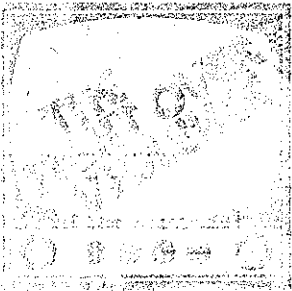


10/14/77

# The 'Television Code': Does it serve the public or the networks?

By Robert Morton  
NEWS WORLD STAFF



Polls have shown that most people object to excessive television violence, and yet some of the action-packed adventure shows draw the largest audiences. How much TV violence is too much?

THE NEWS WORLD today presents the third part of a five-part series on the controversy over TV violence. This article explores the attempts made by the television industry to establish acceptable standards for its programs.

Today's typical high school graduate has witnessed over 15,000 murders on television according to a study by the House Subcommittee on Communications. In the aftermath of last week's trial of 15-year-old Ronny Zamora for the murder of an elderly lady who lived next door, his mother speculated that her son may have viewed four times that number.

Zamora's defense attorney still contends that his young client was insane at the moment of his crime because he had viewed too much violence on television. And he has pledged to campaign for the reduction of TV violence. If he does, he will join an estimated 250 other special

interest groups who are confronting the networks over the issue.

But as the polarization increases, a number of questions remain unanswered. For instance, what constitutes a violent act?

The CBS Office of Social Research monitored their programming for the 1975-76 season and found a 36 per cent decrease in violence. But Drs. George Gerbner and Larry Gross of the Annenberg School of Communication in Philadelphia found a substantial increase of the level of violence on CBS in their annual Violence Index. Clearly the studies used different definitions for the word.

Testifying before the House Subcommittee on Communications on March 2 this year, CBS President John A. Schneider protested that while everyone opposed excessive violence, almost no

one could agree on what that meant. "Some might feel that a pie in the face is an act of violence, some might not," he said. "Some might feel that the fantasy violence of a science-fiction movie is all right, some might not . . . And some may feel that when Bugs Bunny pours a pitcher of milk over a chipmunk's head it's an act of violence, while some may not."

According to the traditional understanding of the concept of "free press" in the First Amendment of the Constitution, there should be no governmental restriction on programming standards for television. All decisions about the acceptability of material for broadcast, including violence, have been made by station managers, network censors and other figures in the television industry. "Self-regulation" is the way they describe it, and they don't appreciate any interference.

## The Television Code

The National Association of Broadcasters is a professional organization that aids in the self-regulating process. Members include 67 per cent of the country's TV station managers, as well as producers, writers and the major networks. Among other operations, the NAB has a Code Authority (formed in 1952) that created and until recently, enforced the "Television Code." Also the Code Authority handles complaints about programming, revising the Code when necessary.

As its Preamble states, the purpose of the Television Code is to help broadcasters fulfill "their positive responsibility for professionalism and reasoned judgment to bear upon all those involved in the development, production and selection of programs."

(continued on page 6A)

# 'Television Code': Does it serve the public or the networks?

FROM PAGE 1A

The Code has several things to say about violence. Under the section entitled "Special Program Standards," violence is the first topic treated. "Violence, physical and psychological, may only be projected in responsibly handled contexts, not used exploitatively," it states. Consequences to "victims and perpetrators" should be presented, and "presentation of the details of violence should avoid the excessive, the gratuitous and the instructional."

Interestingly, at a time when greater self-regulation is being called for, the Code Authority has been temporarily prevented from enforcing its own code. On Nov. 4, 1976, a federal judge in Los Angeles ruled in a complex, 240-page decision that the NAB could not enforce a new provision in the Television Code that set special conditions for family viewing in prime time. Until this [Ferguson] decision has been appealed, the NAB feels restricted from enforcing any part of the code.

That provision in question reads, "Entertainment programing inappropriate for viewing by general family audiences should not be broadcast during the first hour of network entertainment programing in prime time and in the immediately preceding hour." The provision also requires advisories in advance of such inappropriate programs. Ironically this provision was intended to protect children from programs with excessive sex and violence.

## Prohibiting gov't pressure

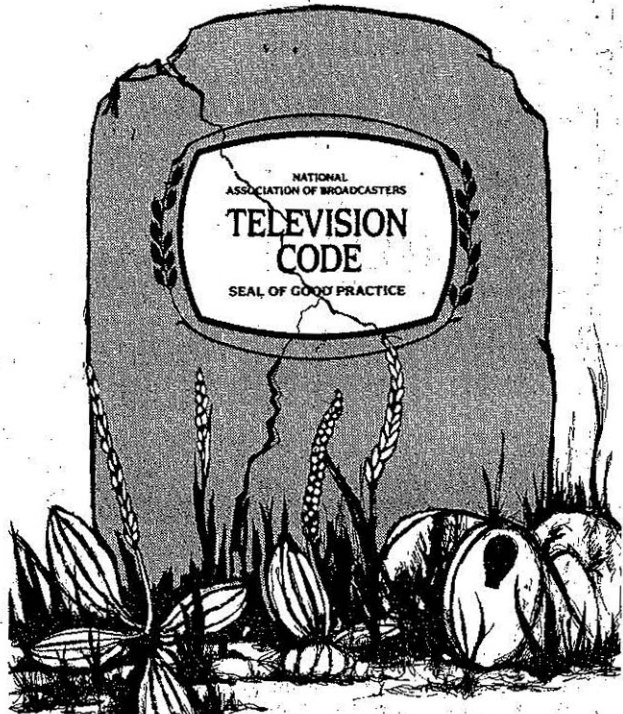
The suit was filed by Writers Guild and Norman Lear's Tandem Productions (All in the Family, Maude, etc.) The judge ruled against the Family Viewing Provision because it had been included in the Television Code as a result of wrongful government pressure from the Federal Communications Commission's Dick Wiley.

Even before the Ferguson decision, the enforcement of the Television Code wasn't such a big deal. If there was a problem, members of the Code Authority would just sit down with executives from the network involved and reach an understanding. The networks would usually be eager to hear from the station managers anyway so that could tailor their productions to public feedback, says ABC Vice President Jerome Lansner.

It would seem that the weakening of the Code Authority would correspondingly threaten networks' ability to regulate themselves. And a number of TV industry officials have made it clear that they consider the pressure exerted this year by the Parents Teachers Association (PTA) and the American Medical Association (AMA), to be dangerous." Part of the pressure consists of threatened boycotts against sponsors who advertise on shows rated among the most violent by the National Citizens' Committee for Broadcasting (NCCB).

Some network executives compare such tactics with McCarthyism as does Chicago Sun-Times columnist Bill Granger: "In that era—lest you have forgotten—various self-appointed groups on guard against the threat of Communist subversion on radio and television, put extreme pressure on sponsors not to let certain performers on the air. . . . The threat used by these groups was simple: We will identify you, the sponsor, as one who supports Communist subversives."

NCCB Chairman Nicholas Johnson doesn't agree with that reasoning. He points out that pressure to change pro-



graming has always been the domain of the networks and the advertisers.

## In the 'public' interest

"Now it's simply irrational to sustain that kind of censorship for years," he told The News World. "And then as soon as the public expresses its concern, suddenly start shouting violations of the First Amendment. If anybody has the right to be considered, it's the public." He began to reel off the numbers describing the shocking state of public expenditures.

The public has \$50 billion wrapped up in TV sets, said Johnson, not to mention \$4 billion per year for new sets, \$7 billion per year to pay for the excess product costs which pay for the program through advertising, and more than \$1.5 billion for the electricity to run the things. "I mean clearly these folks have a right to be heard from," said Johnson in outraged tones.

The NAB, which bestows its "Seal of Good Practice" on members who voluntarily follow the standards established in the Television Code, is not about to cast the first stone at the accused television industry. As President Wasilewski told the House Subcommittee on Communications on March 7, 1977: Concerning the issue of TV violence. "We welcome assistance from any quarter but the final decision on how to approach this problem must remain in the hands of the broadcaster."

Privately, NAB officials fully support the networks in the fight over TV violence. And one branch of the organization has been particularly effective in battling the pressure groups. The Television Information Office refers to itself in the words of one official, as the "best library in the world for the study of television as a social force." Perhaps this is true, but it is a library with a purpose.

When this reporter visited the library, cooperative staffers provided the informa-

tion I requested on the Gerbner Violence Index. Soon thereafter, I receive in the mail a thick envelope from TIO stuffed with press releases, photocopied articles, etc., all of which defended the television industry and criticized the opposition on the violence issue. Some might see this as the efforts of an enthusiastic public relations firm.

## Parents' responsibility

When the PTA held one of its eight regional meetings in Kansas City last winter, TIO Director Roy Danish came to speak in defense of the beleaguered networks, terming himself "your first interruption in what has been a fairly critical view of what my colleagues are engaged in." He called attention to the studies that showed no relationship between TV violence and anti-social behavior.

Danish also stressed parents' responsibility in supervising their children's viewing habits and cautioned those in attendance not to be too sanctimonious about violence on television.

"Remember," he said, "that you and I and our friends and, in some cases, our children have made "Jaws" and "The Godfather" and "The Exorcist" the three most popular films of all time.

The NAB is sponsoring public meetings in Boston on Oct. 18 and San Diego on Nov. 10 at which the public can question local broadcasters and network officials about program policies. NAB President Vincent T. Wasilewski said the forums would also "offer an opportunity for viewers and listeners—not just the vocal groups—to express their opinions on broadcasting and Codes."

Unfortunately, after all the dialogue, there is still no conclusion on what television violence is or how much is too much. But it is clear that the NAB's Television Code, even if the Code Authority wins the right to enforce it, will not satisfy the growing number of pressure groups much longer. No one favors censorship. Everyone agrees that self regulation is the only acceptable route. The problem facing the TV industry is how can they meet standards which are acceptable to the public without legislation or governmental pressure.

Monday: Translating violence research to TV policy—how to regulate a powerful, self-regulating industry.

MONDAY

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# The News World

New York  
FINAL 10¢

## Producers fear drop in TV violence may be 'dangerous'

By Robert Morton  
NEWS WORLD STAFF

The assembled television producers were *not* in a good mood. "I tell you the industry is slowing down the violence to a degree that is dangerous," said Aaron Spellman, co-president of the company that produces "Starsky & Hutch" and "Charlie's Angels."

"I think that we are going to be faced with plastic television that's going to breed a plastic society," he continued. "We're going too far."

The producers were debating the issue of television violence with a group of editors from TV Guide. And the message sounded by their angry voices was a far cry from the widely-publicized complaints of advocate groups such as the national



The reality of death and violence doesn't strike home to Americans in the same way it does to the inhabitants of the war zones in some of the Third World nations. But violent crimes such as child abuse and battered wives have triggered charges that television programming is the cause.

Today's fourth article in a five-part series on the issue explores the practical difficulties involved in the regulation of network broadcasting.

Parents Teachers Association (PTA) and the American Medical Society (AMA) who claim that the networks are broadcasting too much violent content, and that people, especially children are being adversely affected.

"At this moment we feel we have lost the violence battle," said David Gerber of "Police Story" and "Police Woman." "We feel the networks have thrown in the towel because of their own fears of FCC licensing authority, congressional investigations, pressure groups and pressure from advertisers."

### Feeling government's heat

According to the First Amendment, the government cannot pass laws that would limit the operations of television broadcasters. However the major networks have

felt heat from the government in other, more indirect ways.

The first major campaign against television violence resulted from a government study conducted by the U.S. Surgeon General's Office. The project, which was commissioned by Sen. John O. Pastore (D-R.I.) in 1969, consisted of 43 separate studies, and its cost was estimated at over \$1 million. A summary report was made public in January 1972.

The report concluded that violence in television programs did not adversely affect the majority of the nation's youth, but possibly did influence those who were already predisposed to aggressive behavior. Between 1967 and 1969, the period of the study, the number of violent actions on TV remained constant, but a smaller number of characters were

involved in violence which was less lethal, according to the report.

The most damaging part of the Surgeon General's report concerned cartoons and comedies: "Violence increased from 1967 to 1969 in cartoons and comedies. . . . Cartoons were the most violent type of program in these years." The report tempered this finding by classifying it as quantitative rather than qualitative; that there was no conclusive evidence that TV violence caused aggressive behavior except in those already predisposed in that direction.

### Down with Deputy Dawg

Although this study did not constitute a government regulation, it had a noticeable effect—especially on children's programs.

(continued on page 7A)

# Producers fear drop in TV vi



FROM PAGE 1A

NBC reacted by dropping Dr. Doolittle, Woody Woodpecker and Deputy Dawg.

Another effect of the study was to stimulate research on the question. Some of these researchers were later to be tapped by special interest groups on both sides of the TV violence question.

Also to be heard from later were a group of social scientists who did not participate in the study. According to a letter made public by Rep. John Murphy, a Democrat from Staten Island, the Surgeon General, Dr. William Stewart, agreed not to nominate individuals for the study to whom the TV industry objected. These seven men included Leonard Berkowitz of the University of Wisconsin and television researcher Albert Bandura, both of whom had studied TV violence and concluded that it had negative effects.

The letter stated that this "special procedure was carefully considered and used to prevent any charges that the government was intimidating that industry or violating the First Amendment rights of that industry should the Surgeon General committee's report... prove highly critical of the television industry."

## Indirect regulation

The Surgeon General's report also made an impact on the industry group that attempts to establish programing standards for television, the National Association of Broadcasters. NAB President Vincent Wasilewski agreed that the report deserved attention and appropriate action. "Even if the great majority of our children are unaffected by television violence, and even if only a small fraction are negatively affected, we recognize the need to determine how the negative effects can be alleviated," he said.

Ironically, the NAB is presently not enforcing its Television Code as a result of a ruling from a federal court in Los Angeles that prohibited the NAB from enforcing a "Family Viewing" provision that had been recommended by the Federal Communications Commission. Because the FCC, as a government agency had proposed this standard, the judge ruled that it was in violation of the First

Amendment. The NAB is regarded as an organization that attempts to help the TV industry regulate itself.

Whether or not the NAB successfully appeals the "Ferguson decision," a number of special interest groups will probably not be satisfied with the standards adopted by the industry. The Parents Teachers Association, the American Medical Association, the United Church of Christ and the National Citizens' Committee for Broadcasting (NCCB) are only a few of an estimated 250 organizations that are pressing for program reform, especially in the area of violence.

## Scientific rhetoric

These groups are successfully making a noise, in the name of the public, that the industry cannot ignore. The battle over violence between these groups and the networks is being waged on two levels. The first and most superficial level of activity consists of rhetoric and public relations campaigns conducted by the heads of networks such as Frederick Pierce of ABC and consumer advocates such as Nicholas Johnson of the NCCB.

On the second level are the social scientists commissioned by both sides, whose findings are used by their sponsors to further their point of view with the help of the media.

George Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School of Communication at the University of Pennsylvania, is probably the best known example. His Violence Index each year purportedly measures the level of violence in network programing. In response, network social research departments have done their own studies which yield results that contrast with Gerbner's.

An alliance that formed between Gerbner and Nicholas Johnson's NCCB has turned into a deadly combination as far as the producers and network executives of shows, termed by Gerbner as most violent, are concerned. The NCCB monitored the "violent shows" sponsors in 1976, made public the lists of violence sponsors and wrote their presidents. The top seven included: Anacin, Burger King, Campbell's, Eastman Kodak, Chevrolet, Frito-Lay and General Foods.

## Advertisers get the word

Then the prominent advertising agency, J. Walter Thompson Co., made up a slick brochure which contained the results of a market survey about attitudes toward violent television programs and sent it to clients throughout the nation. The final conclusion in the brochure contained the following statements:

"We think it is clear that many people are concerned about the amount and the effects of violent TV programs... For many of them this is not merely a socially acceptable expression of distaste: it represents a sincere and potentially explosive conviction that the lesser instincts of people are being exploited... And, finally,

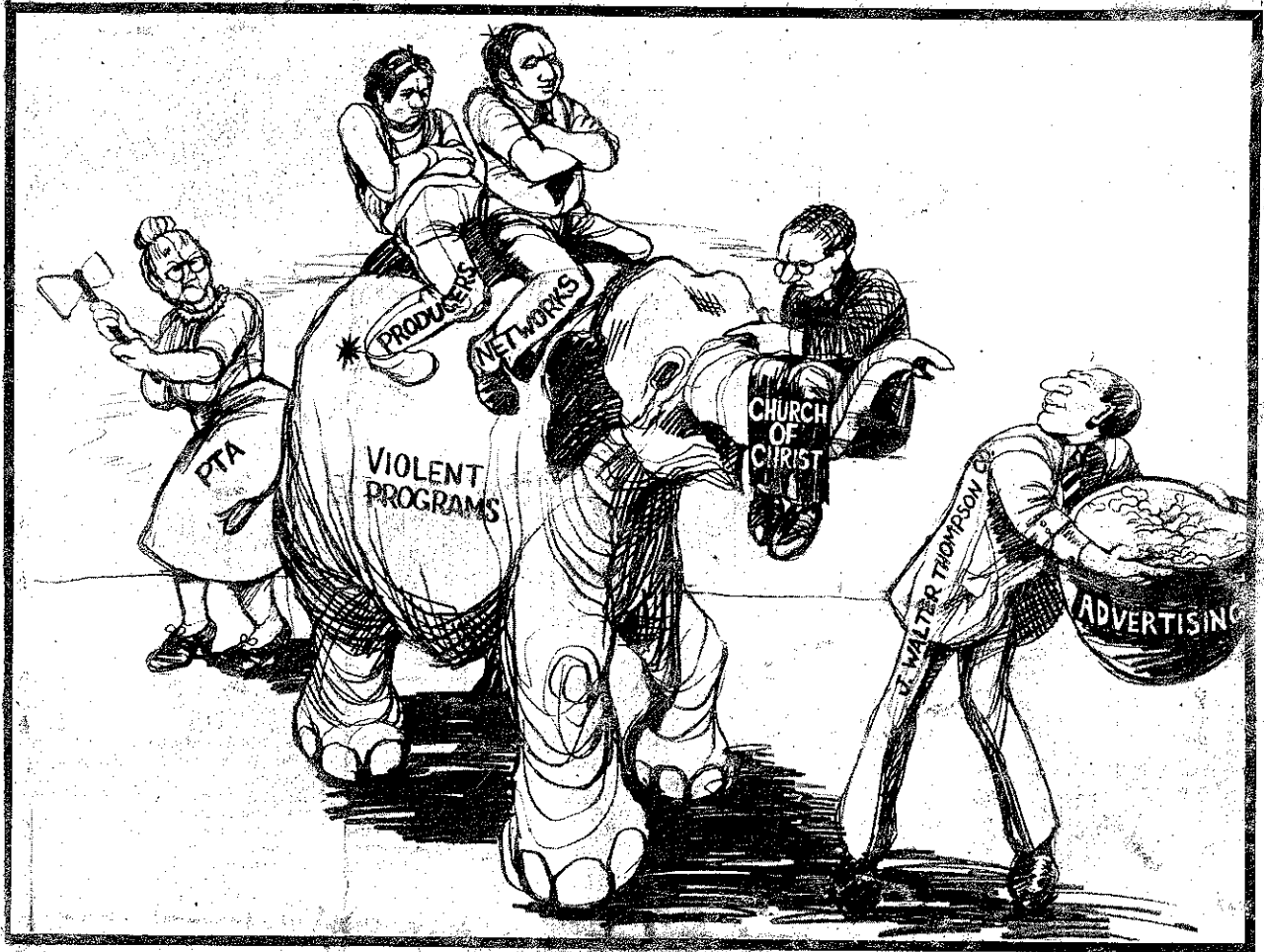


for advertisers: there is a danger that products advertised on violent programs may be boycotted by small, but vocal and growing numbers of people."

## Denouncing blanket denunciations

Needless to say, the TV industry has not appreciated this special attention. As producer David Gerber said, "When these social scientists ask people if they like violence, do they really expect anybody to say yes, we love violence?" Other network officials have pointed out that during the McCarthy era the same methods as those employed by J. Walter Thompson Co. were used to encourage advertisers not to sponsor undesirable programs.

# Sp in TV violence may be 'dangerous'



For advertisers, there is a danger that products advertised on violent programs may

At a PTA hearing on violence in Chicago on January 25, of this year, co-

agrees with the criticism of consumer advocate groups who would conduct "eco-

network officials be allowed to hear this feedback.

# Violence may be 'dangerous'



At a PTA hearing on violence in Chicago on January 25, of this year, co-chairwoman Ann Christine Heintz criticized some of the methods by which citizens' groups were attempting to directly affect networks' self regulation. "I am anxious to end blanket denunciations and the 'Ten Most Violent' lists," she said.

She went on to say that she found that programs like "Maude," "where no character in the series intervened to bring integrity and sensitivity to family conflict," to be a more disturbing model of adult behavior for young people.

Leonard Berkowitz, a psychology professor at the University of Wisconsin who had done research in TV violence, dis-

agrees with the criticism of consumer advocate groups who would conduct "economic boycott" on the networks. "I think it is all right for A & P to put pressure on the food manufacturers, Macy's to put pressure on the clothing manufacturers, and J. Walter Thompson to put pressure on the networks," he told The News World.

A spokesman for the AMA said he did not consider charges of implied censorship to be valid. "The man at ABC said something about elitist groups," he said. "I don't know anything more elitist than having three guys sitting in New York deciding what the nation is going to see on television."

He also suggested that advertisers and

network officials be allowed to hear this feedback.

Ann Christine Heintz in her Chicago speech, called for a "unified national plan of responsible research" that would included studies of television effects on the lives of young people on a broader scale than violence alone.

Thus far the rhetoric-packed arguments about television programing reform have overshadowed realistic discussions about the more fundamental problem of controlling an industry which is protected by the Constitution from governmental regulation.

*Tomorrow: The truth about television violence according to the university studies that haven't made the news. The conclusion.*

10/18/77

# Even Plato warned that some stories are bad for children...

By Robert Morton  
NEWS WORLD STAFF

Dr. Leonard Berkowitz, a psychology professor at the University of Wisconsin, was speaking thoughtfully about the recent murder trial of 15-year-old Ronny Zamora. "What the judge wanted from that Florida psychologist was a definite demonstration that television violence is conclusively linked with specific criminal acts," he said.

"That kind of evidence really doesn't exist, but you can make a probability statement," he continued. "It is somewhat analagous to the relationship between cigarette smoking and cancer. You can say that there is a pretty good probability that prolonged cigarette smoking will heighten the chance of the cancer. And I



Some parents worry that they have less influence on their children than the family television set. The American Medical Association, warning TV violence might negatively affect young peoples' behavior, has termed it an "environmental hazard."

The News World today concludes a five-part series on the controversy. This article focuses on university researchers' conclusions on the issue and suggestions for parental control of family viewing habits.

think a similar statement can be made about movie and television violence."

Berkowitz is only one of many psychologists and sociologists who have conducted laboratory studies to determine whether or not TV violence causes aggressive or even criminal behavior in young people.

At the same time that network presidents and leaders of advocate consumer groups such as the Parents Teachers Association (PTA) and the American Medical Association (AMA) have waged a noisy media war of words and statistics over the issue, these scholars have worked in a more subdued atmosphere, far away from the front line of the battle. Their conclusions have been duly recorded in the pages of the academic journals to be read by distinguished colleagues and almost no one else.

## Heeding the scholars

But these men deserve to be heard from, if for no other reason than some of them may be the only objective participants in the highly emotional debate about TV violence. While critics can easily dispute conclusions reached in the laboratory as being irrelevant to real life behavior of children, there presently seems to be no better way to pin down the slippery causal relationships in question.

For parents to be concerned about communications coming from outside the home is certainly not a new phenomenon. Writing in "The Republic," Plato warned about certain poems and stories that could adversely affect children. Even Grimm's fairy tales were criticized for being too frightening when they first appeared around the turn of the century.

But the campaign against television violence didn't really get off the ground until the 1972 Surgeon General's report which summarized 43 separate studies by social scientists on the issue. The report concluded that violence in television did not adversely affect the majority of the nation's youth, but possibly did influence those who were already predisposed toward aggressive behavior.

## Doctors' organized protest

The AMA's major crusade for television programming reform was triggered by an article by Michael Rothenberg in the December 1975 issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association. The article stated that a number of studies had demonstrated the detrimental influence of TV violence on children. It concluded by calling for "a major, organized cry of protest" (continued on page 6A)



Beverly Sills tonight: high note for opera

page 1B



Jesse Jackson on 'The Bakke Bomb'

page 11A

## WEATHER

NEW YORK CITY—Mostly sunny and cool today; highs in the low 50s. Partly cloudy tonight. Lows in the upper 40s. Variable cloudiness with chance of showers Wednesday. High in the mid 60s. Chance of rain . . . 10 per cent. Winds easterly 10 to 15 mph today, southwest 10 to 15 mph tonight.

Air Quality Index: Good

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# Even Plato warned that some stories are bad for children...

FROM PAGE 1A

test from the medical profession." In June 1976, the AMA House of Delegates adopted his suggestion, passing a resolution that decried TV violence as an environmental hazard.

In a letter dated April 12, 1976, another researcher of the behavioral effects of television, Dr. Robert M. Kaplan, sharply disagreed with Rothenberg's arguments. He denied that television could be included among the major causes of violence. His major complaint concerned the way in which "Rothenberg takes a complex issue and presents it as a simple one."

"Since the topic he discusses has serious political implications," he wrote, "it is important to consider the issues in their true complexity." The question is not as simple as "Does TV violence cause aggression?" he pointed out. Rather it is, "Under what conditions can people be influenced to behave aggressively by television?"

## Beating the Bobo doll

Perhaps the most well-known study that purportedly demonstrated the adverse



effects of TV viewing was carried out by Dr. Albert Bandura. In his experiment, groups of children watched a grown man attack a large Bobo doll either on film or in person. Another control group did not see either. Then they were all led into a play area which contained a Bobo doll and a number of interesting toys. Experimenters frustrated the children by removing the toys. The children who had watched the adult model attack the doll were found to be more likely to imitate this behavior than those who hadn't.

The results of this study were questioned for a number of reasons. For one thing the laboratory setting was contrived and for another, the doll was not alive. So to attack it was entirely different from attacking a person.

Dr. Bradley Greenberg, who also took part in the studies for the Surgeon General's report, performed an experiment that was modeled after a more realistic situation. He rated the aggressiveness of two groups of car drivers. One group had viewed TV violence beforehand, while the other group had not. He could find no significant difference in driving aggressiveness between the two groups.

## Related factors

Other studies have focused more on other conditions which, together with exposure to TV violence, could result in aggressive behavior. For example, an experiment by Michael Charlton and associates at the University of Hamburg concluded that children from "unfavorable homes" would behave more aggressively after seeing televised violence than children from "favorable homes."

Dr. Seymour Feshback of UCLA performed an experiment which he said dem-

onstrates that in some contexts, the viewing of TV violence could even reduce aggressive behavior.

In his study, children who viewed programs they perceived as being actual happenings demonstrated more aggressive behavior. But children who watched programs they thought were fantasy or fiction behaved less aggressively than a control group that saw no TV.

After hundreds of studies, no clear consensus of opinion has been reached by sociologists about the effects of television on behavior. Dr. Timothy Meyer, director of the graduate program in the Dept. of Radio/TV/Film at the University of Texas at Austin, termed the relationship between viewing of TV violence and aggressive behavior as "trivial" in an address to a PTA hearing in Dallas in February of this year.

In other words, he explained, there are people who view a lot of violence and are low in aggression; and, there are people who view very little violence but are highly aggressive.

Noting that the question was quite complicated, Meyer concluded that "We need a great deal more research before programming policy recommendations can be defended on the basis of systematic, comprehensive and valid... evidence."

## TV's positive potential

If results from studies on this complex question are still inconclusive related findings suggest that other important issues may have been overshadowed by the concentrated attention devoted to TV violence. In his testimony before the Senate Subcommittee on Communication in April, 1974, Dr. Eli Rubinstein pointed out that removing programming from television that was harmful to children was only half the step. "The potential of television as a positive socializing influence for children is yet to be realized," he said. "It is to that purpose that intensive research and policy efforts should be addressed in the future."

While the interpretation of the findings from studies of the negative influence of TV violence on behavior is often ambiguous, experiments which tested effects of programming portraying positive adult behavior, offered more conclusive results. In the Charlton study, for example, children who viewed TV scenes of cooperative behavior became significantly more positive and relaxed.

Other studies showed the importance of the presence of parents or adults while children are viewing television. An adult's interpretation of news shows or adventure programs may be crucial to provide a basic

frame of reference for the child's understanding.

## Parent's responsibility

Speaking before a PTA public hearing on TV violence in Kansas City, Television Information Office Director Roy Danis suggested that parents take up more of the burden of responsibility for their children's behavior. "Watch their favorite programs with them from time to time even if they're not your favorite programs," he said. "Express your own opinions about programs and don't be afraid to offend a child by saying, 'I think that's a bad program.' Television," he concluded, "is a marvelous bridge of communication between parents and children."

A number of other important questions still need to be considered. For example, why are some violent television programs so popular? Is it possible that excessive television viewing can damage an individual's ability to think and act spontaneously and autonomously? Finally, the view of reality portrayed on television realistic and desirable, and how does that view affect the average viewer's consciousness? Clearly the issue of television's influence on the public cannot be treated with oversimplification.

Rochester, N.Y., Thursday Evening, October 20, 1977

# TV Teaches 'Fear, Exaggerated Danger' — Expert

By PETER PRICHARD

Television trains people to think they will be the victims of crime, a leading expert on television violence said today.

George Gerbner, dean of the communications school of the University of Pennsylvania, spoke at Rochester Institute of Technology as part of a continuing series that examines the effect television has on society.

"Television violence seems to be teaching most people not the lesson of aggression but the lesson of fear," Gerbner said. "Ninety-nine percent of the viewers learn lessons of fear and exaggerated danger."

Gerbner said that heavy viewers of television are more likely to be afraid to walk the streets than light viewers who live in the same neighborhoods. "This is how we teach the old to be more afraid than the young and non-whites to be more afraid than whites," Gerbner said.

For the last 10 years, Gerbner has monitored the amount of violence on television. His work has been studied by congressional investigations and has led to talk of reforms.

Gerbner has also studied groups of children who watch a lot of television, and he said viewing has serious effects on their attitudes.

"You can no longer bring up your

children according to your own ideals and your own ideas," Gerbner said. "We have this teacher-preacher-salesman in every living room.

"Cartoons are the most violent programs on television. And kids do imitate what they see."

Gerbner said that the children who watch a lot of television have more stereotyped ideas than children who don't watch and that they are more conventional and tend to resist change more than non-watchers.

This idea fits Gerbner's theory that television conditions people to expect they will become victims of crime, and the medium is a factor in the real incidence of crime.

This exaggerated idea of the crime rate can lead to government repression, Gerbner said.

"Violence seems to generate fear," Gerbner said. "So viewers will accept repression. Thus violence has long range social as well as political effects."

Gerbner said the average television program has 10 violent acts per hour.

Television producers use violence as a cheap raw material that is easy to build programs around.

Programs have to be cheap to produce, Gerbner said, because the producers are bound by the cost-per-

thousand formula that advertisers use. Advertisers require cheap programs, Gerbner said, because they don't want to pay too much for commercials.

In fact, the public pays for television advertising, Gerbner said.

"It's a hidden tax without representation. The cost of advertising is included in the price of the goods we buy. We have to pay whether we watch it or not.

"Television is the cultural arm of our industrial society. There is no escape from it. You drive down any American street at dusk, you see the same scene in every living room."

WRFM STEREO-105  
485 MADISON AVENUE  
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10022  
(212) 752-3322

AIRD: OCTOBER 24, 1977

"AFTER THE FACT"  
REPORT #10

COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

Just when one atrocity passes from the news scene, it seems another comes along. And as though that were not enough, reporters have been known to dig up an incident out of the past to dwell on it again...perhaps from a different angle. New York readers were recently given the chance to read in one of the two major morning papers about the doings of the Charles Manson gang...the young people who were convicted six years ago of the murder of actress Sharon Tate in California. A lot of people say they get tired of hearing or reading about these atrocities in the news. But there are those who believe that violence in the news may serve a useful purpose to society. I'm Beverly Poppell, WRFM's Director of Community Affairs, with a report on news coverage of crime and violence. One of those who think there may be some good in reporting violence in the news is psychotherapist Pamela Oline.

OLINE:

"We all have an underside to our nature. We all have a potential for the demonic...which could be transformed into something highly creative or it could be transformed into violence...that is in most of us unexpressed because we've been civilized out of it. So when we see violence on the TV, this is a way for us to experience that side of our natures in a safe way...by watching it happen to somebody else."

Tales of terror may satisfy a deep-seated human need for an outlet for aggression in the same way a boxing match or a football game might do. But studies done at the University of Pennsylvania of the impact of televised violence on viewers draw a different conclusion. These studies indicate that heavy viewers of televised violence come away with a warped view of society and themselves. The Dean of the Annenberg



School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania...Dr. George Gerbner...explain.

GERBNER: "We find in our studies that those who are more exposed to a lot of publicity about crime and violence exhibit this sense of greater fear of victimization, of mistrust of other people...particularly of strangers--all of which makes our group relationships more difficult and more dangerous--and a greater sense of general anxiety."

Dr. Gerbner points to studies showing...for example...that of those people who watch four hours or more of TV a day...52% think there's a good chance they'll be involved in some violence. That compares to only 39% of light TV viewers who feel the same way. Also...of the heavy viewers...65% believe that people in general cannot be trusted... whereas only 48% of light viewers agree. Other studies show that one-third of the TV viewing audience watch television mainly for the moments of violence and action. These people tend to be male, young...and tend to see violence as a solution to problems in their daily lives. But Dr. Gerbner's conclusions that there is a strong connection between violence on television and alienation and distrust in society...were dismissed as "hogwash" by one TV programming executive we talked to...Van Gordon Sauter of CBS. He says that televised violence--at least in entertainment programming--serves one purpose...and that is entertainment. And...the Chairman of the Communications Arts Department at Hofstra University...Dr. George Gordon...a major critic of Dr. Gerbner's point of view...says that the public's interest in violence and crime...whether it's in the news or in entertainment...is sparked mainly by curiosity. People...says Dr. Gordon...are fascinated by their own condition.

GORDON: "They're interested in what their potential is, their emotions and what other people do."

Regardless of whether violence in the news gives people relief from their aggressions... or insights into human nature or...as Dr. Gerbner claims...an added sense of paranoia...

we can't help wondering: Is the purpose of news to entertain? We'll have more on that in tomorrow's report.

"AFTER THE FACT" is written and produced by WRFM's award-winning Community Affairs Department. We welcome contrasting views from responsible individuals.

**“Some say that violence  
is as American as  
apple pie, that a little  
spilled blood on TV  
never hurt anybody—  
and I say that’s  
how jungles are born”**

BY BESS MYERSON

**A**n increasing number of social critics are saying that it's time America came to its senses.

Its sense of traditional values. Its sense of individual responsibility. Its sense of humor. Its sense of civilized pursuit of an old but still challenging dream.

They say that only a nation that has taken leave of its senses could lose its way in the large and small violences that are erupting all around us.

Those who have given up on America, or on themselves, say that violence is the true face of America. "Violence," they shout violently, "is as American as Mom's apple pie."

Well, most Americans like Mom's apple pie. But most Americans resent the charge that we are a violent nation. Most Americans don't mug their neighbors, hold hostages at gunpoint, loot during a blackout or force thousands of office workers into the street by planting bombs—which sometimes go off, killing those totally unconnected with whatever political cause the bombers so recklessly support.

*(Continued on page 206)*

Yet it is impossible for us to deny that there are violent ones among us who do just these things, that they are growing bolder and that something must be done about them. And as we good citizens continue to wonder what, the violent ones continue to plunder and kill. And the answer seems forever to elude us.

Some say there is so much violence in our nation simply because there are too many of us—the census strangling the senses.

Some say it's because we have become too permissive—failing to understand that when anything goes, everything may go.

Some say it's because violence is an entertainment for jaded appetites—part of the side show of our time—perhaps not arranged but certainly exploited by television and the other media to keep their profits high.

Some say violence is big business, that crime *does pay*—handsomely.

Some say that violence is merely a crude form of redistribution of wealth—that's not a gun the violent one is carrying; it's an economic theory.

Most merely say, Help!

Most Americans agree that violence is a cancer in any society; that it should be detected early and treated promptly; that to ignore it can be fatal; that we must find the causes and develop the cures. We all agree on that.

Then we begin to disagree on exactly what it is we're talking about.

**A**ll of us have our selective definitions of violence, about who's doing what to whom. Usually it is somebody's "they" doing something to somebody's "us," and rarely is it "we" who are doing something to "them."

It's easy to recognize violence when it sticks a gun in our ribs or punches us between the eyes or leaves someone very, very dead. But we tend to get confused when it merely steps on someone's toes—especially if it is we who are doing the stepping. Or when it merely invades our privacy and bruises only our dignity. Or when it makes us think twice before speaking our minds or making our own personal decisions.

Violence is intimidation in all its corrosive forms, and there are few among us who do not live with its use or abuse every day. It can be street crime. It can be war. It can be a war economy that shortchanges social programs at home. It can be racism. It can be religious bigotry. It can be neglect of our cities, our schools, our elderly, our squeezed middle class—neglect of any of our people's needs.

Violence can be pressure to conform—social, economic, political, moral. Social violence can be the job that isn't there while the bills are very much there. It can be indifference to another's pain on the part of those who haven't felt the pain yet.

"Looking out for number one" may be the most violent banner ever waved.

"I don't want to get involved" may be the most damning epitaph for buried national hopes.

Too many of us look out for number one and don't want to get involved—as our cities crumble into disaster areas, as our environment is violated by pollution, as our market place ignores consumer protection, as our tax money pays the privileged or is otherwise wasted. Just as illegal looters run wild through our neighborhoods in the darkness, legal looters run wild through our family budgets in broad daylight.

Too many of us think we have to learn to live with this kind of violence—if our income depends on it, if our job depends on it, if our creature comforts are drawn from it, if our prejudices are sustained by it.

But this kind of violence makes us less than we should be as a people. Violence is the natural enemy of freedom. A country where the use of violence or the fear of violence or the quiet acceptance of the "benefits" of violence dictates the choice of lifestyles is a country that is not holding as firmly as it should to the self-evident truths out of which it was born—that life is precious, that liberty is beyond compromise, that pursuit of opportunity does not require ransom to extortionists of any kind.

And violence does misshape our lives.

We say good night to the security guard, double-padlock our place of work, put on our blinders and set out on the trip through the city. We are on our way to the safety of our padlocked homes, in the city itself, in the suburbs, in exurbia or the countryside.

Past the potential muggers in the doorways—whom we'll see interviewed later that night on television as a talk-show host finds social value in a detailed explanation of the scientific techniques of knocking down old ladies . . .

Past the pimps and prostitutes and porno shops, past the movie houses where X marks the spot, past the park, off limits now to everyone but dope peddlers and their customers . . .

Past all those autos inching along—all those autos now years beyond the original deadline for a nonpolluting engine; gingerly past the comparatively milder but arrogant violence of all those dog walkers who have turned the streets into an outdoor toilet; past the

supermarket—pausing perhaps, for a moment, to watch the prices rise . . .

Then—on foot or by subway or by bus or by car—blessedly home . . . wondering if there's any contractor in town who could build a moat around a house or a high-rise.

Now for a little television watching to escape from all that violence outside.

Good luck.

**I**f television is the widely proclaimed window on the world, then it follows that it will be a violent window on a violent world. Especially if it discovers that violence is bankable. Violence sells. Violence entertains. Violence wins the ratings. V for Violence!

Except that some people didn't rush past the television set with their eyes averted. They looked at that screen, they looked at their children looking at that screen—and they didn't like what they saw.

What they did about it, and continue to do, is an important story. There are clues here to the response we must begin to make in all areas where violence surrounds us today.

But why pick on television, you ask, in a time when many children can't read, many adults can't find work and many families can't make ends meet? In a time when great leaders seriously discuss the use of a "clean" and "intelligent" neutron bomb that will destroy "only" people, not buildings, thus keeping the world safe for real estate? Being patiently permissive about all that and outraged about Starsky and Hutch may not seem exactly like 20/20 social vision.

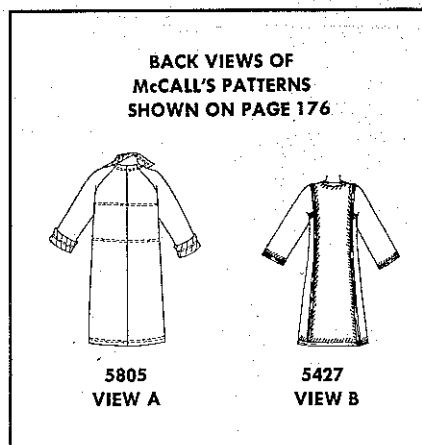
Why television, in a time when too many people in office think that "public trust" means "take the money and run"? Of all the threats to our survival as a civilized nation, what's on Channel X on Saturday morning would seem to be the least of our problems. But it's a place to begin.

Television for many people is their sight and sound, their touch and feel, of a world that has become too complex to be understood without an interpreter. It is town crier, companion, teacher, baby sitter, masseur, pusher, salesman, social and moral arbiter. It lives with us, sitting in a place of honor and homage in the living room like a rich uncle who has been everywhere and done everything and has stories to tell. We sit around and listen, and we believe. If we are shown that we are a violent people—and for younger viewers the desensitizing message is a forecast of the world awaiting them—then there's nothing left to do but put another lock on the door and cringe.

Or change the message.

That's what some parents and other concerned adults set out to do. It didn't happen easily and it didn't happen quickly.

Television really began to get its lumps in the '60s, when Newton Minow, Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, called it a "vast



wasteland." He was reflecting the first rumble of protest from parent-teacher associations, educators, psychologists, consumer groups and thoughtful editorialists.

"I'm one of those who have complained bitterly about television for years," Dr. Benjamin Spock wrote in the July, 1970, issue of Redbook. "By providing so many dramas of violence—crime violence, Western violence, comic violence—I believe, it has played a considerable part in the progressive brutalizing of our people, young and old."

Then and now the TV industry had and has a ready response to those who protest: "We're only giving the public what it wants. Look at the ratings."

It's a response the critics of TV violence find difficult to turn aside. When violent programs dominate the ratings, that says more about the viewers than about the programers. Despite our great advances in technology, no television set has been invented yet that turns itself on, selects a channel and ties the members of the family to chairs facing the set.

The TV industry has another strong argument against its critics.

"Listen, we didn't start violence; it was here long before we were. After all, Cain never watched a Saturday-morning children's hour. It's out there in the real world—we're only reporting it. Kids should learn about it so they're prepared."

They're right, of course, for those viewers who believe that guns are the final argument, that automobiles are for chasing and crashing, that blood is for spilling, that heads are for bashing, that people are for killing or being killed, that tough is "in" and compassion is corny, that taste is expendable if the price is right.

Is that the world of reality? Or the world of the ratings?

Those who say it is the real world also must be saying that decency and dignity have gone out of style permanently and that standards should be lowered to half-mast.

That's how jungles are born.

**T**hose protesting TV-program content said no, it isn't the real world. Some decent men and women, concerned about the effect on their children, trying to hold on to what they had and reach for something better, refused to accept TV violence with resignation. You might call them "ordinary" people, little Davids against the network Goliaths, but the kind of people who talk back to their sets and care about their streets and wonder what's happening to their neighborhoods.

They are the answer, still not spoken loudly enough, to violence. They are people who still care about the best of what we have been and the best of what our children can be and who do not easily give up their hopes for a better society and a better world. And beneath the corroding patina that violence has laid on the surface of our lives, they are *you*.

But for those who still walk silently through the violent streets or sit silently before the violent set, there's a question of conscience to be asked. What if this world of ratings *were* the world of reality instead of an ugly footnote that threatened to push everything else off the page? How should we feel about this perpetuation and institutionalization of violence as part of our way of life?

If we believe in civilized survival, then we should be concerned enough and courageous enough to teach our children to change that world, not to accept and conform to its mindless violence. How are we going to keep the violent ones out of our way anywhere if we can't even keep them out of our own living rooms, winning the minds and hearts of our children before they have a chance to know or feel differently?

A recent survey conducted by a firm of broadcast consultants, "The TV Viewer Comes of Age," has this to say about our viewing habits: "Today, TV is thoroughly entrenched in the life-style of most Americans. . . . It has had and continues to have a far-reaching impact on American society. It is in every sense of the word a social institution—one of major importance and pervasive influence."

In a review of the survey John J. O'Connor, the perceptive television critic of The New York Times, went to the heart of the matter:

"Ratings are paramount," he wrote last June. "While noting the growing resistance to gratuitous violence on TV, the study points out that young adults, who are particularly precious to advertisers, are the most avid fans of violent TV. The problem, then, for programming is [according to the study] 'how to satisfy their appetites without impinging upon the rights, standards and needs of other audience segments.'"

"But why should those appetites be satisfied?" O'Connor asked in his column. "The programmer evidently, in his noble quest for ratings, can go so far as to supply a key audience segment with a violence 'fix.'"

A survey earlier this year by the Foundation for Child Development, an organization that supports research on the responsibilities of family and com-

munity to children, questioned more than 2,200 youngsters seven to 11 years old about their hopes and fears. A majority of the youngsters said they were afraid to go outside, citing as one reason that they always saw people fighting and shooting guns on TV.

Other independent surveys, including one by Redbook ("How TV Changes Children," November, 1976), have produced similar information:

American Medical Association survey, conducted by George Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania: "The cultivation of fear and mistrust may be among the most pervasive effects of heavy exposure to the violent and risky world of TV drama."

National Parent-Teachers Association: "Children learn and vent aggressive antisocial behavior after watching violent television. . . . Adults show signs of learned aggression from watching violence on television. . . . Televised violence makes viewers less sensitive to real-life tragedy."

University of Mississippi survey, conducted by Professor Ronald Drabman: "Television desensitizes children to violence in real life. They tolerate violence in others because they have been conditioned to think of it as an everyday thing."

Carnegie Quarterly, published by the nonprofit Carnegie Corporation: "Children can be exposed through television to a world of sights and people earlier generations could not even imagine. . . . They can learn the ABC's, the history of space discovery, how a baby is born. . . . However, most of the time they are bombarded by commercials. . . . they see characters who 90 per cent of the time are white, and three times more likely to be male than female. . . . More than six out of ten programs contain some act of violence, and about three in ten are 'saturated' with violent acts."

It's a pretty strong case, but there are still some who refuse to be confused by the facts:

James Duffy, president of ABC-TV: "If we took conflict out of television drama, television would become not only bland and boring but also a purveyor of fantasy. Human conflict and its corollary of physical and mental violence is part of the human condition."

So the fight isn't over yet, although a handful of anonymous parents, whose only assets were concern for children and a kind of desperate determination, provided the impetus that made the large broadcasting corporations take a few steps forward.

Action for Children's Television (ACT), organized in 1968 by four mothers, was in the vanguard of the campaign that led to a voluntary reduction of time for commercials by the networks from 16 minutes an hour to nine and a half minutes on weekends and from 16 to 12 minutes on weekdays. The networks also eliminated the huckstering of products by children's-show hosts (who have tremendous influence on their young viewers); and the

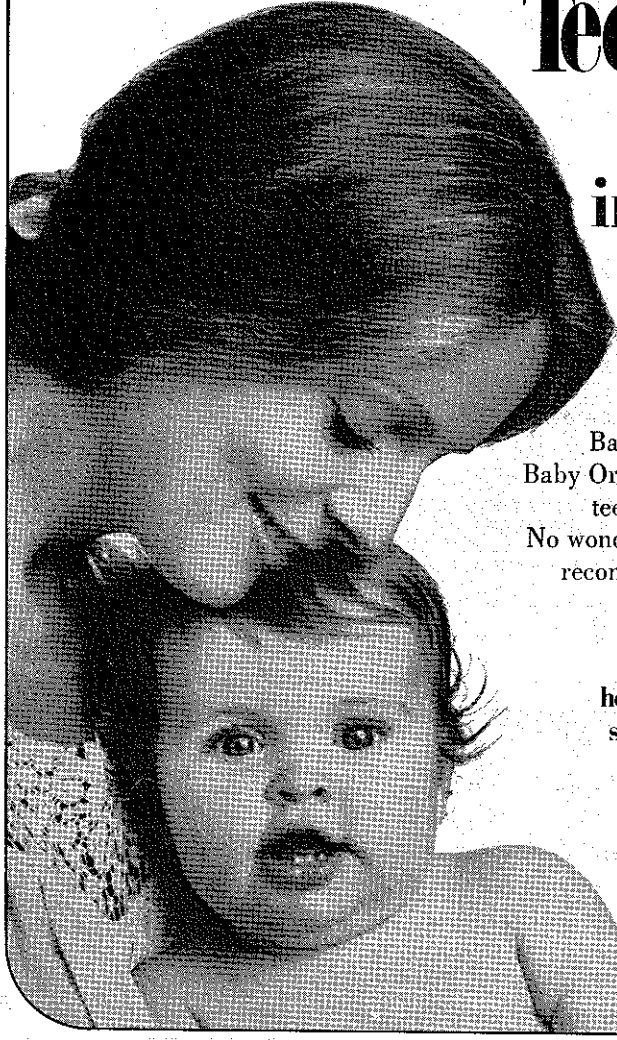
### Price List of McCall's Patterns

Leading dealers everywhere sell McCall's Patterns, or you may write to Redbook, 230 Park Avenue, New York, New York 10017, giving quantity and size desired, and enclosing the price stated in a check or money order.

No.	Sizes	Prices	
		U.S.A	CANADA
5427	Misses' P-S-M-L	\$1.75	\$1.85
5805	Misses' P-S-M-L-XL	\$2.00	\$2.10
Alternates			
4893	Misses' P-S-M-L	\$1.50	\$1.60
5710	Misses' 10-20	\$1.75	\$1.85

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helps you and your baby sleep the night through.



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advertising of junk foods and toys of questionable safety was sharply reduced. The networks moved "voluntarily" to make these changes after the Federal Communications Commission received 100,000 letters in a write-in campaign led by ACT, which sought and received help from organizations concerned with children all over the country. Not bad for a group the industry tried to brush off at first as "a few Boston mothers."

That was three years ago. ACT now has 7,000 members and receives some foundation support but, as Mrs. Peggy Charren, its president, says today: "Violence continues to sustain stories, the needs of minority children remain ignored and children's shows are still laced with commercials, especially for sugary foods and expensive toys."

Last July the National PTA, exercising the clout of an organization with 6.5 million members, launched its own action plan against violence on televi-

sion. After holding public hearings in eight cities across the country, at which parents, teachers, children and representatives of professional, civic and civil-rights organizations had a chance to air their opinions, the PTA set up its own TV-monitoring groups. With a massive letter-writing campaign as the central focus, the organization provided its members with the names and addresses of network officials and prime-time sponsors and urged them to keep an eye on local telecasting.

Early in 1978 the National PTA will issue what its president, Mrs. Grace Baisinger, has called "report cards," rating networks and sponsors on both objectionable and exemplary programming. And, Mrs. Baisinger suggested last August, on CBS-TV's *Face the Nation*, if progress in cleaning up shows has been minimal in this six-month "probationary" period, boycotts of products and programs may be just down the road.

As ACT and the PTA know, most viewers, children or adults, who see a murder or vicious beating on the screen do not rush out of the house and kill or beat the first passer-by, or even think for a moment of doing it. That is not the gravest danger.

The danger that chips away most deeply at our civilized veneer is that violence on TV helps to develop an immunity to violence in our everyday lives. We begin to lose our capacity to be angry or horrified when others are pushed around or even when we ourselves are the victims.

We are being "violenced" into a narcotic stupor where it counts the most—in our spirit, in our commitment to one another, in our responsibility to question what's happening to us. It's a stupor that prevents us from bringing a wider definition to violence.

Fear and frustration are the parents of violence, and we will never get rid of violence as long as we are afraid to look it in the face—or if we are too frustrated to think that nothing can be done about it now.

The people who said no to violence on television have provided a lesson for all of us.

"No" can be said to violence everywhere.

But we have to open our mouths first. We cannot afford not to be involved, to look out only for number one, to ignore the decay of our cities, the neglect of our aged and our ill, the pollution of our air and our water and our morality. We cannot afford, in fact, to neglect our responsibilities—every one of us.

We must say no to all the violent ones.

Even if it means beginning with a heart-to-heart talk with ourselves.

THE END

## HOW TO HELP

Readers who would like to register their protests against violence on television in ways that will count can obtain how-to information from Action for Children's Television, 46 Austin Street, Newtonville, Massachusetts 02160; and from the National PTA TV Action Center, 700 Rush Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611. PTA also has a toll-free TV Action hot line: 800-942-4266 in Illinois and 800-323-5177 for all other areas of the country.

As a service to readers, we are preparing reprints of the article above in a convenient form for those wishing to save it or send copies to friends. If you would like a reprint, send 35 cents in coin (no stamps, please) with a stamped business-size, self-addressed envelope to Department M-118, Redbook Magazine, 230 Park Avenue, New York, New York 10017. For larger orders, postage is included at the following prices: 10 copies—\$2.50; 50—\$11.50. Please allow three weeks for delivery. Prices of other quantities are available on request. This offer expires April 30, 1978.

search studies to include studies of the way television portrays the elderly, minorities and women. He has three new grants totaling more than \$130,000 to fund the expanded research, divided among these projects:

1. A study of television's portrayal of old people and its effects on viewers. Dr. Gerbner said the project should lead to an age index and profile to be used annually in monitoring television, similar to the index and profile he applies now in his research of violence on TV. At the completion of this study, he and his researchers will organize a prototype workshop with participants from the federal government, public interest groups, educators and television to look for ways to achieve the best television portrayal for the elderly. The "aging" study is funded with an \$87,035 grant from the Administration on Aging, U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

2. A study on minorities and women in television drama as portrayed in four samples of prime time programming from spring 1975 to fall 1976. The funding is through a \$3,500 grant from the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

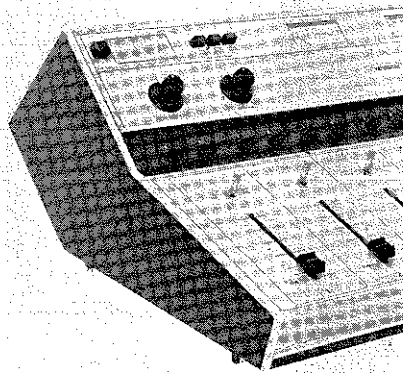
3. A continuing study Dr. Gerbner labels "cultural indicators," analyzing the roles of different groups in society such as minorities and women in violent TV displays and the effects of televised violence on these same groups of viewers. For this he has a grant of \$39,971 from the Office

of Telecommunications Policy, complementing a grant of \$99,000 from the American Medical Association to continue his annual violence counts from 1977 through 1979.

Working with Dr. Gerbner on these projects are Dr. Larry Gross, associate professor, and Dr. Nancy Signorelli, communications research coordinator at the Annenberg School.

Dr. Gerbner had indicated last summer that he planned to expand the scope of his TV studies (BROADCASTING, Aug. 29).

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## More grist for Gerbner

Professor who has made second career out of TV violence gets backing for three other studies

Dr. George Gerbner, dean of the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School of Communications and the nation's leading researcher into television violence, announced last week he is expanding his re-

Dr. George Gerbner, who persistently nettles the networks with his annual Television Violence Index and Profile, has announced expansion of the activities of the University of Pennsylvania-based Cultural Indicators research group to include studies of how the aged are portrayed on TV, how women and minorities were depicted between spring 1975 and fall 1976, and aspects of current programming other than violence.

Grants totalling \$130,506 from three sources have cued the new research.

Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School of Communications, is teamed in the Cultural Indicators projects with the school's Dr. Larry Gross, associate professor, and Dr. Nancy Signorelli, communications research coordinator.

*Inquirer, Dec 6,*  

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*1977*

## TV & The Elderly Debated In Atlanta

A conference on the way tv depicts old people is being held today (Wed.) at the Urban Life Center of Georgia State U. in Atlanta under the sponsorship of the Federal project Getting On Television and the Georgia State Dept. of Sociology.

Speakers will be Dr. George Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School of Journalism at the U. of Pennsylvania, and Dr. Nancy Signorielli, Gerbner's aide, will speak on tv images of the elderly as divulged by the Cultural Indicators Archives developed at the school. Fabian Linden, chief economist of The Conference Board of New York, will research results on the buying power of the elderly, and its neglect by advertisers.

A.R. Van Cantfort, will respond to the Gerbner talk as program manager of WSB-TV Atlanta, and Peter Seeley, marketing v.p. of Coca Cola, will answer the Linden charges.



# How Television Portrays Older People

By HELEN C. SMITH

Suppose you are a 10-year-old child. Your parents are in their 30s. You have no grandparents since they all died young. And all the teachers at your school are under 40.

You really don't know anyone who has crossed the great divide and slipped over the 50 mark into "old age."

But you do have a television set which you watch about as much as most 10-year-olds, which is to say a very great deal.

What image would you have of people over 50 in America? Would that image coincide with reality?

If you took television's message as the real thing, you would see such "old" people as ineffective, passive, likely to be victims, and very often, laughable figures without any romance in life and very little value otherwise.

And you wouldn't see very many of them as compared to their actual numbers in society. Only about three percent of the major characters depicted on prime time television are elderly, yet in the real world they comprise 20 percent of the population.

These are some of the findings of an eight year study based on the systematic monitoring of the content of over 1,000 network television programs by the Cultural Indicators Archives developed at the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania.

Dr. George Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School, and his associate, Dr. Nancy Signorielli who was the chief researcher for the project, were among those taking part Wednesday in a conference at Georgia State University on how television reflects older people.

Although about two-thirds of the elderly depicted on prime time television are depicted as married and of having children, none of the elderly women and only two men were involved in romance," said Dr. Signorielle. "That's a very sad portrayal."

Signorielle said that the research findings show that whereas older people might be shown as sociable, warm, quite peaceful, fair and supportive,

they were nevertheless rated as being unhappy and ineffective.

"We get a mixed picture," said Dr. Gerbner. "The elderly profile (on television) has some benign aspects and some insidious ones. Our concern is that there is such a gross under-representation which almost necessarily means type casting and stereotyping."

The worry of the researchers is that television may be brainwashing the viewers into seeing all older people as "unintelligent, ineducable, infirm, asexual and unemployable."

Tossing the ball back for the television industry, A. R. Van Cantfort, program manager of WSB-TV and president-elect of the National Association of Televisions Program Executives said:

"What you see on television is really what is happening in life, a year or two behind. If you are upset at the treatment of any group, maybe it is because you are upset at the way society does indeed treat the elderly. If television is to change, society must change."

Admitting that television has become the "universal scapegoat," much the way the "robber barons" who built the nation's railroads became scapegoats for everything venal, Gerbner said the situation calls for "tackling the problem together."

The second half of the conference, which was the last of four around the United States sponsored by the Getting on Television Project, a federal model project in New York City which depicts older people in a more "favorable and realistic light," examined the buying and selling power of the senior citizen.

If a big company were looking for the ideal advertising spokesman for his product whom would he choose? Someone young (18-24), active, blonde like Farrah Fawcett-Majors if possible, physically attractive, a perfect size, right?

"We don't agree," said Peter Lubalin, creative director for the Marsteller Advertising Agency in New York which mounted the Dannon Yogurt advertising campaign which uses centenarians to sell its product.

"Who said you can't show old people to sell young people on a product? Our sales have increased to record levels since we've been using them. We now have 75 percent of the market. Out of 150 brands of yogurt, Dannon sells as much as the other 149 combined."

There goes the theory you have to be young to reach the young, Lubalin said.

As for the buying power of older persons, it has been generally overlooked, though statistics prove it is an enormous market, said Fabian Linden, chief economist for the Conference Board, New York City. There are an estimated 23 million persons over 55, one study showed.

Linden used charts to show that the over-55 age bracket is growing at a more rapid pace than any other age bracket, that they comprise the single largest hunk of consumers, that they have the largest per capita income and fewer heavy family responsibilities than any other age bracket.

And yet, they remain largely "invisible" in the eyes of many marketers.

Overlooked, misrepresented, demeaned—these are a few of the complaints leveled at the television industry's portrayal of one very large segment of Americans. And the elderly women within that segment come off worst of all, it was found.

"Men are allowed to age much more gracefully than women," said Gerbner. "Very few women are ever shown as successful."

It was suggested at one of the prior conferences that perhaps what Mary Tyler Moore did to redeem the "Don't trust anyone over 30" syndrome, some over-50 person may someday due for another maligned age bracket.

"I'm old enough to remember when a lady, a single lady in her 30s was a very unattractive stereotype. And Mary Tyler Moore came along and changed that image," said a participant. "I think there is a chance then, to anticipate the fact that there are some older people who also can be attractive, interesting, competent characters, NOT funny, laughable, negatives, but nice people like Mary Tyler Moore, like me."

# MEMO

George:

Sorry it took so long  
to get this to you.

Regards,



12/21/77  
Attachment

RICHARD C. BLOCK

## George Gerbner Will Address The Caucus

George Gerbner, whose theories on tv violence have raised quite a few hackles in Hollywood creative circles, will address members of the Caucus of Producers, Writers & Directors on Jan. 18 at Chasen's.

Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School of Communications and a communications prof at the U. of Pennsylvania, will meet with the membership to discuss his definition of violence, his work, theory and methods.

His academic credentials include teaching at the U. of Illinois, USC, El Camino College and John Muir College. Years ago, before his rise to prominence, he was a dishwasher at Chasen's.

Press is being invited to the confab. Charles W. Fries is chairman of the Caucus Steering Committee.

DAILY VARIETY

December 8, 1977

## **Gerbner to speak on TV violence**

Dr. George Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School of Communications, speaks before the Caucus for Producers, Writers and Directors, at Chasen's the evening of Jan. 18. He is the creator of the violence profile & index, a program content tool which originally was developed under a grant from the National Institutes of Mental Health.

THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER  
December 8, 1977

# MEMO

George:

Sorry it took so long  
to get this to you.

Regards,



12/21/77  
Attachment

RICHARD C. BLOCK

# What Does The Tube Do To The Senior Citizen?

By JAN WEINER  
Staff Writer

There's only one minority group to which everyone will someday belong: the elderly.

That's probably why there are an increasing number of people who are concerned about the senior citizens in this culture and how the elderly are portrayed on television, the medium with perhaps the widest audience.

A special conference on aging and television was held Wednesday at the Georgia State University Urban Life Center. Sponsored by the Getting on Television Project, a federal model project in New York City, and the Georgia State Department of Sociology, the conference featured the research findings of Dr. George Gerbner, Dean of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania, and Fabian Linden, chief economist of The Conference Board in New York City.

Gerbner and his associate, Dr. Nancy Signoriella, reported how the elderly were portrayed in prime time television over the past eight years based on the systematic monitoring of the content of more than 1,000 programs.

In defense of television, the conference invited A. R. Van Cantfort, program manager of WSB-TV and president-elect of the National Association of Television Program Executives.

The theme of the conference was probably best expressed by actress Harriet Sappington, who started her acting career at the age of 72. On film, Mrs. Sappington said to the audience, "I only feel old when I'm made to feel old by other people."

Margaret Kuhn, president of the senior citizens group The Grey Panthers, said during a recent appearance on "Saturday Night Live" that people should not be afraid of old age and wrinkles.

"Our bodies get slower, but we must keep our minds alive and achieve," she said.

Her admonishment to become active was later expressed by Van Cantfort when he said that senior citizens are often the most vocal group when their favorite television shows are taken off the air. He urged them to get further involved with television.

Van Cantfort argued that people expect too much from television. Statistics were cited by Dr. Signoriella to show that the elderly are rarely portrayed on television, and when they are it is an unflattering portrayal. Responding to this, Van

Cantfort said that television is a "reflection of society."

Dr. Signoriella said that fewer of the elderly are portrayed as successful or "good," and that women are rarely seen as elderly. She also said that the elderly are usually cast in comic roles.

Romance is rarely associated with the elderly on television, she claimed. They usually have children and think family life is important, though.

Senior citizens, she continued, are shown as sociable, warm, peaceful and supportive, but unhappy.

Dr. Gerbner spoke about how those portrayals affect viewers. For people who are heavy television viewers, he said, the process of aging is speeded up. "They say they'll get married earlier, they feel they must find a full time job sooner, they have children at a younger age and more children and they get older at a younger age," he said.

He said that this was extremely true among women.

Van Cantfort responded, however, that the "picture drawn of the elderly treatment on television is not by design."

"It's not deliberate," he said, explaining that casting crews only choose from the people who volunteer to act.

He did admit, though, that "roles are stereotyped." But, then recalling Bob Hope, the late Bing Crosby, Dinah Shore, John Wayne and the Waltons' Will Greer, Van Cantfort said that "age makes no difference, talent does."

The moderator of the two-part conference, Patricia Reed Scott, said that behind the stereotyped roles of the elderly on television programs are the limited roles for the elderly in advertising.

Arlene Hoffman and Peter Lubalin, with the Marstellar Inc. advertising firm, said that the "ideal" advertising vehicle is someone between ages 18-34, active, blonde, a men's suit size 40 and women's size nine, and height of five foot, eight inches tall for women and six feet tall for men.

As the creative force behind the use of centenarians from Soviet Georgia for Dannon Yogurt commercials, the two advertising executives said that they tried to "poke a hole in the theory that only young people can be used to sell to old people." That theory also supposes that elderly people cannot be used to sell to the young.

Response to the advertising cam-

paign proved that the theory is not ironclad, they said; the market for yogurt has increased.

Other spokesmen at the conference agreed that advertising is changing from its sole focus on young people to the inclusion of the elderly in television life.

The conference was the fourth of a series on television and older people presented nationally this year by the "Getting on Television Project." It was designed as an effort to include older people in the mainstream of television programming content and advertising "in a more diversified and balanced manner."

Roswell, Ga.  
North Fulton Today  
Dec. 8 1977

# Chicago Tribune

THE WORLD'S GREATEST  
NEWSPAPER

D. 750,767 SUN. 1,079,945

DEC 13 1977

*Byline*

## TV found to be new social arbiter

RADNOR, Pa. [UPI]—People who once consulted family or church in defining socially acceptable behavior now are being guided solely by television, TV Guide magazine reports.

In an article in its Dec. 17 issue, the magazine said researchers agree that the role of television in socialization is becoming increasingly important. They also found that TV shows replace reality for heavy viewers.

"Both adults and young people turn to television to learn what society considers appropriate behavior, as they once turned to the family, the community, or the church for guidance," the article said.

"Moreover, some young people are more likely to believe television than their own experience."

THE MAGAZINE reported that Dr. George Gerbner, of the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School of Communications, said, "People who watch a lot of television carry in their heads a television version of reality, rather than a true one."

"Gerbner's interviews show that heavy viewers consistently overestimate the number of policemen in the U.S., the crime rate, and their own chances of being mugged or robbed," the article said.

DEC 13 1977

*By Ellen*

# The More TV Children Watch, the Worse They Fare in School Tests

The more television children watch, the worse they do in school achievement tests, say two University of Pennsylvania researchers who recently completed a three-year study of the effect of TV on schoolwork.

"We found that the children who watch the most TV tend to score more poorly in tests than the others," said researcher Michael Morgan. "As viewing goes up, scores go down.

"Our main conclusion is that of all achievements, reading comprehension is most related to TV viewing at all IQ levels. Children watch TV because it's easy and enjoyable, while reading is more of an effort.

"But reading is involved in just about every subject, so if you can't read well you'll have a handicap in everything.

"Children learn a lot of things from watching TV — they learn about the way the world is and about all kinds of people. But learning in that sense is different from learning traditional academic skills."

Dr. Larry Gross, associate professor of communications and co-director of the study, agrees.

"The amount of TV that children watch tends to be around three to four hours a day," Dr. Gross said. "But there are a fair number of

**By EDWARD B. CAMLIN**

children who watch more.

"In general, the higher IQ children watch less TV and the lower IQ children watch more.

"And, if you control the IQ — that is, select groups of children with equal IQs — you find that the more TV they watch, the worse they do on achievement tests."

The study, which involved 650 New Jersey schoolchildren in grades six through nine, revealed that TV viewing habits change as children mature.

"From kindergarten to about the sixth grade, the smarter kids tend to watch more TV," Morgan said. "They are learning about the world.

"But around the sixth or seventh grade, the smarter kids start watching less TV while the poorer students start watching more.

"The high IQ children find entertainment in books and other activities such as clubs, sports, drama, music and art.

"The lower IQ children watch TV because it's easier than doing lessons — and they possibly develop their social life around the TV."

# Gerbner Study Shows Increased Violence on All Three Networks

Claims by the television networks that they have been reducing the violence content of their programming have been exposed as false and misleading to the public in dramatic testimony before the House Subcommittee on Communications in Washington, D. C., on March 2.

In direct contradiction of reports emanating from those with vested interest in the perpetuation of gratuitous violence as the staple of TV entertainment, the most prestigious source of such information has revealed that violence increased sharply last year on all three networks, reaching its highest overall level since 1967.

Testimony heard by the Subcommittee was drawn from the 1976 Violence Profile compiled at the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School of Communications. Annenberg dean Dr. George Gerbner and Dr. Larry Gross, the principal researchers, presented their findings to the highly engrossed group of lawmakers.

The violence profile is the eighth such study made by Annenberg under Gerbner's supervision since 1967. In addition to the violence statistics it also reported that while all viewers absorb TV "lessons" of fear, suspicion and mistrust, children are most affected by the "mean world syndrome" of television programming.

Dr. Gerbner said that the increase in violence in 1967 resulted in the highest violence index on record. The level of violence took its biggest jump in "family viewing time" followed by weekend children's programming.

CBS, leader of the family hour con-

## CBS Resurrects Batman!

Right in the midst of the most pious proclamations network brass have ever made regarding content of programs for children, CBS has dredged up Batman from the discredited mess of Superman-type shows that plagued network Saturday mornings a few years ago.

The new series, titled *New Adventures of Bat Man*, is being aired at 10:30 a.m. Saturdays. It begins by claiming to present "the greatest array of villains the world has ever seen."

cept, lifted its two-season lid on violence during early evening hours, making the highest increase of any network. But despite the rise at CBS, ABC had the most violent "family hour," while NBC showed the most violent children's weekend and late evening programming.

The Annenberg annual violence profile is sponsored by the National Institute of Mental Health.

## ATTORNEY JOINS NABB BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Leonard Zelickman, attorney with a private practice in Van Nuys, California, has been elected to the board of directors of the National Association for Better Broadcasting. He is a member of the California State Bar, the Los Angeles Bar Association, and the San Fernando Valley Bar Association.

## NABB Award for Muppets

The National Association for Better Broadcasting has cited *The Muppet Show* as "the most creative, entertaining, and refreshing program series to be introduced during the 1976-'77 television season."

Awards and citations from NABB have been presented to Jim Henson, creator and producer of the program, and to ITC Entertainment for originating, producing, and distributing the series.

The citations commended Henson and ITC for "distinguished service to families everywhere." *The Muppet Show* was described as a program that can be shared with equal enjoyment by any age or any race or nationality.

There was a special notation for ITC's "courage and ingenuity" in successfully bringing to television a series of this quality through first-run syndication to stations throughout the world.

## NABB FILES NOTICE OF APPEAL OF FCC LICENSE RENEWAL ORDER

The National Association for Better Broadcasting on February 7 filed a notice of appeal with the U. S. Court of Appeals in Washington, D. C., of the adverse ruling by the FCC concerning NABB's 1974 Petition to Deny the license renewal application of KCOP-TV.

The Chris Craft station, which has operated over channel 13 in Los Angeles for many years, recently had its license renewed after more than two years of questionable standing caused by complaints by NABB and others. At one point the Commission itself levied a \$2,000 fine against KCOP for its weekly "Championship Wrestling" because the entire 90-minute show constituted a "program-length commercial."

Jerry Weinstein, NABB attorney, said that the appeal will be based on the FCC's "gross misinterpretation" of the censorship clause (Section 326) of the Communications Act, and on "other flagrant legal errors" made by the Commission in reaching its ruling.

Weinstein said that the FCC has set itself above the instructions and admonishments of Congress and of various Federal courts, including the Supreme Court, in its obdurate refusal to consider program content in its relationship to the needs of the community serviced by the licensee. He said that such consideration has nothing to do with censorship, and that it in no way violates the First Amendment.

Weinstein continued: "The FCC memorandum and order is a monumental illustration of the Commission's prejudice, and of its willingness to actively protect the special vested interests of certain incumbent broadcasters, regardless of the general public welfare. The FCC has attempted to force upon us, and upon all other citizens groups involved in broadcasting, the burden of proof that would be required of a prosecutor's office in trying a case in court. It has not only totally abrogated its responsibilities to protect the public interest. It has gone to the extreme assumption of an active role in shielding broadcasters

(Continued on Back Page)