyone agrees on one point—that TV is helping to do away with the rabble-rousing, red-necked shouter on our national political scene. "We don't have a Bilbo or a 'Cotton Ed' Smith or a 'Pitchfork Ben' Tillman around any more—the Southerners are the most dignified members of Congress now," reports NBC's David Brinkley. And looking at the North, CBS's Walter Cronkite notes: "TV, these last eight years, has pretty well wiped out the cartoon version of the derby-hatted, bespatted, cigar-chewing ward-heeler."

"Bernard Shaw once said that you can't lie to a microphone," observed *Manchester Guardian* correspondent Alistair Cooke, who . . . doubles as a TV performer. "This is even more true of a TV camera. TV is an X ray of personality. As a result, more than ever now, we get what we deserve."

EDUCATIONAL TV<sup>9</sup>

An airplane flying 23,000 feet above Montpelier, Indiana, recently began to broadcast televised instruction in thirteen subjects to about 500,000 students in schools and colleges in a six-state area of the Midwest.

This is the demonstration phase of an experiment known as the Midwest Program on Airborne Television Instruction (MPATI), which promises to open up a new era for classroom television. The plane in effect is a flying transmitter that can broadcast to an area that would require fourteen conventional transmitters to cover.

A distinguished professor once remarked that it took about fifty years for a new idea to gain general acceptance in American education, but this certainly has not been the case with educational television. ETV is now only eight years old, but it is a fast-growing child. What the future will bring is anybody's guess. But two things seem certain at this point: first, that television as a medium of instruction has established itself as an integral part of the educational process, just as the book did 500 years ago, and second, that the full potential of television as a teaching tool has by no means been realized.

The direct educational value of the new medium was recognized early, and in 1952 the Federal Communications Commission set aside 242 channels for educational purposes. (The number has since been raised to 267.) The Fund for Adult Education, established by the Ford Foundation in 1951, immediately took steps to help local communities establish educational stations. Through a series of grants—on a matching basis—it was instrumental in the activation of about thirty ETV stations. It also made possible the establishment of the Joint Council on Educational Television, which was set up to help

<sup>9</sup> From "Classroom TV Enters a New Era," article by John J. Scanlon, associate education editor of the *Saturday Review* and program associate in education for the Ford Foundation. *Saturday Review*. 44:50-5+. My. 20, '61. The monthly Education Supplement of the *Saturday Review* from which this article is reprinted is sponsored by the Fund for the Advancement of Education and prepared by the Fund in cooperation with the staff of the *Saturday Review*. Reprinted by permission.

local communities with the technical and legal problems involved in getting a station on the air, and the National Educational Television and Radio Center, whose purpose was to service the stations with ETV programs.

The first ETV station, KUHT in Houston, began operations on May 25, 1953. Since then, educational television has grown almost as fast as commercial television. There are at the moment fifty-four ETV stations on the air, and at least ten more under construction. In addition, the Joint Council on Educational Television estimates that there are more than 150 closed-circuit installations in schools and colleges throughout the country.

Educational television includes two broad categories of programs—cultural and informational programs broadcast primarily for an adult audience, and televised lessons that are part of a school or college curriculum. It is with the latter category that this article is concerned: direct instruction by television. Specifically, this means the use of television by schools and colleges to teach courses for credit.

### *College of the Air*

Among the pioneers in the use of television as a medium of instruction were a few midwestern universities, including Western Reserve and Iowa State, which first began to offer televised courses for credit about eight years ago. The armed services also realized the potential of the new medium, and began to use it extensively for instruction and training. Medical and dental schools in several universities soon discovered that television could provide every student a "front-row seat" in observing complicated surgical and dental operations, and quickly adopted the new medium as a teaching tool. One of the earliest experiments at the school level took place in New Jersey in the spring of 1954, when fifth-grade students in the Red Bank and Long Branch public schools watched a two-week series of televised lessons in American history that had been prepared by six teachers under the supervision of researchers at Montclair State College

Today, practically every course in the school and college curriculum, from first-grade arithmetic to college zoology, is being taught somewhere over television. Although no accurate figures are available, even from the United States Office of Education, it is safe to make the following estimates:

1. At least 3 million students in about 7,500 elementary and secondary schools throughout the nation are receiving part of their regular daily instruction by television.

2. Perhaps as many additional students are receiving televised "enrichment" programs, which are not considered part of the regular curriculum but which nevertheless are regarded by teachers as a valuable supplement to daily lessons.

3. About 250 colleges and universities are offering credit courses on television to about 250,000 students. In addition, some 300 colleges and universities are offering credit for courses taught on "Continental Classroom," the nationwide program broadcast from 6 to 7 A.M. five days a week over the NBC network. . . .

As a medium of instruction, television has several unique advantages. To begin with, it can vastly extend the reach of the nation's best teachers—and particularly those in the subject-matter areas where good teachers are scarce. This has been dramatically demonstrated in "Continental Classroom," which was designed as a massive effort to teach teachers and to upgrade the teaching of physics, chemistry, and mathematics in the nation's high schools. Surveys have shown that at least 35,000 high school teachers in these fields have watched these programs since they began three years ago. Dr. Harvey White of the University of California, who taught the course in physics, and Dr. John Baxter of the University of Florida, who taught the course in chemistry, are both seasoned teachers. But to help them in special aspects of their courses, they brought before the camera fourteen Nobel Prize winners. It is doubtful that any college or university in the country could command such an array of talent, and these teachers were not lecturing to 30 or 40 or even 100 students. They were reaching an audience

of several hundred thousand, including not only the high school teachers for which the programs were intended but also high school and college students, housewives, businessmen, engineers and others who were interested in bringing themselves up to date in these fields. Television's ability to extend the reach of rare teachers also has been demonstrated at the elementary school level, in art, music, science, and foreign languages. In Detroit, Miami, and dozens of other cities, schools which never had been able to offer adequate programs in these subjects because there weren't enough competent teachers available now are able to do so over television. . . .

Another unique advantage of television as a medium of instruction is that it can bring to students educational experiences far beyond the potential of conventional teaching in the classroom. ETV overcomes the time and cost limitations of bringing a thousand and one artifacts, special maps, original documents, photographs, sketches, and expensive science equipment into the classroom. Educational materials from museums, libraries, historical societies, industrial plants, and government agencies that were hitherto unavailable can now be brought before the television cameras. For example, history students in the Philadelphia public schools recently had a chance to see the actual wampum belt presented to William Penn by the Indians. . . . In Alabama, thousands of science students were taken—by television—on a tour of the Army's Redstone Arsenal, one of the nation's most important missile centers. Neither of these experiences would have been feasible without television.

Television's ability to convey reality—to give the viewer a "you are there" feeling—also contributes to its usefulness as an educational tool. Not long ago, for example, fifth-graders in the Pittsburgh public and parochial schools had an opportunity to see and hear Robert Frost read some of his poems over television. The experience these youngsters had was quite different from the experience they might have had in a conventional poetry class. They were not reading Robert Frost's poems from a book. They were not listening to their teacher read them. They were seeing and hearing the poet himself. . . .

When television first began to be used for direct classroom instruction, many questions were raised about its role in education. There were some who took a dim view of its potential. It was argued, for example, that television was essentially a one-way medium of communication and that its use for instruction would deprive the student of valuable contact with the teacher. As one critic put it, "an electronic tube cannot understand a child." It was also argued that learning would be reduced to a passive experience in which the student merely soaked up what was presented by way of a flickering image on a screen. Finally, of course, it was argued that "television will never replace the teacher."

### *The Best Teachers for Everyone*

What most of these arguments overlooked was that television is not a teacher, but merely a conveyor of teaching, and that an outstanding teacher on television can be much more effective in stimulating *learning* than a mediocre teacher in the intimate environment of the classroom. The shortcomings of one-way communication are real, but not insurmountable. A book also is a one-way medium of instruction, but when great minds speak from the printed page there is likely to be a response by the reader. The same holds true when a great teacher teaches over television. (The people in the Detroit public schools were amused at the remark about the electronic tube not being able to understand a child because one of their television teachers—an exceptionally able woman teaching American literature to high school seniors—had an experience which illustrated its ridiculousness. One day this teacher received a letter from one of the girls in her unseen class, describing an unfortunate love affair she was having. At the end of the letter the girl wrote: "I suppose you're wondering why I'm unburdening myself to you this way, but you're the first adult who ever understood me.")

As teachers became more familiar with television as a medium of instruction, much of their early opposition evaporated.

It soon became evident that television, far from being a threat to the status and prestige of the classroom teacher, was actually a powerful new tool for enhancing the art of teaching and for bringing to the student richer, broader, and deeper learning experiences.

The Midwest Program on Airborne Television Instruction represents the latest and most dramatic venture of the Ford Foundation into the ETV field. Primary aim of the program is to bring high-quality instruction to school and college students in an area of the Midwest embracing parts of six states—Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Kentucky. . . . The potential "audience" has been estimated at 5 million school and college students in 13,000 schools and colleges of the region. MPATI officials will be surprised if this full potential is realized, but they were heartened by the fact that schools with an enrollment of some 500,000 students have indicated a desire to participate in the demonstration phase of the experiment.

Courses tentatively scheduled for the first year are Spanish, French, social studies, arithmetic for gifted children, music, literature and composition, history, geography, and science in the elementary and secondary schools; at the college level chemistry, mathematics, and Russian will be taught. . . .

Initially financed with Ford Foundation grants of \$5.5 million, together with funds from other foundations and industrial firms, the project is designed to be ultimately self-supporting, with participating schools and colleges sharing the cost on a pro-rata basis. . . .

Although one cynic has described MPATI as an exercise in "educational crop-dusting," it has excellent leadership, a serious purpose, and . . . the novelty of the project lies in its scope. The plane (which will have a "standby" in case of bad weather or mechanical difficulties), is capable of transmitting a signal that will reach far more students, at a lower cost per student, than any existing ETV arrangement. By flying at an altitude of more than four miles, the plane can transmit televised courses to schools and colleges in a radius of 200 miles on the ground.

The average "reach" of a conventional television antenna is a radius of only 75 miles. Moreover, the plane can reach big-city schools and remote rural classrooms with the same ease and at the same cost.

The MPATI experiment has begun over two ultra-high frequency channels allocated to it by the Federal Communications Commission and may eventually expand to six, which means that it then could telecast several courses, at different grade levels, simultaneously. The key to this hope lies in a new technique known as "narrow band" broadcasting, by which broadcasts occupy only three megacycles in the television band instead of the usual six, thus doubling the number of telecasts possible in the same wave length. If this hope is realized, a technological problem that currently limits the use of television as a medium of instruction may be solved. This problem has to do with transmission of the signal. Open-circuit broadcasting, in which the signal is sent out from a transmitter, has the advantage of being able to cover a wide area, and thus it can reach many school systems. It has the disadvantage of being limited to one program or lesson at a time. This means, for example, that in the course of a six-hour school day, only twelve thirty-minute lessons can be broadcast—the equivalent of only one for each grade level. Closed-circuit broadcasting in which the signal is carried by coaxial cable, has the advantage of being able to transmit several lessons simultaneously (six in the case of Washington County, Maryland), but it has the disadvantage of not being able to cover a wide geographic area except by the use of microwave relays or long-line telephone wires, both of which are relatively expensive. The Midwest Airborne Project may well suggest solutions to this problem.

Educational preparations for the launching of the experiment rivaled the intricacies of the electronic research necessary to get the MPATI program on the air. A special advisory committee selected the courses to be offered, after consulting with school officials throughout the region. The television teachers were selected, after a nationwide "talent search," by a panel of

teachers, supervisors, and educational television experts. The MPATI staff, with the help of experienced television teachers and curriculum specialists, produced manuals, teacher guides, and syllabuses to help classroom teachers in the schools which will receive the airborne lessons. Teachers, supervisors, and administrators from the school systems planning to use the televised courses attended workshops at nineteen colleges and universities throughout the region last summer, and a special summer-long workshop was held at Purdue University, headquarters of the project, for the television teachers. Most of them have devoted the past academic year to recording their courses on video tape. (After much technical research, MPATI engineers decided it would be better not to carry the television teachers aloft in the plane, but instead to record their lessons on video tape in studios on the ground and to equip the broadcasting airplane with "playback" machines that reproduce the TV signal with almost as much fidelity as the original copy. This is the same technique used to broadcast many commercial TV programs. . . .)

### *The Results*

Although it is much too early to draw any final conclusions about television's ultimate role in education, the results of the experimentation to date have been very encouraging. These results show, among other things, that students at both the school and college level learn as much—and in some cases significantly more—from televised instruction as from conventional instruction. The usual finding from most of the school and college experiments has been that there is no significant difference in achievement between students in television classes and comparable students in regular classes. This finding is in itself rather remarkable, in view of the newness of television as a medium of instruction, the relative inexperience of those who have been using it, and the fact that existing school and college classrooms were not designed for televised instruction.

Other encouraging results have emerged from the experimentation. For example, it has been found that televised in-

struction requires the student to accept more responsibility for his own learning than is the case with conventional methods of instruction. Also, students in television classes at the elementary and secondary level make more extensive use of the school library than students in regular classes.

In addition, experience to date has shown that the "team" approach to teaching, particularly at the elementary and secondary levels, opens up exciting new possibilities for capitalizing on the varying teaching skills among teachers in any given school system. Televised courses have been much more carefully planned and organized than conventional courses, and the combination of the skills of the studio teacher and of the classroom teacher has made possible a cooperative teaching effort far better than either teacher could achieve alone. At the elementary and secondary levels, for example, the usual practice has been for the studio teacher to "meet" only one class a day, generally for twenty or thirty minutes. The teacher then has the rest of the day to plan tomorrow's lesson. This opportunity to plan carefully, combined with the unique possibilities that television affords in the presentation of visual materials that reinforce learning, has stimulated the studio teachers to do a much better job of teaching than they had done in their conventional classrooms. In the meantime, the classroom teachers, relieved of the burden of planning and presenting the principal material in several different subjects during the course of one day, are free to concentrate on other important aspects of teaching—such as eliciting student participation, answering questions, leading discussions, reinforcing when necessary the main concepts presented in the telecast, providing individual help where needed, and stimulating the students to do something with what they have learned. Studio teachers and classroom teachers who have mastered the techniques of the "team" approach greatly prefer it to the conventional method.

One other important result of the experimentation to date has been a more effective use of teaching time and classroom space. This has been especially true in the elementary and

secondary schools, where the shortage of teachers and classrooms is most acute. Several school systems . . . have found that the use of television in teaching large classes has enabled them to serve more students with the able teachers already on their staffs and to get along with fewer new teachers than they otherwise might need. This means that they can be much more selective in hiring new teachers. The use of auditoriums, cafeterias, and other large rooms for certain television courses also has meant a substantial saving in classroom space.

Several other school systems have used the teacher time saved by the use of television in large classes to establish much smaller classes than usual for slow learners and for rapid learners, and to provide overworked classroom teachers with one or more free periods during the school day.

### *The Problems*

There also have been problems. . .

One of the biggest single problems at the elementary and secondary level has been that today's schools were not designed for instruction by television, especially in large classes. Another major problem at the elementary and secondary level—particularly in those school systems using open-circuit telecasts originating from educational television stations—has been the matter of scheduling. This has taken two principal forms. First, there has been the difficulty of timing the telecasts to fit the schedules of as many schools as possible. (For example, fifth-grade arithmetic is not usually taught in all elementary schools of a given school system at the same hour each day.) The second aspect of the scheduling problem has been how to fit a thirty-minute telecast into class periods of varying length. (Observers agree that thirty minutes is not necessarily the optimum length of the telecast part of the lesson in every subject every day, but educational television stations, like their commercial counterparts, traditionally operate in terms of thirty-minute blocks of time.)

Other problems persist. For example, the respective roles of the studio teacher and the classroom teacher as members of a teaching team have not yet been fully defined, although in some instances such teams are functioning with remarkable skill. Similarly, the techniques of teaching and learning in large-class situations have by no means been fully mastered. The problem of dealing effectively with individual differences among students, particularly at the elementary and secondary level, also needs further exploration.

At the college level, the biggest single problem has been how to interest the very best teachers in using the new medium. The recent program of "released time" grants by the Ford Foundation may help colleges and universities overcome this problem.

Finally, there is the never-ending problem of quality. Television, like the printing press, is essentially neutral as a conveyor of ideas, concepts, and information. It can transmit the bad as well as the good, the mediocre as well as the superior. A mediocre teacher on television communicates her mediocrity to a much larger audience than a mediocre teacher in a classroom. A superior teacher on television can strike a spark in the minds of thousands of students. This is the essence of the challenge—and the opportunity—facing educators in the years ahead. There is no doubt that television as a medium of instruction has entered a new and revolutionary phase of its development with the launching of the Midwest airborne experiment. There also is no doubt that its growth will not stop with the "flying transmitter" now circling Montpelier, Indiana. Technological advances in the field have been enormous in the past five or six years—low-power transmitters, video-tape recorders and playback machines, microwave relay installations, and so forth. The possibilities of the future stagger the imagination. David Sarnoff, board chairman of the Radio Corporation of America, recently told an audience at the University of Detroit that worldwide television is just over the horizon through the development of satellite relay transmitters, and

that a billion people throughout the world can eventually watch a TV program simultaneously, with immediate translation techniques making it understandable to all.

Will educators the world over be ready for this day when it comes? What will they have to say to eager learners? Will it be useful, instructive, and inspiring? Only the future can provide the answer, but education had better start getting ready.

### THE CELLULOID JUNGLE <sup>10</sup>

From the early-early show at reveille to the last squeak and gibber of the late-late show in the blackest hour of night, a specter haunts television—the specter of the old, shelfworn moving picture. The crepitating murmur in the tube is now able to numb the viewer with old films for seventeen hours at a stretch, if he so chooses. There are available the bland sixty-minute, single-feature goof-off; the heavier torpor of the double feature; or the massive high-frequency narcolepsis of film after film, keeping the viewer snowbound in hibernation from the rigors of existence. Write your own prescription.

Since Hopalong Cassidy came second-hand to the glass screen, television has engorged and re-engorged an estimated seven thousand obsolete feature films: every brittle foot of celluloid that Hollywood produced between 1928 and 1948. In addition, it has already absorbed several hundred features which bear a later imprint; also French, British and Italian importations, as well as a mixed bag of minor works by one-shot producers, which barely returned their negative cost in theatre exhibition.

The mathematics of Movietime are simple and terrifying. The 7,200 features now in circulation, each tailored to 10,000 feet for TV, add up to 72 million feet of film. Yet every inch of it is needed to keep the voracious teleprojectors from gnashing their sprockets empty for the scheduled hours.

<sup>10</sup> From article by Hugh G. Foster, free-lance writer. *Holiday*. 29:115-16+. Ja. '61. Reprinted by permission.

Indeed, while waiting for the treaties to be drawn releasing the pictures made after 1948 . . . the old film kept going back into the hopper for the third time around, sometimes for the fourth.

With the exception of those serviced by nonprofit (educational) networks, the average television station puts on ten hours of movies in a week. When it is recalled that three hours a week is par for attendance at a movie theatre, ten hours without even switching the channel selector verges on a debauch. If this were all. But there are eight, and in some broadcast areas ten, stations that a television set in good repair can lock onto, making quintuple, and even eight-ply features possible.

I recently sat out a typical TV-movie weekend, during which the commercial stations within the Boston-Providence-Portland triangle roiled the air with fifty-eight vintage movies—not unusual for areas of moderate population density throughout the country. The bacchanal began Friday morning at 9:30 with *Hi Diddle Diddle* (1943), officially synopsized: "A sailor and his bride suffer many interruptions while trying to leave for their honeymoon." The ball ended two hours after midnight, on Monday morning with the blood-chilling screech of *The Undying Monster* (1943)—"A mythical monster changes from human to savage and attempts to escape justice, but is unmasked in the end."

Five of the stations in that New England complex shared the burden of sixteen features on Friday. But Saturday was gala, with nineteen, including a children's matinee at which *The Mad Doctor of Market Street* (1942) was shown as a curtain raiser to *Hold That Ghost* (1940)—"Abbott and Costello inherit an abandoned roadhouse from a gangster when he is rubbed out."

Sunday's eighteen-picture program kicked off with *Wild Bill Hickok Rides Again*—"A young girl teams up with Wild Bill in order to help him swindle an old friend." Seven channels were operative, but only three serviced by the major networks held back their movies until noon. For the balance of

the week, the combined teleprojection in that one sector was 104 movies—more than a million feet of film in a seven-day period.

To say, however, that all of it was on the level of *The Monster from the Ocean Floor* and the *Dr. Christian* slobber would be grossly prejudicial. For once in a while the boiling torrent of celluloid will roll down a nugget that is worth all the popcorn eaten during the wait: a Hollywood . . . [feature] of some distinction that you saw once many years ago, and yearned to see again. Or, by perverse miracle, three memorable films are spotted in a cluster, on three different channels at the same time, and frustration ensues. For, as the viewer is involved with James Mason in *Odd Man Out* on one channel. *Rififi* is on the adjoining lane; simultaneously, elsewhere, in *Public Enemy*, James Cagney in *rigor mortis*, falls into the front door of his mother's home like a block of chalk.

But contretemps such as these are curiously rare, and the bulk of Movietime continues to be fueled with the crumbling and most unmemorable salvage from the film vaults. The reason is simply dollars-and-cents. An opaque gem like *The Depraved* (1945)—“An Army captain in love with an English girl plans to murder her husband and make it look accidental”—costs peanuts compared with what the station would have to pay for any other type of video entertainment. It furnishes an hour of viewing time and scope for as many as twelve commercial messages.

The same merchandising logic controls the spacing out of the movie day into early, late and late-late shows. Though attendance is an intrafamily affair, the times of showing are allocated for the convenience and leisure of its separate members. The greatest portion is offered to the homemaker on the assumption—frequently mistaken—that for most of the day she is at home. As the broadcaster sees her, she can scarcely wait until her man has gone off to win the bread, and the kids to school. Then, with her second cup of coffee poured, her filter tip alight, she snaps on the switch and it's ho! for *The Keyhole*

(1933)—"After Kay Francis marries millionaire George Brent, she discovers that her former husband had never divorced her, as he promised."

With that as antipasto, there is time for two additional features before the children come bounding home for lunch with glad cries of, "Look, Mom, no cavities."

From the forenoon until the dinner hour, all movie projection is lumped under the heading "early shows." The term "late show" does not apply until after 11:15 P.M. when the network programs, alive or embalmed on video tape, have been run off. The designation "late" holds for only one picture. Not until an hour later, when the owls are on the wing and sailors have mounted to the middle watch, does the late-late show begin, droning on until 2 A.M. and beyond. . . .

Television movies could be better tolerated at any leisure period if it were not that viewers are held captive, without being captivated, by the incessant commercials. If the film is at all interesting, it is broken into at least eight times by a sales pitch that has long lost its effectiveness as a result of oily repetition. There is supposed to be an understanding, a sort of gentlemen's agreement, among the station owners limiting commercials to six minutes out of an hour. This, anybody can observe, is cynically breached, as often by the networks as by independent television stations. They cheat a little here, and fudge a little there: a sly half minute blended into the announcement of the movie title, and an extra forty seconds for the prime sponsor before the encomiums to the alternate sponsor-of-the-second-half-of-the-third-quarter of the program.

Had they been less immoderate in this regard, pay television would not be looming so near.

### PAY-TV <sup>11</sup>

At long last, pay-television is nearing its acid test. . . . The laboratory will be Hartford, Connecticut, where 300,000 set

<sup>11</sup> From "Pay-TV: Ready for Test." *Fortune*, 62:133-5+. Reprinted from the December 1960 issue of *Fortune* magazine by special permission; © 1960 Time Inc.

owners will get their chance to watch—and pay for—a daily schedule of telecasts without commercials. One of the sponsors will be Zenith Radio Corporation, whose Phonevision system of scrambling and decoding television signals will be employed in the test. The experiment will . . . [begin in late 1961 and] continue for three years.

For some time television's critics, in their tirades against "mediocrity" and "domination by Madison Avenue," have held up pay-television as the ultimate panacea. The idea became the subject of a boiling controversy involving the networks, the entertainment industry, movie-theatre owners, and self-appointed guardians of the public interest. The battle of words has been waged in a dense fog of ignorance and confusion about what pay-television can and cannot accomplish.

The Hartford test will go a long way toward clearing the air. For the first time, a sizable section of the public will be able to register its opinion, and some vital questions that could never be resolved in theoretical discussion will now be answered in the market place. Can pay-TV really assure sustained quality in programing? Are viewers willing to pay for this? Will pay-TV pay its promoters?

### *The Hartford Lineup*

The way was opened for the Hartford test early in 1959, when the FCC, which had been considering the subject off and on for years, issued its celebrated Third Report, setting the rules for limited tests of pay-TV. Last March a team of companies was formed to sponsor the first test under the rules laid down. The team consisted of Zenith, as manufacturer of Phonevision equipment; Teco, Inc., as exclusive Phonevision licensee; and RKO General, Inc., a subsidiary of General Tire & Rubber Co., as pay-program operator and broadcaster. They chose Hartford out of twenty possible sites because the city fit the FCC's requirements and had a broadcasting outlet available. Station WHCT had been losing money for some time and its owners were only too happy to sell it to RKO General. . . .

Like any new product, pay TV faces new marketing problems. In preparing for the Hartford test, the sponsoring team of companies has developed marketing arrangements that could become a pattern if pay-TV spread to the rest of the nation. Zenith will manufacture all the Phonevision encoders and decoders. It plans to turn out 50,000 decoders, at slightly under \$100 apiece, for Hartford the first year. (If the test is successful and the system catches on elsewhere, Zenith intends to license other manufacturers to fill the demand for decoders.) It will sell the decoders to a local Phonevision company, which has been set up in Hartford by RKO. Hartford Phonevision will equip station WHCT with the encoding device (which costs \$50,000 to \$60,000). Under FCC rules for the test, it must make the scrambling service available to other stations if they want it; but two pay programs cannot be aired simultaneously. Hartford Phonevision will also install decoders in subscribers' homes, charging each set owner a service fee to cover the cost of installation and servicing. The exact fee has not yet been established but it is expected to be between \$7.50 and \$10. There may also be a weekly rental or minimum charge of about 75 cents for the equipment.

(To ensure that only subscribers can receive programs, Zenith's Phonevision system garbles broadcasts before transmission and ungarbles them with a device on the receiving set. In any telecast, pay or free, the camera electronically scans the picture line by line and translates it into voltages, producing an electric profile of each scanning line. At either end of the line is a blank space, containing a horizontal synchronizing pulse which makes sure that an identical picture is produced on the home picture tube and run in perfect unison with the beam in the camera.

In pay-TV these electric profiles are sent to the Phonevision center instead of being broadcast directly. Here a generator produces an electric square wave, equal to fourteen scanning lines from the camera, which controls an electronic switch. One half of the wave switches seven lines one way, leaving them

undisturbed; the other half switches the next seven lines so that they are delayed relative to the synchronizing pulses. This breaks up the picture horizontally. The square wave also cuts the picture into vertical strips, which vary in position. The square wave itself is not transmitted; instead a coded signal, the "air code," different for each program, is added and controls the distortion. The audio portion is also scrambled, merely by raising its frequency 2,600 cycles. Thus scrambled, the entire signal is returned to the TV station for transmission. The picture can be sent either as a positive, which is conventional, or as a negative.

At home the decoder, which is connected to the TV set, has a three-position switch. One position disconnects the decoder, allowing regular free broadcasts to be seen. To unscramble a pay program, the viewer opens the door of the decoder, automatically moving the switch to Phonevision A for unscrambling when the program has been broadcast in positive. To receive a negative transmission, the switch must be moved to Phonevision B. The dial is then turned until the decoding number for the particular program (listed in a monthly program guide) appears in a window . . . [e.g. 284A—the letter indicating the price]. This prints the program number and price on the billing tape, which the subscriber tears off and sends in with his payment at the end of the month. Simultaneously this information is permanently recorded on magnetic tape inside the decoder. The dialing also starts an electronic process that unscrambles the broadcast by reversing what took place in the Phonevision center.)

The third team member, Teco, will supply Phonevision encoders to local Phonevision companies, and also book programs. Teco is a creation of Zenith, which it set up and spun off in 1949 to promote Phonevision. . . . Teco will license the local Phonevision companies to use the system in return for 5 per cent of gross revenues, and it will take a percentage fee for the programs it offers. Zenith, in turn, will receive one

third of Teco's net profits before taxes or up to 10 per cent of Teco's gross, whichever is greater.

As soon as Hartford Phonevision installs decoders in 2,000 homes, service will begin. Each subscribing viewer will probably receive a regular program guide, and when he wants to watch, all he need do is set his decoder and tune in the right channel. At the end of the month he will strip off the tape that records his listening times and prices and send it with a check to Hartford Phonevision. The average price of a program will be \$1, but some special events may cost as much as \$3.50 or as little as 25 cents. The broadcast fare will include Broadway plays, current motion pictures, operas, ballets, symphonies, and sporting events. To direct its programing, Teco has hired Leland Hayward, the well-known Broadway-Hollywood-TV producer.

In setting their price schedule, the Hartford sponsors will be operating in the dark. Until the system is actually operating, there is no way of determining prices that will ensure a profit, because two variables are as yet unknown: first, the cost of programing and collecting fees, and second, how many viewers are willing to pay and how often. It is on this economic mystery, central to the whole pay-TV issue, that the Hartford test is expected to shed some useful light.

#### *Air versus Wire*

Hartford will test only one of several proposed pay-TV systems. Zenith's Phonevision will be used with conventional broadcasting over the air waves. Other systems are based on transmission by wire. The major proponent of wire is International Telemeter Company, a division of Paramount Pictures Corporation. In the Telemeter and similar systems, programs are sent over coaxial cable strung along telephone poles or through conduits and eventually through drop-off wires into each subscriber's home.

The expense of stringing cable would appear to put wire systems at an initial cost disadvantage. But Telemeter contends

it can set up a service for homes in suburban areas for as little as \$100 to \$125 apiece and in densely populated cities for even less. This is close to what Zenith figures it will cost per viewer to manufacture and install Phonevision encoders and decoders. Advocates of wire point to its superior security: i.e. only paying subscribers whose homes have been wired could receive the programs. To this Zenith counters that its Phonevision coding is virtually cheatproof.

Perhaps the main advantage claimed for wire systems is that they would be free of FCC regulations limiting pay-TV to a few hours of broadcasting every day and to one channel in each area. (In the Telemeter system three programs can be transmitted simultaneously over a single cable.) But pay-TV over wire may be subject to state and local regulation, which might be even more rigorous. And anyway, as a Zenith official observes, "What we're worried about is getting enough programing with box-office appeal for one channel."

In the Telemeter system, the subscriber will have an electronic gadget on his set with a collection box into which he must drop coins when he wants to see a program. Louis Novins, Telemeter's president, is particularly insistent on this pay-as-you-see feature. "No mass media can operate on a credit basis in show business," he says. "People don't like to pay a month later for something they've seen and forgotten about, especially if it wasn't as good as they'd expected." In answer to this view it has been pointed out that consumers are now used to paying for almost everything on credit, and, in fact, the consumption of services such as telephone and gas increased spectacularly after the coin boxes were removed from the home years ago.

#### *Lesson from Etobicoke*

Telemeter has beaten Zenith to a tryout of its system, though its test is far less extensive than the one planned for Hartford. . . . [In February 1959] Telemeter began pay broadcasts in the Toronto suburb of Etobicoke, an area with about 12,000 homes. When Telemeter came to Etobicoke, the de-

mand from would-be subscribers was so great that installations had to be put on an allocation basis so as to ensure a fair sampling of low, middle, and upper income groups. By October, when 6,000 homes had been wired, the company stopped installations and now intends to operate on a steady basis for about six months so that it can get some solid results.

Though the programs have been almost entirely movies up to now—a few hockey games were shown in the spring—the average Etobicoke family has been spending more than \$2 a week; now Telemeter is beginning to upgrade its programs, adding some taped Broadway shows and some educational programs.

Telemeter has been satisfied enough with preliminary results at Etobicoke to begin examining the possibilities of starting wire operations in five areas around major cities in the United States including a suburb of New York. Says Novins, "If the reaction in the United States is anything like what we've had in Canada, pay-TV's growth is going to be explosive." . .

### *Half Pay and Half Free?*

Despite their vehement opposition, the networks are quite prepared to go into pay-TV themselves if there is proof of its popularity. RCA has taken out a patent on a pay-TV system that it is holding for the day NBC might go over to a subscription service. The networks' position is that if pay-TV became profitable, it would drive free TV out of the market because it would be able to bid higher for all the big attractions—the comedians, the major sports events, the "spectaculars." However, there seems to be little reason why television should not endure half pay and half free. No subscription service could hope to fill up the day's viewing hours; even if enough attractive programs were available—a fantastic assumption—the viewing public could not afford to support such an expensive diet. There will still be plenty of room on the air waves for the news broadcasts, serials, Westerns, and children's shows the public will want to watch without paying for.

More cogent is the argument that pay-TV would hurt the nation's 16,000 movie theatres—at least at first. But there is also a chance that pay-TV might bring about a great revival of the movie-making industry. The possibility of capturing large paying home audiences would be a tremendous incentive for making more and better films. Hollywood producers are already thinking in terms of 1,000 or more features a year against 250 currently. With such an outpouring, the theatre owners might be able to hang on to a lot more of their business than they now anticipate.

The advertising agencies have begun to look at pay-TV with interest and not necessarily with pessimism. Last April, Young & Rubicam sent representatives to Etobicoke to survey viewer reaction. Among the questions asked was how they would feel about commercials on pay-television if the price of the program were reduced; a majority said they would not object to advertising before and after the programs, but they would strongly object to interruptions for commercials. At present, sponsors of pay-TV are opposed to commercials on their systems. But the role of advertising, like the other unknowns in pay-TV, will not be clarified until a subscription system is actually operating.

### III. THE QUESTIONS

#### EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY MILLION CENSORS

Americans, among the least censored people in the world, are the world's most censorious. Protected by the First Amendment ("Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech or of the press") and curbed only by laws against libel and obscenity, an American may say or print almost anything he wants to without fear of either prior restraint or subsequent punishment. Only the exigencies of war can abridge this right of free speech and even in wartime the American government exercises censorship with extreme reluctance and a hovering sense of guilt. Following World War II the Office of Censorship deliberately burned its files and today, save for one sealed microfilm copy of its records that can be opened only by order of the President, it is an agency that exists only in unpleasant memory.

Yet at the very moment they are trying to forget a necessary exercise of a beleaguered government's right to censor, the American people regulate television, their greatest medium of communication, with a severity unmatched outside the Iron Curtain. They do it by raising a great hue and cry—singly, in groups, and en masse—against the first and slightest appearance of what the television industry has come to know and dread as Controversial Content. It is a form of censorship without legal backing or government sanction, but it is as effective as a bullwhip, for controversial content is the happy hunting ground of pressure groups and no industry is more sensitive to pressure than television. It will blanch at the thought of ten offended listeners, quail in terror at the thought of fifty. And no matter what the content, someone will find it controversial. Smith sees sacrilege where Brown sees art; Doe

sees wit where Roe sees smut. Enough Smiths or enough Roes—two or three are usually enough—will make the most innocuous subject "controversial." During its short life television has built up a library of controversial content that ranges from sex to politics and from ethnic denigration to religion. In charge of this library—this *index expurgatorius*—is an army of station and network script editors who wield the blue pencil on any and all material that might be offensive. They are the busiest men in television.

### *Obscenity*

Script editors make more deletions because of obscenity than for any other reason and such deletions are the only ones (save profanity) that have any legal justification. Restrictions on obscenity are based on state and Federal law and court decisions and television shares them, by logical extension, with such other media as books and periodicals. Most state laws define obscenity with such non-objective adjectives as disgusting, filthy, indecent, immoral, improper, impure, lascivious, lewd, licentious, or vulgar and leave more precise definitions to the courts. The courts usually acquit, and in the few cases where a court has held a work to be obscene the test has been the English "Hicklin Rule" (after the defendant) of Victorian times—"whether the tendency of the matter charged as obscenity is to deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences."

This definition of obscenity was established in 1868 and has been widely used in both England and the United States. In this country, the Federal anti-obscenity statute lobbied through Congress in 1873 by Anthony Comstock has been interpreted in various ways by different courts, but it was not until the *Ulysses* case, involving the famous book by James Joyce, that a court partly repudiated the Hicklin Rule and emphasized the need to study the "dominant effect" of a work, the author's intent, the work's artistic merit, and whether the work had a libidinous effect *on an average person*. Previous decisions had assumed that a work might be obscene in itself, regardless of

who saw it. The *Ulysses* decision, and others subsequent to it, implied that any work complying with the new definition of obscenity was constitutionally protected from censorship.

This is all rather confusing, and anthropologists have compounded the confusion by emphasizing that nothing is obscene in itself but only becomes obscene if it has been culturally defined as such. A Chinese, for example, once observed that the pronounced rhythms of Sousa's "The Stars and Stripes Forever" were "almost unbearably lascivious" while the same march has connotations of patriotism for Americans.

One of the difficulties in censoring television shows is that the screener can edit written material but not camera angles or intonation. In a 1930 radio performance Mae West's voice was so clearly suggestive that radio listeners responded with one of the few spontaneous protests in broadcasting history. In rehearsal she had read the same lines without a trace of suggestiveness.

Sex taboos differ from one medium to another. In general, sex taboos are observed more closely by television than by radio, movies, and the legitimate stage, but television is becoming freer with the passage of time. *Man and Superman* was a sophisticated play concerned with sex. *The Four Poster* frankly presented the relationship between a married couple over the years, and *Happy Birthday* suggested that one way for a young unmarried girl to get rid of her inhibitions was to relax with a drink. This solution brought a great deal of adverse mail; generally speaking, morality seems to be one of the areas of program content in which there is a comparatively close balance between audience wish and broadcast performance.

#### *Satire and Antisocial Expression*

Certain kinds of satire which have been popular in other media never reach television. This may be because of the broadcaster's concern with special interests, or it may be because television audiences are not considered capable of understanding the satirical tradition that has evolved over the years in other

media. As a result television has developed its own indigenous and unique forms of humor. Comedians like Sid Caesar and Phil Silvers (and Fred Allen on radio) have often been brilliantly satirical, but television comedians as a whole avoid the kind of political and topical satire that flourishes on the stage, on the screen, and in night clubs.

The same bans are placed upon any material that might be regarded as antisocial. The term "antisocial" is a broad one and it embraces any material that might seem to approve some socially unacceptable or illegal activity, or cause the viewers (especially young ones) to lose respect for established authority or institutions. An implied attack on military leadership, a showing of gambling casinos in a way that might encourage gambling, or the representation of suicide have all been regarded as undesirable. Some viewers have been disturbed by a reference to the "profit" in kidnaping and a play that showed a criminal trying to avoid the police by dressing like Santa Claus brought an avalanche of mail saying that Santa should be kept sacred for children.

Although dramatic programs on television usually avoid controversial themes, some of the most spectacular successes of recent years have been interview or panel programs that featured guests who advocated euthanasia, anarchism, legalized abortion, and similar unorthodox causes. It seems to be a matter of timing and the political climate. In 1957 the New York Public Library felt constrained to withdraw its support of a television panel show, "Faces of War," which dealt with the futility of war. The program had a distinguished group of panelists, but it was aired at a time when there was a special consciousness of the need for military preparedness and the library did not wish to be put in the position of sponsoring a show that might be considered pacifist. In another highly publicized case the plot of a TV drama about how industrial plants were causing unhealthy smog in a West Coast community was changed at the behest of the industrial community. In the revised version the plants were leaders in the fight to eliminate smog. On the other hand, television has presented Shaw's *The Devil's Disciple*,

an impudent blast at Puritanism that satirizes the discrepancy between formal morality and ethical reality, and it would be difficult to imagine a less traditionalist and more unpopular theme than that of "Last of the Belles," a TV play concerned with the superficial warmth and lack of real womanliness of southern ladies. The problems of the broadcasters are manifold and few of them feel that the best method of handling antisocial material is to bring it out in the open. Most of them, concerned with income and ratings, prefer to keep any material that could possibly be regarded as antisocial off the air.

### *Ethnic and Racial Groups*

The stereotyping of racial and ethnic groups—usually to their disparagement—has been condemned by the television code of the National Association of Broadcasters since 1952 ("Racial or nationality types shall not be shown . . . in such a manner as to ridicule . . .") and the ban has been almost always scrupulously observed. Americans of Italian descent are sometimes disturbed (and inclined to boycott sponsors' products) by a continuing tendency of some programs to identify all gangsters as Italian, but Negroes and Jews—the two most sensitive minorities—have succeeded in eliminating completely the old and offensive stereotypes. The caricature of the derbied Jewish peddler or of Little Farina blanching with fear is never seen on television. In fact the Jew as a character has all but disappeared from the performing arts and it is said that the new generation of television viewers is being raised with a brand new stereotype—the nonexistent Jew—that might prove as unwelcome as the exaggerations of the past.

The fight to eliminate Negro stereotypes on television has been so successful that many Negro actors are feeling the effect in their inability to find work. Only one Negro—Nat "King" Cole—has ever had an even partially sponsored program of his own, and that one was abandoned after a year for lack of national sponsorship. "A Man Is Ten Feet Tall" was probably the only major network drama with a Negro in a major role, and

Sidney Poitier was given the part because he was an outstanding actor, not because the plot called for a Negro. Most broadcasters, sensitive to regional and economic pressure, would rather not present a Negro character at all rather than show him as less than honorable and courageous. Others, for the same reason, have eliminated racial stereotypes from old films with such thoroughness that the remaining portions are utterly meaningless, and a network's elimination of the objectionable word "darkies" from Stephen Foster's "My Old Kentucky Home" led to the introduction of four separate congressional resolutions demanding an investigation of network censorship. The seriousness of the problem of racial presentation was recognized by the FCC when it denied a station's application for license renewal—the only denial on record—because of a program that carried inflammatory attacks on various minority groups. This is one side of the coin. Overly zealous representation or nonrepresentation is the other, and television has a long road to travel before reaching an adequate and sensible portrayal of the pluralist society that constitutes America today.

### *Violence*

A main concern of parents' groups and of broadcasters is the kind and amount of violence on television. A sampling of New York stations found violence the most frequent form of behavior on programs (56 per cent) and the amount of mayhem on television plays for children was even higher. Westerns, in which aggression is considered almost necessary, are subject to considerable criticism and editorial pruning. There should be, the critics argue, a minimum of unnecessary fatalities. Chases should occur through a locale like a ravine, where ammunition can be fired into the air rather than directly at individuals. Pony relay stations and depots are more desirable locales than saloons. And although it is traditional in Western movies for the villain to be killed at the end, this practice has had to be modified on television so that the villain is now

brought to more formal justice after receiving a deserved but superficial wound.

Television viewers are likely to become offended when the aggression spills over into violence, and especially offended when the violence is gratuitous. Objections to violence in children's programs generally fall under three headings: violence disturbs the child, encourages disrespect for law and order, and demonstrates techniques of crime. There is no substantial scientific evidence to support these objections, and one of the problems in programing for children is that there is no one homogeneous child audience. What may be too stimulating for one age group may be too condescending for another, and the interests of any age group may overlap with adjacent groups. Until the recent use of videotape, a serious problem was posed by the three-hour time differential between the east and west coasts, which made it possible for a program intended for adults (after 9 P.M.) to be seen by children in the West. Perhaps the most important thing for television to recognize, however, is that children have special interests and needs and that procedures are available for determining what those needs and interests are. Television currently seems more concerned with what children should not see than with what they should see, for no networks and few if any stations now have personnel exclusively concerned with children's programing.

#### *And All the Rest*

The United States has spawned so many pressure groups in recent years that television is finding it increasingly difficult to find writers willing to observe the thousand and one taboos these groups have inflicted on the industry (see "The Terrible Toll of Taboos," by Worthington Miner, below). Doctors insist that they always be depicted as dedicated and skillful healers, and lawyers that they must never, never be shysters or ambulance chasers. No prohibitionist wants to see a drinking man happy, or even earning a decent living. Hat manufacturers deplore a bare-headed hero and undershirt makers rose in arms

when a televised showing of *It Happened One Night* revealed Clark Gable without one. The list extends into the ludicrous. Among the varied interests that complained to one network within a month were the following: dentists—who objected to scenes showing a dentist causing pain in patients; warehousemen—too many murders committed in warehouses; gas companies—the use of gas ovens in suicide attempts; toupee manufacturers—jokes about toupees; security dealers—the presentation of crooked security dealers; leather manufacturers—the presentation of juvenile delinquents in leather jackets; dry cleaners—dry cleaners shown leaving spots in a suit; and waitresses—television waitresses depicted as hard-boiled and tough. The mother of a son called Melvin objected to so many simpletons being called Melvin.

A pressure group is not necessarily an evil force. It may be a perfectly legitimate organization, employing socially sanctioned methods to achieve a social end. But if the taboos of every segment of the audience were considered, the nation's television screens would be blank. It is when an organization misuses its right to speak up on its own behalf that undue suppression of content follows. And such misuse isn't necessary. The viewer, after all, is the final arbiter of taste and he has a ready weapon at hand to enforce his views—he can lean over and turn the knob.

### *Not All the Pressure Is from Groups*

That criticism of TV is not limited to pressure groups, or even to professional critics, is demonstrated in the section that follows. E. B. White, in his "Letter from the East," deplors TV's tendency to peddle cigarettes and culture with the same voice. Jack Gould, in "Licenses and Programs," examines the growing demand for broadcasting "in the public interest" and the editors of *Newsweek* delve into the question of just what "the public interest" might be and how it might be served. Other critics are more jocular and more kindly. W. F. Miksch, with tongue in cheek, actually congratulates the harassed indus-

try on its ability to teach anatomy by getting "Inside Everybody, With TV," and Charles W. Morton is only slightly perturbed by the tendency of baseball players to delay the game by hamming it up when on camera. In "What Do You Want from TV?" Robert W. Sarnoff and Stanley Frank ask a question that few people can honestly answer—and answer it.

### LETTER FROM THE EAST<sup>1</sup>

E. B. WHITE

The effects of television on our culture and on our tone are probably even greater than we suspect from the events of the last few years. TV's effect on political campaigning was great and . . . not entirely healthy. The debates were not conducive to reflection and sobriety; they encouraged quick, cagey answers delivered in headlong style to beat the clock. TV has kept the farmer up late at night, has lured the unwary candidate to offshore islands, and has drawn quiz contestants first into clicanery, then into perjury. It has given liver bile and perspiration a permanent place in the living room—the world's most honored secretions.

John Crosby, who watched television for a living until he felt himself getting loopy, wrote a very instructive column about the whole business several months back. Viewers, he reported, are less concerned about the falsity and fraud of commercials than about the annoyance of them. This is true, and it is unsettling. But you have to go beyond the mere characteristics of commercials to get at the real source of the annoyance. The physical form of TV is so familiar to all of us by this time that we seldom examine it with a fresh gaze. I believe that the basic shape of the audio-visual world is inferior to the shape of the world of journalism and the world of the stage and music hall. The trouble with TV is not that the programs are poor and the commercials sometimes repulsive but that the advertising matter is not in direct competition with the editorial

<sup>1</sup> From article by E. B. White, noted essayist and *New Yorker* staff member and contributor. *New Yorker*. 36:233-48. D. 3, '60. Reprinted by permission; © 1960 The New Yorker magazine, Inc.

matter, as it is in newspapers and magazines. I see no hope of improving television until this structural fault is corrected.

Take the world of journalism, which is the one I am most familiar with. If you open a copy of the *Times* to a page that has in one column a Macy ad displaying a set of china and in an adjoining column a news story about China itself, your eye makes a choice; you read about Macy's china or about Mao's China, according to your whim. It's a free selection. But if you turn your TV set to a channel, only one image appears, and after you have watched for a few moments, an advertiser buttonholes you and says his piece in a loud voice while you listen or try not to listen, as the case may be. Thus, your attention is not just invited by the commercial, it is to a large extent pre-empted. Pre-emption of this sort does not occur in periodicals. It cannot occur. There, advertising matter competes with editorial matter for the reader's attention, and it is fair competition.

Open *The New Yorker*. You may start reading a Profile and, in midcourse, switch to a shoe ad, either because the author of the Profile has allowed your attention to wander or because your feet are killing you. Or you may start reading an automobile ad and switch to the Race Track column, horses suddenly seeming, by contrast with cars, more amusing or more profitable. Whatever happens to you as you dip and sway in these pages happens because of competition. The text and the ads are on an even footing. The choice is yours. I think the cause of my own exasperation with television is that I resent having my attention pre-empted by anyone at all, whether pitchman or prophet. And because television has access to both eye and ear it presents a far more complex problem than do newspapers and magazines, which command only the eye. The problem is stickier, and no easy solution suggests itself.

Another structural difference between television and publishing is that in the case of magazines each article or poem or story is supported by the whole body of advertising, lumped, and not by an individual advertiser. In television it's the other way round; a TV show is usually identified with a sponsor and his product. The sponsor not only backs the show, he gets it up—

with the help, of course, of his Madison Avenue outriders. Thus, Chevrolet has Dinah Shore for its girl, Kraft Cheese has Perry Como for its boy. Suppose this passionate arrangement obtained in the world of periodicals; you'd have Walter Kerr reviewing the theatre for Hart, Schaffner & Marx, and you'd have Walter Lippmann cleaning up the political scene for Fab. Such an arrangement would be unnerving, to say the least. If Hart, Schaffner & Marx happened to own a piece of a show, Mr. Kerr would twitch in his seat so violently that he would wear out his critical judgment before the first-act curtain.

In newspapers and magazines (good old newspapers and magazines!), a great number of advertisers (the sum total of those represented) simply join forces in supporting the daring venture of putting out an issue; they buy space and hope to attract some unwary reader's glance, but they don't buy a writer or an artist, they don't create material, and their products are dissociated from the work and the personalities of the men and women who do create the editorial content. How different is TV, where the sponsor and his agency are in the saddle most of the time! Correction: the whole time.

The TV industry should realize that being in possession of a customer's ear is a responsibility unlike that of being in possession of his eye. The eye can reject an image, but the ear cannot escape from sound. TV from the start has seized this advantage and exploited it to the hilt, and from the start the audience has resented it. The exploitation mounts, the resentment mounts, and I think the resentment will continue to grow until something gives way and busts.

I'm a firm believer in the system of having private enterprise support public utterance; advertising is the safest and best foundation for free speech. It is also diverting and instructive in itself, being the showcase for our national dream, and people like to study advertising, provided they do so of their own free will. Advertising becomes objectionable and irritating only when it gets the upper hand, and that is exactly what it has got in television. The basic design of the medium is somehow defective.

Ideally, if TV is not to pre-empt the attention of the viewer and is to permit him a free choice of material, such as he enjoys with newspapers and magazines, a TV set should have two screens, one right next to the other—a delightful, if chaotic, situation. One screen would be the showcase for advertising, the other the showcase for editorial matter. The revenue from Screen 1 would support the material on Screen 2—the debates, the panels, the drama, the weather, and the news. Stations and networks would be in the same boat with publications; the editors would put the whole show together, without one single assist from advertising genius. Ronald Reagan, instead of appearing for General Electric, would appear for Ronald Reagan. Advertising would be regularly scheduled and would have its separate listing in the guide. A master switch would be at the viewer's hand. If he desired utter confusion, he could watch both screens at once. If something occurring on one screen seemed more diverting than the thing occurring on the other, he could flip. The viewer would enter his living room and find both screens going full blast—bedlam. On the advertising screen Zsa Zsa Gabor would be giving the news of underarm security; on the editorial screen the Secretary of State would be giving the news of national security. The viewer could decide which presentation, which person, seemed the more attractive or instructive. No program would have a patron, every program would enjoy the support of the entire field of advertising, and Dinah Shore could see the U.S.A. in a moving van if she wanted to. I do not sketch the outlines of this dizzying structure to show the solution to the problem of TV, merely to show what the problem really is—or what I think it really is. The problem is how to support the editorial stuff with the advertising stuff without subjecting the viewer to a thousand indignities and without compelling singers and actors and reporters and philosophers to identify themselves with hair sprays, bug sprays, floor wax, and marshmallows. If television advertising were truly in competition with editorial matter, instead of being in command of it, the quality of TV advertising would immediately improve. It would have to, in order to stay alive.

The most troublesome result of television's format is that, slowly but surely, the industry has pushed almost every celebrated performer into the role of pitchman. There is hardly a person of any note in the TV world who does not lead a double life; right in the middle of whatever he is saying or doing there comes a pause, and the performer holds up a can of cleaning fluid and recites the lesson. Prior to this unseemly pause, the actor or the singer or the ballplayer was obviously a person whose opinions and ideas were spontaneous and his own; then it suddenly turns out that his good opinion of the sponsor's product has been prefabricated and is, in reality, the opinion of somebody else. (Next week the sponsorship may change and his good opinion will shift smoothly to the new product, for the same or more money.) This is a relatively new cloud in the American sky, this practice of commandeering people in the arts for advertising and promotion. Across the TV screen marches an endless procession of peddlers. There is a no parallel to it in the publishing world. Some TV performers like it, some hate it, some, like Godfrey, are switch-hitters, as happy in one role as in the other; most (I think) simply accept it as an occupational hazard. No matter what a man thinks of it, he is not in a good position to hold out against it; the pressure is always on.

As a viewer, I feel demeaned. I hate all kinds of fuzziness. I believe that when a TV personality speaks disinterestedly one moment, interestedly the next, it does something to the performer and something to me. Even after so many years, I experience a slight internal twinge, as though I had taken a tiny bullet from a distant gun.

A year or so ago, payola was in the news and TV was in the doghouse. Americans were shocked at the way money was being passed around for sly promotional services. But payola strikes me as much less disquieting than pay. Payola has been around since the invention of money; it will always be around, because there will always be a new crop of alert characters willing to take money for undercover service. Payola is simply an evil associated with the human character, which is less than

perfect. But the steady drift of people from the lively arts into the ranks of advertising is not an evil; it is a mist settling on our pond. The old clarity simply isn't there any more. In its place we have the new, big, two-headed man, one mouth speaking his own words, smiling his own smile, the other mouth speaking the words that have been planted, smiling the smile that has been paid for in advance. This is nationally demoralizing.

If anybody thinks I'm implying that TV artists have compromised themselves by giving the pitch, he fails to understand my complaint. I do not think anybody has compromised himself; I think everybody has fallen heir to a system that is disagreeable, disenchanting, interruptive, and unhealthy. Any person who, as a sideline, engages in promoting the sale of a product subjects his real line of work to certain strains, and fogs the picture of himself in the minds of all. It seems sad that the TV industry, on which ride the country's hopes for entertainment, education, and information, should have felt it necessary, as a first step, to equip its pundits, its clowns, its reporters, and even its children, with something to sell.

### LICENSES AND PROGRAMS <sup>2</sup>

Television is in the middle of a new controversy over old problems: How good are its programs and who should make them better? Newton N. Minow, the vigorous new chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, touched off the controversy with his declaration that much of TV programing is "a vast wasteland" warranting governmental concern.

When television is good [said Mr. Minow] nothing—not the theatre, not the magazines or newspapers—nothing is better. But when television is bad, nothing is worse. I invite you to sit down in front of your television set when your station goes on the air and stay there . . . until the station signs off. I can assure you that you will observe a vast wasteland.

You will see a procession of game shows, violence, audience-participation shows, formula comedies about totally unbelievable families,

<sup>2</sup> Extracts from "TV Spectacular—The Minow Debate" by Jack Gould, radio and television critic of the *New York Times*. *New York Times Magazine*. p 14-15+. My. 28, '61. Reprinted by permission.

blood and thunder, mayhem, violence, sadism, murder, Western badmen, Western goodmen, private eyes, gangsters, more violence, and cartoons. And, endlessly, commercials—many screaming, cajoling and offending. And most of all, boredom. True, you will see a few things you will enjoy. But they will be very, very few. And if you think I exaggerate, try it. . . .

I believe in the people's good sense and good taste, and I am not convinced that the people's taste is as low as some of you assume. . . .

I am unalterably opposed to governmental censorship. . . . I want to see broadcasting improved and I want you to do the job. . . .

The industry, smarting under the chairman's strictures, detected a fresh assault on its freedom and feared increasing Federal intervention in the matter of what the public sees.

The challenge by Mr. Minow, which he delivered at the . . . [1961] convention of the National Association of Broadcasters in Washington, and the subsequent response have precipitated what promises to be one of the better TV spectacles to occur off the home screen. At issue are fundamental differences of philosophy concerning the relationship between government and industry in a field that deals with the volatile commodities of ideas and tastes.

Only in TV could there be a clash involving constitutional law and the prevalence of cowboys, international prestige and private eyes, Shakespeare and the sale of cigarettes, Congress and soap operas, presidential interviews and dental cavities, the frightening grandeur of a space flight and the numbing repetition of a spot announcement. There may or may not be something for everybody on TV but in the argument over the medium, there certainly is.

Broadly speaking, Mr. Minow's position is that television, extending into 50 million homes every day, is a source of vast influence by reason of what it either does or does not do on the air. Such a medium cannot be allowed to sink to the least common denominator of the national audience merely because that is where survival and profit come most easily. A rising curve of leadership and accomplishment in entertainment, education and information must be asked of TV if it is to do its

part in elevating cultural standards and in helping Americans to cope with the urgencies of the 1960's.

The position of the broadcasting industry is that progress can come only by evolution, not regulation. The stimulating programing admired by the do-gooders simply is not watched by sufficient millions to attract sponsors. TV can afford to serve the minority only by first satisfying the majority, which pays the bills. Moreover, if critics of television applied their rigorously sweeping standards to the world of books, newspapers and magazines, or to all entertainment, they would find the ratio between quality and mediocrity not notably different. Critics may dream that the masses will rise to their high level, but in reality it does not work out that way.

While the arguments in TV's great debate are comparatively familiar to the viewing audience, it is the conviction of both Mr. Minow and broadcasters that the fundamentals of the relationship between the FCC and the industry are not. . . .

#### *Broadcaster's Policy Is His Own*

Contrary to widespread belief, the FCC does not stipulate that a specific proportion of time on the air must be devoted to any particular kind of programing. It is up to the applicant to outline how much of the broadcast week he will assign to entertainment, religion, education, news, discussion, talks and so on. He must also state his policy with respect to commercials.

However, since a broadcaster knows that diversity is important to the FCC, he naturally makes representations in as many categories as he can or explains why he is omitting one. To a degree, therefore, the Government does have an influence over program content. A broadcaster knows he would get a cold reception if he put down 100 per cent entertainment and nothing else.

A television license runs for three years and it is on the question of its renewal that the latest controversy basically turns. As part of his renewal bid, a broadcaster must report what he put on the air during a representative week chosen by the FCC.

This report affords a comparison between what a broadcaster said he would do and what he actually did.

Not since radio station KDKA, Pittsburgh, received the first commercial franchise in 1920 has any outlet ever been denied a renewal because its programing failed to be in the public interest. Yet it has been common knowledge that a substantial number of stations have performed at wide variance with their promises, sometimes offering many more commercials than they said they would or cutting back on the volume of local and public-service programing.

Mr. Minow's argument for matching a station's performance with its promise is this: If a station knows it can operate without regard for its promises, it starts an erosion of standards that can quickly become widespread. If one outlet feels free to cram in commercials, its rival is apt to feel similarly free. If one network concentrates on the most profitable shows, skimps on public service and suffers no consequences, the other chains are induced to follow the same course. If the FCC issues licenses without regard to how they are actually used on the air, then its effort to protect the public interest becomes a hollow gesture.

The industry's argument against the performance-versus-promise philosophy is this: It constitutes an opening wedge for the Government to impose on broadcasters its own notions of what is good TV. For in order to retain a multimillion-dollar asset, a broadcaster will adjust to bureaucratic wishes in children's programing or almost anything else.

The broadcasters see a policy of "gradualness" at work. To begin, there is Mr. Minow's dramatic needling of the industry; presumably, a wary industry will respond by raising its promises at renewal time; then the FCC will insist the promises be fulfilled. If the process is repeated every three years, the broadcasters fear they will eventually become captives of the commission.

Essential to the renewal problem, of course, is the large question: Is *any* control of TV desirable? The justification for regulation is rooted in the scarcity factor; as long as there is even one community in which two parties want the same channel, the Government will have to make a choice. Since the applicants'

other qualifications may be the same, the test can only come on which promises the more balanced programing job.

The issue, therefore, reduces itself to the degree of control. Broadcasters see themselves as a fundamental arm of the free-enterprise system entitled to the privileges that are accorded the unlicensed media of the press and the stage.

According to the industry, a channel is a valuable public resource not because of its mere existence, or even its scarcity, but because of what the broadcaster has done to make it a powerful source of information, entertainment and education. It was private industry, not the Government, which took TV out of the laboratory in the first place, and it was private industry which invested countless millions before TV became a household fixture and was able to return those millions (albeit with fabulous interest).

In his heart, the broadcaster is convinced that TV is often a scapegoat. If, he asks, a broadcast station has a public trust, doesn't a newspaper also? Economic factors have caused a scarcity of newspapers in many towns; doesn't a community's only newspaper have an obligation to serve the entire community?

Yet, say the broadcasters, there are newspapers that place local crime news ahead of critical events in Laos, that put the pursuit of circulation above ethical considerations. But there is no outcry for regulation or reform. Merely because the licensing power offers a convenient weapon for bringing pressure, and because TV has such a dramatic impact on the public, the medium of the home screen is an inviting and easy target for those who are worried over a world imperfect in many spheres, not just one. . . .

#### *Case for Stronger Control*

Mr. Minow's case for stronger control begins with the contention that a license constitutes in effect a contract between the Government and a broadcaster stipulating how public property will be used. If the FCC overlooks repeated breaches of the contract and renews licenses automatically, then it betrays the intent of Congress in establishing the regulatory agency and concurs in the abuse of a public trusteeship.

If a station's promises are made only to be broken, then the criteria for choosing one applicant against another fall apart. The result may be discrimination against the more honorable applicant.

The new FCC chairman is convinced that evaluating the balance of a station's programming does not involve censorship or dictation. The concern of the FCC is limited to broad types of programming, not to specific attractions.

If, in his license application, a broadcaster said he would offer so many hours of discussion, he will merely be asked to show that he did so when the time comes for his license to be renewed. If he has kept his word, the issue ceases to exist. The FCC's only interest in the showing of an old movie is to determine whether the movie occupied time which the broadcaster had pledged would be used in another way; the content of either the movie or the show originally pledged is not germane.

The review procedure, in Mr. Minow's opinion, is necessarily imprecise. This imprecision accomplishes two difficult goals in a free society: It allows the broadcaster liberty to establish a schedule of his own devising, but it still provides a means of assuring adherence to his voluntary commitment to the Government.

By Mr. Minow's philosophy, the FCC cannot remain indifferent on the issue of over-all balance when the public can see for itself a steady increase in the so-called "action-adventure" type of programming and a proportionate decline in other types of presentations. Advertisers and mass audiences comprise part of the public whose interest must be guarded by the FCC but there are minority groups, like artists and educators, that are entitled to similar solicitude. The strongest protection of the rights of the majority viewers lies in respect for those of the minority. . . .

What will the future bring in the way of control of TV? Both Mr. Minow and the broadcasters agree on one thing: The core of their controversy lies in the mass economics of the medium. The ferocity of the competition will be the determining force for a long time to come. . . .

In the direct relationship between the FCC and the industry, it is likely that the dispute will take the form of artful fencing rather than a bloody duel. There could be a disadvantage for both the commission and the industry if the United States Supreme Court ever ruled on the FCC revocation of a license for reasons of programing.

A decision against the commission would eliminate the powers of persuasion it now has; a decision against the industry could lead to vastly more intervention than currently prevails.

Mr. Minow also has run head-on into the raw political power of the broadcasting industry's lobby in Washington; stations on the grass-roots level have turned the heat on their congressmen, many of whom were elected with the help of TV, to defeat the Kennedy Administration's plan for a reorganization of the FCC. Not only is the reorganization plan expected to perish [it did—Ed.] but Mr. Minow can prepare for a stiff battle from many quarters on any suggestion he may hereafter make.

What may ease his road, however, is three factors: first, the uncovering of a broadcaster whose performance could be equated with a grievous assault on the law; second, a recent amendment to the law that allows a fine or suspension for an offender, not the extreme "death penalty" of revocation; and third, the existence of some broadcasters who are notably sensitive to unfavorable public relations and will accommodate Mr. Minow by doing some of the things he asks. . . .

### TELEVISION AND "THE PUBLIC INTEREST"<sup>3</sup>

PLEASE ORDER YOUR MINIONS OF SATAN TO LEAVE MY STATION ALONE. YOU CANNOT EXPECT THE ALMIGHTY TO ABIDE BY YOUR WAVE-LENGTH NONSENSE . . . OPEN THIS STATION AT ONCE.

This fiery exhortation came crackling into Washington, D.C., in the distant and generally peaceful other-world of the twenties. It was signed by Aimee Semple McPherson, the celebrated Los

<sup>3</sup> From article in *Newsweek*. 58:61-4. S. 11, '61. Reprinted by permission.

Angeles evangelist and eleemosynar, and it was aimed straight at the beleaguered head of Herbert Hoover, then Secretary of Commerce. He was making the first hesitant attempts to clean up the messes created by that healthy but untidy infant called radio. Aimee, in her zeal to convert the heathen and speed up collections, had founded her own radio station, but with such inattention to technical matters that her broadcasts spread themselves willy-nilly over everyone else's wave lengths. After several warnings, Hoover closed down her station, and Aimee didn't get back on the air until she hired a capable engineer.

Beyond its historical interest, the endearing aspect of Aimee's old-time telegram is that, with a few changes, it might have been received in Washington last week. In its outraged tone, its ascription of nefarious motive, above all in its assumption that the broadcaster has a God-given right to use the air waves in any way he pleases, the message is a not unfair approximation of the attitude of a huge majority of today's TV and radio broadcasters toward a relatively new captain of Satan's minions: Newton N. Minow, thirty-five, a dedicated, joke-telling, star-bright lawyer and family man, and chairman since January [1961] of the Federal Communications Commission.

Minow has created a sensation in broadcasting by implementing—or threatening to implement—the law. At its founding in 1934, the FCC was empowered to issue, deny, revoke, or fail to renew broadcasting licenses to stations on the basis (among others) of their willingness to serve "the public interest." In applying for a license, prospective stations may volunteer their own definitions of "the public interest" by listing the percentage of broadcasting hours they propose to devote to each of eight categories: Entertainment; religion; agriculture; education (exclusive of discussion programs); news; discussion; talks (including sports), and miscellany. There is no such thing as an ideal apportionment, since "the needs of the community," which the prospective station is also expected to serve, will vary widely depending on the nature, size, and location of the community. A more or less typical station, though, might

promise to devote only about 70 per cent of its schedule to entertainment. . . .

Although the breakdown by category is not required, almost every prospective station has supplied one, and the FCC has leaned heavily on it in selecting one applicant over another. Newton Minow's rollicking idea has been to make the stations live up to their promises or lose their licenses. In this, surprisingly, he has been joined by a major figure within the industry: LeRoy Collins, the courtly ex-governor of Florida who now heads the National Association of Broadcasters. From the start Collins has been as firm a voice as Minow in demanding the upgrading of television programming. And to the annoyance of a majority of his employers, Collins has gone down the line with Minow on the remedy. "Some assert that the FCC has no proper or lawful concern with programming," he . . . [says]. "I shall be . . . candid and say that I disagree with this position."

### *Hue and Cry*

Since about half the TV stations in the nation, if they went up for renewal tomorrow, would have to admit to what Collins called "abuses in programming reflecting a gross lack of qualifications," the hue and cry has been piercing. Minow has found a way to pinpoint responsibility in an industry that regards buck-passing as a way of life. Until now, it has been almost impossible for a compassionate man to fix the blame for the mess. The networks say that they are caught in a vicious rating war; the ad agencies complain that their clients demand to reach the most people with the least expense; the clients wail that TV expenses are ruinous and they must fall back on lowest cost-per-thousand; the Hollywood film factories point to the huge number of hours that must somehow be filled each week.

The interesting thing about all these laments is that they are all true—and all irrelevant. The only gauge that matters is the one that the stations themselves have volunteered to the FCC. By threatening with utmost seriousness to crack down on the stations, Minow was bound to win the enmity of most of

the broadcasting industry. If he survives, it will mean nothing less than an over-all improvement in TV programing. In taking the course he has, FCC's Minow has become the most important single broadcasting figure in the most TV-conscious nation on earth.

To a highly un-FCC-like degree, Newt Minow has been a phrase-maker and a headline grabber. In his widely publicized "vast wasteland" speech to the NAB [see preceding article] known simply as The Speech around the FCC—he plastered TV programing with a thick coat of ridicule. Much of this still clings and still hurts in an industry that spends millions on promotion and regards a virtuous "image" as slightly more important than a virtuous wife.

Even so, the industry would have had no major trouble withstanding simple criticism; it has had lots of practice. TV and radio have been lampooned and lambasted without noticeable effect for three decades by educators, critics, many parents, some congressmen, all eggheads, and one previous FCC chairman [James Lawrence Fly, who headed the commission in 1939 to 1944]. . . .

Minow's challenge is unique. Not since the FCC was founded in 1934 has a station lost a license or been denied renewal for reasons of programing. Minow's cautiously phrased threat in The Speech ("renewal will not be *pro forma* in the future") produced instant panic, like a small stone thrown among pigeons, but not the sort of deep-seated worry that might make the pigeons consider changing their nesting habits. Then . . . at a broadcasting conference [at Northwestern University] lawyer Newt Minow laid out his philosophy and his legal position in a tightly reasoned speech that hit like a shot-gun blast in a dovecote. Broadcasters, who thought that Minow, like every FCC chief before him, would have his little say and then go away, found themselves in a position where they would have to make serious answers to serious charges, and most had no idea what to answer. "Despite a great deal of industry bitterness over Minow statements and actions," admitted a trade mouthpiece called *Sponsor* . . . "vigorous and in-

telligent opposition to . . . his philosophy has crystallized very slowly. Early objections to the statements of the FCC chairman . . . tended to sound like merely selfish, reactionary attempts to justify the status quo, and were promptly branded as such."

### *The Status Quo*

Even the minions of Satan would have to admit that the status quo is seductively attractive. TV broadcasting, in fact, is probably more attractive than any status quo in the country. [When] the FCC released its . . . [1960] figures on industry profits, it turned out that television as a whole—including everything from the CBS network to the smallest UHF educational station—earned an income before taxes of \$244 million, or a little better than 19 per cent on sales. According to the usual formula, this means a net profit *after* taxes of about 9 per cent, which is more than was earned last year by automobiles, chemicals, textiles, or most purely private industries which are *not* licensed by the government to serve the public interest.

When the figures are broken down to include only the big cities, the big stations, and the big networks—to include, in other words, those places where all the important decisions about the nation's programming are made and where most of the nation's people live—the status quo becomes downright dizzying. The three networks made their traditionally tiny profit—only about 8 per cent before taxes—but their fifteen owned-and-operated stations earned a staggering 42 per cent before taxes. Thus while the three networks made only \$33.6 million before taxes on a gross of \$420 million, their fifteen stations, on little more than one third as large a gross, earned \$61.6 million. The same embarrassment of riches is enjoyed by nearly all big-city network affiliates, regardless of ownership: 67 TV stations reported net income before taxes of more than a million dollars [in 1960]. . . . "Any big-city network affiliate that doesn't make 35 or 40 per cent," says one executive of an independent group of stations, "is just a badly run station." (Wealth itself is not venal: The network-owned stations are

generally excellent, and the Croesus-like Westinghouse group is a model of intelligent broadcasting.)

Dull and dusty-dry though they are, the figures shed a certain light on what, besides wounded vanity and honest conviction, has prompted the yelps of outrage from the TV industry. Something more than 85 per cent of the profits made in U.S. television comes *not* from the glamorous, hyper-publicized networks, over which Minow and the FCC have no control anyway, but from individual TV stations, over which the FCC has a carefully defined power of life and death. To fail to renew a license may be, as many of Minow's critics assert, a glancing blow at the Constitution; in any case, it is undeniably a direct blow at the pocketbook.

Pending formal rebuttal by the networks this . . . storm of criticism has almost all been what *Sponsor* politely called "uncrystallized." At one end is the objection that Minow has never been specific about what kind of cleanup he wants. "It's easy to blast away and say everything is bad," [says] David Dortort, producer of NBC's "Bonanza." . . . "But he doesn't offer any specifics—tell us what's actually bad, what's good, and how we can improve the bad." At the other end is the equal and coexistent objection that Minow is entirely too specific about what he wants. John W. Guider, president of WMTW-TV, in Poland Spring, New Hampshire, complained in a speech . . . "It [Minow's crackdown] is the very essence of censorship. It is censorship when Big Brother in Washington decides what you shall see and hear regardless of your personal preferences."

The comicality of this kind of thing doesn't amuse Minow very much. Normally imperturbable, even serene, he becomes ruffled at the charge that he is a potential censor. "What kind of censor would I make?" he grumbles privately. "I've been a member of the American Civil Liberties Union for years." Publicly he has been at pains to shake the label from himself. "I am unalterably opposed to governmental censorship," he declared in *The Speech*.

Minow is too good a lawyer, however, to try to get by with simple disclaimers based on personal conviction. The

foundation of the FCC's power over licensing, and the crux of Minow's argument in the great debate, are that the FCC's review of a station's programing does not comprise censorship or denial of free speech under the First Amendment, and that the FCC has been specifically empowered to make just such a review of programing.

### *Rock 'n' Roll*

The Supreme Court has said that the term censorship, "as commonly understood, denotes *any* examination of thought or expression in order to prevent publication of objectionable material," or "*previous restraint*" of communications or publications.

I believe that the commission clearly does *not* censor anything [Minow said at Northwestern]. We don't censor rock 'n' roll, or the Westerns, or quiz shows, or even overdoses of brutality. Nor do we say: "Put on this program or do not broadcast that program." . . . We never view a program in advance of broadcast and prevent its being seen by the public.

What the FCC does (or will do) is review the station's performance at renewal time to see whether the station has lived up to its voluntary promises.

The most widely offered rebuttal, Minow said, is that broadcasting and publishing are exact equivalents: "The First Amendment prohibits governmental concern with the content of a newspaper; ergo—the government is similarly barred from concern with a broadcaster's programing." This argument, Minow said, is immediately depleted by the fact that in the 1920's, facing up to the chaos that had resulted from the unlicensed spread of radio, broadcasters themselves "petitioned, cajoled, and literally begged the Congress to restore order—and the Congress responded with the regulatory pattern we now have." The Supreme Court has ruled repeatedly that stations, unlike newspapers, must meet the test of public service.

But is review of a station's programing a valid method of determining whether the station is serving "in the public interest?" Once again Newt Minow trotted out a long string

of precedents (privately he makes a strong point of the fact that the FCC has never been beaten in the courts on the question of its rights to consider programing as one criterion of renewal). And even if there had never been a court test, there is no doubt that both Congress and the broadcasting industry intended, when they worked out the Communications Act in 1934, that the newly created FCC would review programing and make decisions on this basis. Ironically, the clearest statement of this principle came in 1934 from the NAB itself. "It is the manifest duty of the licensing authority," the National Association of Broadcasters told Congress, in passing upon applications for licenses or the renewal thereof, "to determine whether or not the applicant is rendering . . . adequate public service. Such service necessarily includes the broadcasting of a considerable proportion of programs devoted to education, religion, labor, agriculture, and similar activities concerned with human betterment."

And there the matter was laid to rest. Franklin D. Roosevelt for mysterious reasons packed the first FCC with political hacks and has-beens who were content to draw their paychecks and let sleeping "Rin Tin Tins" lie (says Newt Minow: "Anyone to whom \$20,000 a year is a lot of money ought not to be appointed to the commission"). As network radio prospered, the notion of government review grew less and less pleasing to broadcasters; radio gave way in turn to network television, which prospered even more. Broadcasting became both a splendid investment for congressmen (18 per cent of the members of both houses own pieces of radio or TV stations) and a feared potential weapon at election time. "A lot of congressmen," Minow says, "have come and told me privately: 'I'm with you, but I can't come out in the open. I have my own program back home,' or 'I'm coming up for reelection,' or something like that."

To hold his stance on license renewals, Minow already has all the authorization he needs from Congress (although he will have a flock of new tests in court, which he welcomes). But Minow has a host of other plans, involving reorganization of

the FCC and extension of its jurisdiction, and on these he has already had his first skirmishes with Congress. A massive re-organization plan, which would have greatly increased the chairman's power, was roundly defeated. . . . Another plan, allowing individual members of the committee to conduct hearings on cases instead of forcing all seven members to sit as a group on every trivial item that comes along, has been signed by President Kennedy. . . .

### *Packages and Pieces*

Minow . . . hopes to increase the number of TV channels—primarily UHF channels—and to find a means of compelling TV set manufacturers to install UHF converters on all new sets. Because individual stations take so much of their programming from the networks, Minow feels it is not completely fair to hold the stations solely responsible while the networks escape FCC jurisdiction.

It seems to me the whole problem of TV is that so few people dominate what the rest of us will see and hear [he has said]. . . . Our real goal is to have more people contributing to TV. To do this, we're first going to ask Congress for the power to regulate networks. Then we're going to establish rules against the talent-agency practice of insisting on packages. If you want Jack Benny, for example, you have to take a whole package of other programs from them. And we're going to establish rules about the network practice of insisting on "pieces" of programs and full rerun rights as the price of allowing them on the networks.

Even if Congress were used to the idea of dealing with a strong FCC, this would be an imposing series of authorizations to ask of it. To bring it off now, when broadcasters are disputing authorizations the FCC got twenty-seven years ago, Minow will need total backing from the Administration and an incredible show of political-legal finesse and conviction from himself. He has the Administration's backing and, as . . . [to his convictions], the following passage may be of interest. It is taken from a personal credo written by Minow for the

clarification of his own thought just before he went to Washington:

Historically, television stations plan and program the telecasting hours to attract the greatest number of viewers for the largest amount of time. . . . This general goal of the greatest appeal to the greatest number is a fact of economic life which should not be condemned no matter how much TV critics might deplore or question mass TV taste. But in attracting the greatest audience most of the time, a station owner cannot bypass the minority "some" of the people during some smaller portion of its programing time. Constitutionally, the will of the majority is never allowed to persecute . . . a minority.

#### INSIDE EVERYBODY, WITH TV <sup>4</sup>

I wonder if they still bother teaching physiology in school. If so, how does a teacher manage to compete against commercial television for a kiddie's credulity?

He must feel a perfect fool trying to explain, for instance, the component parts of the human brain when just about every child in the classroom knows from having watched television commercials that there can be no room for cerebellums and medullae oblongatae in a head already crammed full of sledge hammers, lightning machines, and clogged sinuses. And why should a child abandon the anatomical knowledge which has come his way through following "The Rifleman" for the unsupported theories of a sheltered grade-school teacher?

My own school days were pre-TV, yet I recall next to nothing of physiology. Being a somewhat squeamish child, I usually turned my eyes away whenever an anatomy chart was unrolled. What I looked like inside never excited my curiosity, and until television came along and forced the facts on me, I kept confusing the human body with a drawing of Watt's steam engine. There, I've said it: for me, television succeeded where the school system failed. So if the Department of Education will kindly step aside, I'll demonstrate how simple the study of the human body can be, thanks to TV:

<sup>4</sup> By W. F. Miksch, former newspaperman, now a free-lance writer for magazines. *Atlantic Monthly*. 208:114+. Jl. '61. Reprinted by permission.

*The Head:* The top of the head (which science used to think housed a brain) actually is divided into three cells, or chambers. Two are filled with electrical charges which spark a lot, while the third contains a suspension coil spring from a 1954 Buick. (There are some heads in which this last chamber accommodates, instead of the spring, a small blacksmith shop complete with hammer and anvil, but such cases, happily, seem rare). The chambers, from left to right, are for (1) Tension, (2) Pain, and (3) Jittery Nerves, and all are capable of lighting up brightly depending on what you've been up to. For a really first-class headache, it is important that all three chambers be in good working order.

The middle head takes in the nose and front of the face as far back as the ears. This is the S zone, "S" being the scientific symbol for Sinus. The S zone is pretty much like an ordinary kitchen sink faucet (without washers, of course) and is composed chiefly of membranes in need of shrinking.

Directly behind the S zone is the Cough Control Nerve Center. People with weak cough control nerves are apt to be bores at the theatre.

Oh, yes, I almost forgot. The middle head also houses the teeth, whose function is the collection of tiny food particles which, in turn, decay the teeth. Thus, Mother Nature takes care of her own.

*The Digestive Tract:* This is a vertical pipe connecting the middle head with the stomach. In most cases, the pipe is a straight section, but there also are digestive tracts where the pipe is spiraled. There is nothing wrong with having a spiraled tract, however; it gives pills with quick-flaking action more time to flake off before hitting the stomach.

*The Stomach:* The stomach is a transparent glass globe which resembles a goldfish bowl. It is half filled with stomach acid, the supply of which is maintained by a perpetual leak in the roof. It is in our stomachs that A's and B's look for a way out—and small wonder.

*The Muscles:* There are some muscles, situated mainly in the back, which knot up or tire, depending on your activities. If

you would like to know what your muscles look like and don't have a television set handy, just slice up an old inner tube into strips and braid them.

*The Skin:* All the wonderful moving parts previously mentioned are packaged in a handy wrapping called the Human Skin, and the less said about it, the better. The skin is red, detergent-cracked, chafed, and completely covered with bacteria. It's a wonder we survive inside it.

Well, there it is. TV Anatomy, a snap course if I ever saw one.

### THE TERRIBLE TOLL OF TABOOS <sup>5</sup>

The subject is censorship—good or bad? There are advocates here, I am sure, and also dissenters. Let me first, however, define our terms—let us be quite certain we are speaking about the same thing.

My dictionary defines the word censor as: "*an official—who examines books, plays, news reports, motion pictures, radio programs, etc., for the purpose of suppressing parts deemed objectionable on moral, political, military or other grounds—any person who supervises the manners and morality of others.*"

I quarrel with this definition because it covers only half the problem—but for the moment we'll let it stand. I'd also like to limit my observations to the only aspect of this problem about which I feel in any way qualified to speak—namely the dramatic area in broadcasting—in broadest terms, the theatre.

The theatre has always been—and is still—a meeting place for the rebellious spirit and the rebellious mind. Aristophanes—I trust that's going back far enough—delighted huge audiences just because he tore to shreds the moral, political and military codes of his time. The best of theatre has always been vulgar, violent and disturbing. It feeds on the false values most firmly advocated by the Pharisees of every age. Its favorite butt is the complacent palace-guard set up to protect some inviolate half-truth—be it moral, political, military or religious. In order to

<sup>5</sup> From article by Worthington Miner, executive producer of National Telefilm Associates' "The Play of the Week." *Television*. 18:42-7. Mr. '61. Reprinted by permission.

delight its audience—to win allegiance and applause—it must shock, awaken and disturb. Every great dramatist creates a spiritual standard of his own, challenging all who refuse to accept his way of spelling "good" or "bad."

He is at war with the censor before he starts.

Look at a handful of the accepted giants of the theatre. Within certain areas Shakespeare was the censor's darling—indeed, he might well qualify for a vice presidency at BBDO [Batten, Barton, Durstine & Osborn, the New York advertising agency]. Not one passionate kiss nor one unchallenged blasphemy appears in all the twenty-six plays. On the other hand, he painted a nobleman of the realm as a whoremaster, a thief, a drunkard and a liar. He spewed the foulest venom through the lips of Thersites, created a series of monstrous, amoral and incestuous women, made an aging Jew into a public laughing-stock, and spattered his dialogue with bawdy puns and double-entendres that might well put Mae West to shame.

A century later, John Gay rocked a political machine with *The Beggar's Opera*, calling the dignified rulers of England a pack of pimps, pick-pockets and highwaymen. It delighted the audience then, as it has delighted a New York audience for well over a thousand nights. Macheath is still "The Knife."

Ibsen tore the veil of demure silence from a social disease, while Shaw charged in to ridicule medicine, the Salvation Army, marriage, Church, state and the Empire.

O'Neill slashed at hypocrisy and prejudice—Max Anderson ripped into political chicanery in Washington—Bob Sherwood lacerated the monstrosity of war, and Tennessee Williams and Lillian Hellman have exposed the dry rot below the surface of southern gallantry.

Here is the cold, hard fact. Under the code of censorship existent in television today, not one of the world's greatest dramatists would, in his own time, have been permitted to put his play on the air. The combined forces of advertiser, advertising agency and network are dedicated to the emasculation, if not the total destruction, of vital, passionate theatre. It has been said—and wisely—that great theatre exists only as it concerns itself

with three basic areas of living conflict—politics, religion and sex—and it is precisely within these areas that censorship wields its wildest and most hotly defended blue pencil. The blazing word "verboten" faces anyone—writer, producer or actor—who has the temerity (Is that, perhaps, a synonym for integrity?) to search for truth, or to arouse outrage. There is a dictum: "Never offend anyone; He might start using another brand of tobacco!"

Without desiring to hedge on any aspect of this indictment, I would still like to be clear on certain challenging aspects of the problem.

I do not advocate total license for television.

Television has inherent problems that do not exist in the theatre. It is free—it brings its wares to the people, does not ask the people to go out and select the things they want to see. Anyone above the age of four can turn on a television set. If ideas and conduct haphazardly stumbled on are designed to shock an adult, they may well terrify, confuse and harm a younger mind. The method and the time of exposure of thoroughly adult drama may, therefore, be the subject of enlightened supervision. But to say how and when is a very different thing from saying it may not be produced at all. Within this limited area I would accept and condone intelligent controls.

Official censorship—as we know it in television—is not the only ogre. There is another kind of censorship that no dictionary recognizes, but it is quite as dangerous, just as rapacious, as that which TV imposes. It is thoroughly wrong to make television the isolated goat, without recognizing the equally restrictive and venal censorship controlling our theatre today. This is the censorship from below.

Broadway could at one time—a very short time ago—boast of its freedom, its adult divorcement from any supervision beyond the power of the idea the dramatist chose to express. This theatre no longer exists. Broadway is today in a strait jacket as crippling as that which assails TV. The villain is not cost-per-thousand, but merely cost—the cost of production, the cost of the try-out, the cost of the cast and stagehands, the cost

of a seat in the sixth row. These costs have imposed a vicious censorship on Broadway. A play is no longer chosen on a basis of merit, but on its capacity to appeal to the only audience which can afford two seats on the aisle—the expense-account trade. This evil permeates and poisons the primary standards of good theatre. A producer is forced to look for a property, not because he cares about it or believes in it, but because it possesses a sufficient burlesque-house appeal to attract the jaded and often boozy tastes of the traveling salesman. In no other way can he finance the show. He must moreover, use a cast, not because it is best for the play, but because it will insure some sale at the box-office, while encouraging the benefit brokers to insure the show against utter disaster.

This form of censorship has had a crippling effect on the Broadway theatre. The evil is there for all to see. And so the worst season that television has ever known is matched by the worst season on Broadway in thirty years.

### *Into the Swamps of Mediocrity*

Realistically I accept that under the existent economy of network broadcasting, the advertiser and his agent must in self-protection, drive dramatic programming deeper and deeper into the swamps of mediocrity. An agency struggling to justify its 15 per cent commission must attempt more and more to control the creative aspects of production—not to improve the quality of the program, but solely to eliminate any forthright or provocative quality that might offend a buyer in Sheboygan.

In my twenty years in television, the most imaginative managerial idea I have encountered is Ely Landau's [Landau was board chairman of National Telefilm Associates, producers of "Play of the Week"] concept for producing and financing "Play of the Week." It is ironic that a single local station here in New York should have been the one to do what no network has dared to try—to release its creative personnel from the strait jacket of commercial interference. I have worked now for nearly

a year with "Play of the Week." I have never to date received a single call from an advertiser or an agency executive. I don't even know who they are. No lunches, no conferences, no arguments, no refusals. When I secure a property like *The Iceman Cometh*, I ask Ely Landau if he wants to put it on the air. When he says yes, that's it.

The yardstick is not sensationalism, spurious sex, or even a controversial shot in the arm. We didn't do "The Iceman" for any of these reasons. We did it because we believed it was one of the greatest American contributions to theatre—and, therefore, the American public had a right to see it.

The history of "The Iceman" is intimately interwoven with the patterns of censorship. Many years ago I had, for a brief time, an intimate relationship with O'Neill. He was a man without a dirty thought in his mind—he deplored blasphemy and he deplored a dirty joke. But he knew people and felt for them with the deepest compassion. He also respected them too much to present them in any roseate glow to appease the delicate nostrils of a watch-dog censor. He let them speak for themselves—and their speech was crusty, crude and accurate.

It is faintly amusing now to look back on the reaction of so many after "The Iceman" was first put on tape. Ely Landau was battered with dire forebodings—forebodings born and conditioned by the commercial mind, which inevitably belittles the stature of the public and shrivels before a hint of adverse response. He was told didactically by every wise, objective observer—from salesman to lawyer—that he would lose half his audience, lose every sponsor on the series, lose his license for the station, lose his shirt. To his credit, and against this wave of adverse advice, he let "The Iceman" go on the air. And go on the air it did, as O'Neill wrote it.

None of the dire forebodings of the wise Madison Avenue minds were borne out. There was a microscopic amount of adverse mail—something like thirty letters. There was no sponsor complaint nor cancellation, no FCC complaint, no religious

complaint. In the face of compelling theatre, little voices are stilled. Also, quite incidentally, the rating doubled.

"The Iceman" is merely the outstanding example of how far a courageous man with flexible imagination can go toward giving television a shot in the arm without suffering a catastrophic economic setback in return. No network censor would have passed this production—but, by the same token, 80 per cent of all our productions this year would have been refused. Integrity of purpose and dignity of spirit are weightless assets on the censor's scale.

This is bad enough. But not the worst. The worst is what remains under the golden stamp of approval. When all searching into politics, religion and sex are removed—when every "damn" and "hell" is gone—when every Italian is no longer a "wop" and every Negro is no longer a "nigger"—when every gangster is renamed Adams or Bartlett, and every dentist is an incipient Schweitzer, when, indeed, every advertiser and account executive smiles—what is left? For this the censor must answer.

What is left? Synthetic hogwash and violence! Not one corpse per half-hour, but three. Shot through the guts, the head or the back—the bloodier the better—Nielsen and Trendex demand it! Untruth and spurious gallantry. Let a woman blast her man in the face with a shotgun—but, please, no cleavage. Tears? Oh, yes—lots of tears—for the poor misunderstood woman, or man, who just happened on the side to be selling heroin—or themselves. And in the daytime—Woman! The backbone of the home, the family, the business, the works. Oh, yes, within the censor's acceptance, the woman is forever a giant of integrity, loyalty, force—while generally misunderstood and abused. Man—a poor, fumbling, well-meaning idiot—or a martyr. This is what the censor declares every American adolescent should know about his father.

Here, then, is the ultimate evil of censorship. One may defend some of the things it deplores—but who can defend the things it permits? Mediocrity, boredom, sadism and untruth.

Over my name, I'll let "The Iceman" stand. Let the censor and his supporters put their names above "The Untouchables."

PLAY BALL! <sup>6</sup>

For the past two or three baseball seasons the suspicion has been growing in me that television has added much to the time-consuming aspect of the game. It may be that one notices the small delays more on TV than amid the crowd in the ball park, but it may be equally true that an awareness of their roles as TV performers is aggravating that touch of the ham which seems to reside in many athletes, especially pitchers. I assume that sports announcers, who have surely become the most statistically-minded segment of the entertainment world, could tell us to a split second the average duration of the . . . [season's] big-league game, and I offer an uneducated guess that TV has spun it out considerably.

The pitcher has always regarded himself as the star performer, but the histrionics which now precede every pitch look like the unabashed bid for more TV camera time. We see the same old cap-twitching, pants-hitching interval, the business with the rosin bag, and the scrutiny of the ball, in which the pitcher often acts as if he had never seen a baseball before.

Then comes the stare-down, which somehow resembles the walk-down in the TV Westerns when the marshal and the gunman are getting set to blast each other. For the stare-down the pitcher leans forward, arms dangling apelike, and eyes the batter unwinkingly for what does seem an awfully long time. "He's getting his sign," says the narrator. "He's got it." But no, the pitcher wags his head from side to side. "He's shaking it off." More staring from the stooping posture ends with a barely perceptible nod by the pitcher. He straightens up. "He's got his sign," says the narrator. That may very well be, but what follows is another brown study and, if first base is occupied, several throws to the first baseman. "He's keeping an eye on that runner." Uh-huh. The batter is fed up by this time and steps out of the box. Now it's the batter who goes through the rosin bag business. There are rosin bags all over the place. In

<sup>6</sup> From monthly feature "Accent on Living," by Charles W. Morton, associate editor of *Atlantic Monthly* and author of *A Slight Sense of Outrage*. *Atlantic Monthly*. 204:81-2. O. '59. Reprinted by permission.

Boston there's even one for the on-deck circle. The odd thing is that after handling the rosin bag and throwing it down the players all wipe their hands on their uniforms, which ought, it seems to me, to put them right back where they were in the first place. Eventually the pitcher pitches, and the batter knocks a series of fouls out of play into the stands. These procedures take a lot of time, most of it occupied by the stare-down.

The protective hard cap worn by batters is another new source of delay. To judge from the way these caps are tossed to a sort of valet, once a batter has reached base, they are not unduly heavy and are apparently made of some tough plastic material. But the convention has developed that the base runner, frail creature that he is, would be cruelly burdened by having to run while wearing the cap, as if it were made of armor plate or lead. So, more protocol and more delay attend its discarding. Caps are a great preoccupation with both pitchers and batters, who are forever tugging at them, taking them off and putting them on, sometimes just fingering the visor, or again taking the cap off and wiping the sweatband with the elbow. Is it against the rules for a player to carry a pocket handkerchief?

All the players are aware that most of the TV camera time is spent on the pitcher-batter activity, and if the pitcher has his stare-down to fatten his part, so does the batter still have his feet to keep him busy in a variety of footwork and foot maintenance, which the lens follows to the smallest detail.

We have the batter striding up to the box, a confident figure, swinging two or three bats and making, as heretofore, a fine show out of discarding the spares. What follows next is more for the camera than for practical purposes: a quick, almost frantic scuffling in the dust. The batter stamps, kicks, and digs with his cleats as if to hollow out a regular foxhole for his stance. Breaking off suddenly in this effort, he carefully taps the side of each foot with his bat, ostensibly in order to remove any accumulation of dirt from his cleats.

The pitcher meanwhile is engrossed in other matters; he scans the heavens or looks at the outfield. He may just stand there, slapping the ball into his glove. But the batter, in this

competitive dillydallying, has begun to shift the dust into little mounds with his feet; he makes a neat little hill with his right foot and moves it four inches to a new location with his left. There is nothing to stop the pitcher from doing the same thing with *his* dust, out on the mound, so *he* begins moving around little piles of dirt.

These phenomena are, of course, in addition to the routine plate pounding, wriggling, and practice swinging of the batter, and the pitcher's standard items of delay. They will be presented in fine detail in the World Series, an occasion when television and baseball combine in full flower.

### WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM TV? †

Speaking for myself, I can't give a blanket endorsement to everything on TV. I don't believe any individual can give unqualified approval to a medium which must be geared to a wide range of interests. I try to watch it every evening, and I'm hardly enchanted by all I see. Taken indiscriminately, programming on various stations can add up to too much violence. Conflict is a basic ingredient of drama, but sometimes it seems that blood and brutality are laid on with a trowel, after the fashion of Mickey Spillane, just for the shock effect.

Phony social philosophy in plays about beatniks and characters full of self-pity annoys me, especially when issues are not resolved realistically. Many situation comedies leave me cold, and I don't care for most audience-participation shows—an opinion, I might add, that predated the quiz scandals of 1959. My pet personal peeve is the exaggerated emphasis put on the Top Ten rated shows by the trade press, advertising agencies and sponsors, a practice that spawns a rash of bad imitations patterned on a few formats and themes which happen to be popular at the moment.

† From the article by Robert W. Sarnoff, chairman of the board of the National Broadcasting Company, as told to Stanley Frank, news correspondent, free-lance writer, and former associate editor of the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Saturday Evening Post*, 234:13-15+. Jl. 1, '61. Reprinted by special permission of the *Saturday Evening Post*. © 1961 by The Curtis Publishing Company.

Certainly TV can stand a lot of improvement, but I contend it is better in terms of quality and professional competence than critical observers acknowledge. They assume that anything labeled esthetic is superior to mass-appeal entertainment. I like Westerns because they are relaxing—and because top-grade shows such as "Wagon Train" and "Maverick" have better motivation, plot construction and production values than serious dramas that are arty and pretentious.

People who harp on TV's mediocrity refuse to make moderate allowances for its insatiable drain on creativity. The NBC network furnishes 92½ hours of programing a week, embracing 143 shows. Every ten days the actual playing time of original material we produce exceeds Broadway's output for an entire year. During the same period we use more dramatic scripts than the three biggest movie studios complete in a year. Inevitably some of our stuff is trivial, just as Broadway and Hollywood have their share of flops despite the high-powered talent lavished on their productions.

A more serious complication is unique to TV among mass media—the problem of serving the *total* public. The *Saturday Evening Post*, for example, is edited for readers whose interests differ distinctly from subscribers to *Playboy* and *Horizon*. The *New York Times*'s extensive coverage of news is not designed to attract readers who are content with a tabloid's once-over-lightly treatment. A local movie theatre and a downtown art house that shows avant-garde films by Ingmar Bergman do not draw the same type of patrons.

Such distinctions go by the board when a viewer clicks on TV with a proprietary flourish. He wouldn't dream of reading a book taken at random off a library shelf or going to the movies without checking first to see what is playing, but he expects the set to do his bidding like an all-purpose genie because it is in the intimacy of his home. He wants a program tailored to his mood at the moment, and if it is not available he dismisses TV as a bore.

*Something for Everybody*

What do you want from TV? No matter how elevated your tastes are, I guarantee that it offers more than you have time to watch, as I will demonstrate. It merely involves consulting the schedule in a newspaper; that is less effort than is customarily made for any other medium of entertainment or information. I think occasional viewers who constantly sound off about TV's responsibility for raising the country's cultural level have an equal obligation to watch programs put on for the discriminating minority. Music lovers have had the gall to tell me they don't listen to the NBC Opera Company because Sunday afternoon is not a convenient time. Yet they will go to the trouble of buying tickets weeks in advance and traipsing to the Metropolitan Opera to hear some of the same stars TV brings into their living rooms.

Another glaring inconsistency continually pops up in caustic comments on TV's mediocrity. The legal standard for broadcasting is programing in the public interest. But how do you interpret "interest"? Does the word denote that which holds the attention of the vast majority, or does it carry the connotation of promoting the welfare of society?

The answer, of course, is a combination of both definitions. It is illogical to say the air belongs to the public, then argue that we ought to ignore the preferences of the majority. It would be just as wrong to brush off more cultivated viewers and neglect the broadcaster's moral obligation to raise popular tastes. Since nobody wants a Federal agency to infringe on the audience's freedom of choice by setting arbitrary criteria for programing, the only alternative is to continue under the present system and patiently inculcate an appreciation of higher artistic values.

A network, therefore, has the dual responsibility to reflect and influence public tastes. If critics understood the dynamics of a mass medium, they would realize these objectives do not conflict. ¶ The primary function of a network is to attract the

mass audience. It establishes the economic base for sponsors' tremendous costs—and supports programs with limited appeal.

"Wagon Train," Perry Como and Dinah Shore carry the NBC Opera, which has been sponsored for only eleven of sixty performances since 1950 and has cost us nearly \$6 million. The profits from mass-appeal shows enabled us to absorb a loss of \$11 million in 1960 on informational programs, an area in which our commitments will be even greater this year. When an hour in prime time (from 7:30 to 10:30 P.M.) is pre-empted for an unsponsored news special, we lose more than \$100,000 in charges to an advertiser for air time, plus as much again for production costs if the canceled show cannot be put on at a later date.

Permit me to clarify one point. A network is not under any legal compulsion to meet FCC requirements for a balanced program. NBC last year presented 288 hours of news, 30 per cent of it in prime time, to keep the public informed on important domestic and foreign developments. CBS has the identical policy, and I hope I don't sound patronizing in saying that ABC is trying to make a more respectable showing in this field.

The pay-off on the range of culture and information a network gives viewers is an analysis of its ratio of programs in eleven categories. I have chosen February 1961 as a yardstick for NBC, because it was about as routine a month as we ever had. There was not an unusual run of major news breaks or public-affairs specials to load the figures in our favor. Following is a proportionate breakdown of our programs during the month:

News, public affairs,	
education	23.9 per cent
Games, quizzes	17.9
Variety shows	14.9
Drama	12.7
Westerns	6.0
Situation comedy	5.4
Audience participation	5.4
Sports	5.4
Action adventure	5.1
Children's	2.8
Opera	.5

As you can see, the schedule was weighted heavily with cerebral programs. Information consumed more than double the combined time given to Westerns, cops-and-robbers and adventure. This stress on news hurt us competitively—only 13 per cent of the audience was tuned in to 23.9 per cent of our schedule—but it represented an effort to stimulate an awareness of current events. Further, this was—and it still is—the category with the most shows in prime evening time and on Sunday afternoon. During the twenty-five hours a week included in those periods, we devote an average of six hours to news, public affairs and culture.

### *The Intellectual Ghetto*

I know I'll be rapped for suggesting that Sunday afternoon is a choice spot for high-brow TV. The networks always are accused of throwing culture a few, grudging crumbs by dumping superior shows into the so-called intellectual ghetto. The gesture costs nothing, the story goes, because there is no demand from advertisers for the time. Rubbish. Experience has proved that such programs draw better on Sunday afternoon, when people have the leisure to reflect on weighty issues. In prime time, competition from light entertainment cuts deeply into the available audience.

The rocky history of "Omnibus" is clear evidence that culture best survives, if somewhat fitfully, on Sunday afternoon. No show ever has been coddled more by the networks. CBS first gave it liberal transfusions of money and talent on Sunday afternoon, but after four years of disappointing audience reaction the show moved in 1956 to ABC on Sunday night with the help of a subsidy from the Ford Foundation.

The rating dropped 45 per cent. The next year "Omnibus" completed the circuit of networks by coming to NBC on Sunday afternoon. It promptly regained all the former viewers, plus a slight increase. ABC, incidentally, put a Western into "Omnibus'" slot and tripled its share of the audience.

Despite these hard realities, we have been adding egghead-type shows to the schedule in prime time and have made

encouraging progress in attracting audiences. "The Coming of Christ," a "Project 20" on "The Real West" and a "White Paper" on the U-2 affair pulled ratings that compared most favorably with popular entertainment.

I'd like to see more controversial questions debated on TV, more experimental drama, more classical music, fewer action shows that are carbon copies of a handful of prototypes. However, the limitations inherent in a mass medium restrain the rapid adoption of such policies. A broadcaster who is too far ahead of the public's tastes drives away viewers, thereby defeating the purpose of his leadership and destroying the nature of the mass medium.

NBC's efforts to assemble a diversified schedule are not always seen by the viewer on the station carrying our service. Our network is comprised of five stations, the maximum we are permitted to own under FCC regulations, and 177 independently owned affiliates. These affiliates determine which elements of our schedule are carried, depending on the shows they elect to use from other sources. As a consequence the general public rarely gets the full impact of our integrated programing.

An indication of the obstacles blocking nationwide projection of information and culture is given by a sample line-up of NBC affiliates for such programs. "Wagon Train," the No. 1 attraction, was carried by 193 stations this season. (Eleven so-called "satellites" joined the network for the show.) There was a sharp drop to 127 for a "White Paper" on the southern sit-in strikes, 123 for "Boris Godunov" (opera), 118 for "Meet the Press," 98 for "The Nation's Future" and 95 for "Omnibus."

The situation is particularly acute in a town where there are only one or two channels. There a station manager can choose shows from two or three networks. He may take "The Untouchables" instead of "CBS Reports," or substitute Garry Moore for a "Project 20" documentary.

We could eliminate a lot of headaches—and terrific expense—if we got out of the programing business and used our facilities merely to transmit shows supplied by advertisers and talent agencies. It would end frantic competition for sponsors to

defray annual investments of \$140 million on program production and development. We could discharge huge creative and administrative staffs and just sell time on the network—but we would not have a diversified schedule. We would be peddling a communication service as sterile as the old-time nickelodeon.

### *The Novelty Is Gone*

Well, there are buffs who say old silent movies were wonderful, just as there are dilettantes who bemoan the deterioration of TV since the early days. Such talk is nostalgic nonsense. There was, to be sure, a heady excitement in the industry and among viewers that is missing now for a perfectly obvious reason. TV then was like writing on a new blackboard; everything made a vivid, arresting impression. When the NBC "network" linking New York and Philadelphia was extended all the way to Chicago, we felt like the pioneers who drove the gold spike in the transcontinental railroad. Every day was an adventure—but the shows were dreadful compared with TV now.

Critics unconsciously are funnier than Goodman Ace, the top comedy writer, when they mourn for dramas with the "artistic integrity" of "Philco Playhouse" and "Robert Montgomery Presents." Most of them were pure soap operas in content and technique. Network programs had about as much scope as a shoe catalog. In 1950, 42 per cent of NBC's schedule consisted of variety shows, which were nothing more than transplanted vaudeville acts. The remainder was padded out with boxing, panel shows and anything that moved.

Every facet of TV is vastly superior now, with the exception of comedy. The kings of the air in the early 1950's were the comedians—Milton Berle, Jackie Gleason, Sid Caesar. . . . Theirs was inspired clowning, the kind you don't hardly get any more, as George Gobel, another casualty, used to say. . . .

The most striking progress made by TV recently has been in the fast handling of spot news and documentaries in depth. This is, by all odds, the most significant trend in the industry, for it exploits TV's unique ability to give the viewer a sense

of immediacy by transporting him to the scene of important events. The latest technique, called "instant news specials," is geared to a deadline as fast as a newspaper's. A few hours after a big story breaks, TV is on the air with a wrap-up of bulletins, background material and pertinent pictures.

On January 3, 1961, the White House announced at 8:30 P.M. that the United States had severed diplomatic relations with Cuba. At 11:15 P.M., NBC presented a digest of the situation and a review of Castro's provocations leading up to it. Since the first special on December 16, 1960—on the crash of an airliner in Brooklyn after colliding with another plane in mid-air—we have been averaging one report a week.

Instant news demands instant decisions. If Bob Kintner, president of NBC, or I am not available to clear a story, Bill McAndrew, head of the news department, has authority to preempt a sponsored show, regardless of the cost. The Gulf Oil Company, sponsor of news specials, has given us a blank check for any story we consider hot enough for treatment. On many occasions, when an event pops spontaneously, we carry it on a sustaining basis.

Network competition once was focused primarily on bidding for performers and properties rated good bets for the Top Ten. Now priority is on initiative in digging behind the headlines for magazine-type themes suitable for comprehensive analysis. . . . Professionally and personally I'm delighted we will vie [with CBS and ABC] in putting TV's best foot forward, for public-affairs projects have given me my greatest satisfaction as a broadcaster. . . .

Nothing ever will top the thrill I derived from acceptances of two identical telegrams sent from Chicago on the evening of July 27, 1960. The wires went to Vice President Richard M. Nixon, who had just been nominated for the Presidency by the Republicans, and to Senator John F. Kennedy, chosen by the Democrats two weeks earlier. They were offered NBC's facilities for face-to-face discussions of vital issues in the forthcoming campaign.

The invitations triggered the Great Debates on the three networks. Unquestionably the highlight of the campaign, the confrontations reached nine out of ten TV homes, further accelerating a most significant trend. Since 1952, when aeriels began mushrooming throughout the country, a greater percentage of eligible voters has cast ballots in Presidential elections than ever before in American history.

*Pay-TV Is Not the Answer*

Commercial TV's incisive impact on the public makes fanciful claims for pay-TV as feeble as a whisper in a tornado. The white hope of visionaries for "good" programs since the late 1940's, pay-TV has been a white elephant in four tests. In my opinion, it is failing right now in Etobicoke, a suburb of Toronto. . . . [The Etobicoke experiment uses the Telemeter System. For an explanation of this and other phases of pay-TV see "Pay-TV" in Section II, above.—Ed.]

Pay-TV has failed to date because it cannot deliver better programs than the free service already available. It is utterly naïve to think the promoters can avoid the same economic realities that govern free TV. They also need the mass audience to stay in business, and that means Westerns, private eyes and adventure shows—the meat and potatoes of free TV. They may survive by usurping our popular shows, but thus far they have offered only a handful of creative contributions to quality entertainment. . . .

[Recently] newspapers went into raptures reporting Telemeter had shown Gian Carlo Menotti's *The Consul* in Etobicoke. They forgot that in 1951 NBC commissioned Menotti to compose an original opera. The result was *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, considered his masterpiece by most critics. Six other original operas have been underwritten and presented in world premières by NBC. Leonard Bernstein's concerts have been subsidized for years by CBS. Does anyone in his right mind think the backers of pay TV will take comparable risks on classical music?

What about the theatre? The pay-as-you-see boys no longer are talking expansively of making Broadway a whistle stop after Main Street by introducing elaborate musicals and dramas with top stars. Small wonder. An untried venture entails an investment running as high as \$350,000, and the chances are it will be a flop. They're not going out on a limb—but scores of companies such as Hallmark, Du Pont, Bell Telephone, General Motors and Ford regularly sponsor programs for the minority audience. And the networks assume part of the cost by offering all affiliates the programs when sponsors contract for a limited number of stations.

It is barely possible that pay-TV can be moderately successful in scattered areas with first-run movies and sports. Movies, however, affect only theatre attendance, and the networks have contracts for all the major sporting events except the heavyweight-championship fights. I don't believe pay-TV will ever have enough exclusive attractions to make serious inroads on the mass audience. If my prognosis is wrong, NBC will have no choice but to join the opposition. To paraphrase Abraham Lincoln—on an infinitely more important proposition—TV cannot exist half fee and half free.

I'd like to see a showdown between commercial and pay-TV, to settle, once and for all, the battle for the mass audience. This challenge hardly stamps me as a brave fellow, because the outcome is as predictable as a fight between an amateur armed with a feather and a seasoned pro pitching blockbusters. The public is too smart to trade the solid benefits it gets at no cost from sponsored programs for an expensive service that cannot begin to provide comparable entertainment.

Commercial TV admittedly is not all it should be, but consider the cultural advances it has helped to stimulate in a dozen short years. In 1949 less than 2 per cent of the population was exposed to the legitimate theatre, concerts and ballet. Now, 16 million to 20 million people watch such performances on TV—bigger audiences than Shakespeare, Beethoven and Nijinsky drew in their lifetimes.

In the last decade the publication of juvenile books has increased 200 per cent; library circulation has gone up 50 per cent; the number of symphony orchestras and museums has nearly doubled; the sales of classical records have climbed 50 per cent. I do not suggest that TV has been responsible for this cultural surge. The country's rising level of education is the prime mover behind it, of course. The point I would like to make is that TV has not damaged our esthetic appreciation, as critics charge.

The lamentations of handwringers are flatly refuted by more competent observers. Leonard Bernstein concluded a record-breaking tour of eleven cities with the New York Philharmonic by playing to a standing-room-only audience in the Hollywood Bowl last September. He attributed the unprecedented crowds to the cultivation of good music on TV.

James B. Reston, the New York *Times's* Washington bureau chief, toured the Middle West . . . [recently] and reported that the press and politicians of the section were generally lagging behind the public in acceptance of momentous changes. "Television is clearly a large factor in this contrast," Reston commented. "For while many of the most powerful organs of the press continue longing wistfully for a past they know will never come again, television is showing the revolution in Africa, the revolution in the cities and races of America, the revolution of automation in the big industries."

On balance, I think TV can be faulted now on only one serious count—excessive violence, especially in action shows watched by children. . . . If you disagree, I respectfully suggest you employ the best little program regulator ever invented, the forefinger and thumb. Grasp the switch of your set firmly, snap it off, and your message will come through loud and clear. Sponsors, like nature, abhor a vacuum.

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