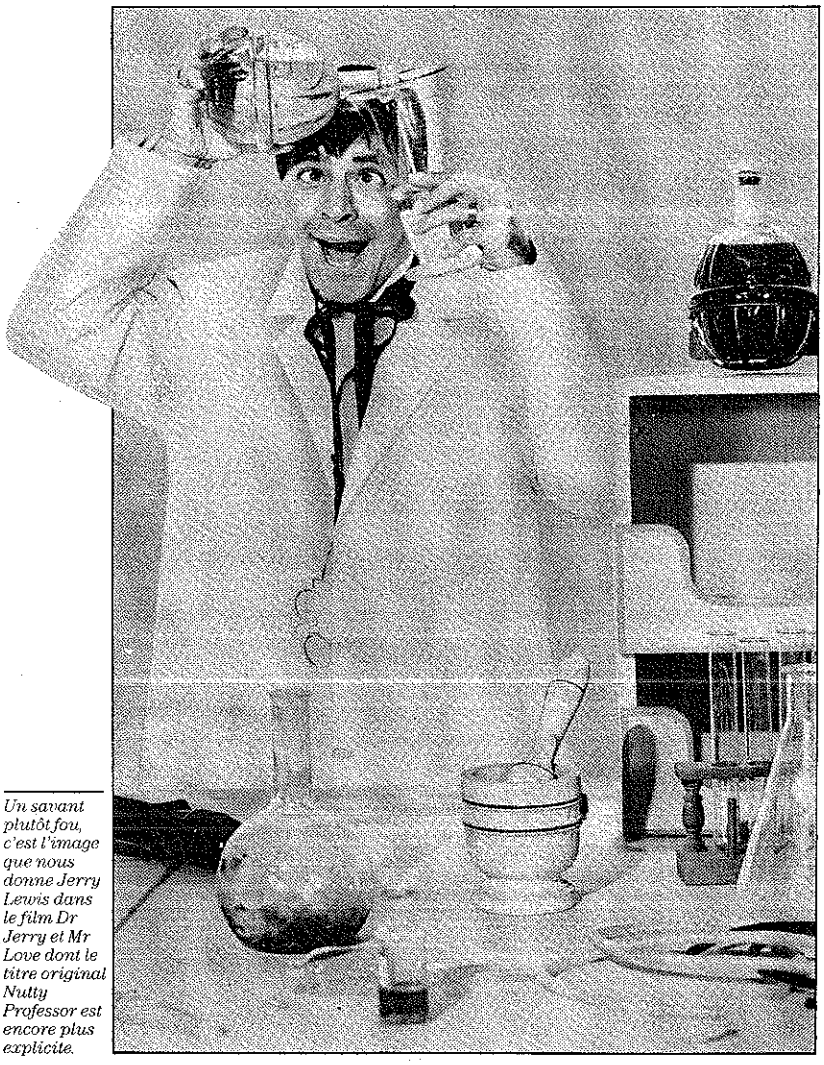
L'IMAGE DU SAVANT DANS LE PUBLIC

PLUS ON REGARDE LA TV, PLUS ON A UNE ATTITUDE NEGATIVE face à la Science. Et le niveau d'éducation du téléspectateur n'y change rien. Il faut bien reconnaître que les films américains et les bandes dessinées françaises ne font guère un joli portrait du savant.



Un savant plutôt fou, c'est l'image que nous donne Jerry Lewis dans le film Dr Jerry et Mr Love dont le titre original Nutty Professor est encore plus explicite.

Quelle image le public se fait-il donc des savants ? Comme il n'en voit guère, il les imagine tels que les lui représentent les feuilletons de télévision et les films de cinéma. Et, curieusement, plus on regarde la télévision et l'on va au cinéma, moins on a d'estime pour les savants.

C'est ce qui ressort d'une étude sur la télévision américaine, menée pendant deux ans par le Pr George Gerbner, de l'université de Pennsylvanie, et présentée à la dernière conférence annuelle de l'AAAS (1). Ses conclusions d'ailleurs s'appliquent aussi à notre pays, puisque, en 1984, selon le service d'Observation des programmes, Antenne 2 a diffusé 279 heures de séries en provenance des U.S. sur 504 heures de feuilletons, TF 1 en a projeté 210 heures sur 446 et FR 3 44 heures sur un total de 44. Collectant les traits prêtés aux scientifiques de fiction par le petit écran, le Pr Gerber réalise le portrait-robot psychologique suivant : solitaire, passionné, pas séduisant physiquement, rarement vraiment "fou", mais "bizarre", et plus âgé que les autres personnages de fiction, médecins, policiers ou journalistes. Détail : il n'est pas de nationalité américaine. Pour 5 savants plutôt bons et vertueux, on en compte un qui est un méchant.

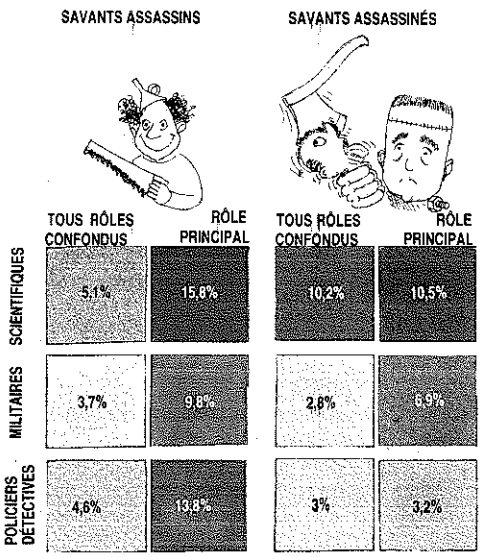
Cette dernière proportion semble favorable, elle l'est en fait beaucoup moins que pour les médecins : 19 bons pour un méchant, qui est elle-même moins favorable que pour les policiers : 40 bons pour un méchant. La même disproportion affecte les réussites et les

(1) American Association for the Advancement of Science.

par Françoise HARROIS-MONIN

échecs : 2 savants qui réussissent pour un qui échoue, mais 5 médecins qui réussissent pour un qui échoue et 8 policiers qui réussissent encore pour un qui échoue. A noter encore que les savants meurent beaucoup à l'écran : 10 % succombent dans l'action, bien plus que pour les militaires (6,9 %), les policiers et les détectives (3,2 %) !

À L'ÉCRAN, LA PROFESSION DE SAVANT EST BIEN HASARDEUSE



▲ *S'ils ont le rôle principal, les scientifiques sont des assassins dans 15,8 % des cas, contre 9,5 % pour les militaires... Et ils sont tués dans 10,5 % des cas, contre 3,2 % pour les policiers.*

Le public en est-il affecté ? Le Pr Gerber soumet, pour le savoir, les 5 questions que voici à un échantillon de 1 600 personnes (échantillon représentatif de la population) :

- La science modifie-t-elle trop vite les modes de vie ?
- Permet-elle de vivre plus sainement, plus confortablement, plus facilement ?
- Permet-elle de distinguer le bien du mal ?
- Pose-t-elle plus de problèmes qu'elle n'en résout ?
- Et son développement va-t-il permettre à quelques spécialistes de contrôler nos vies ?

Si le téléspectateur répondait non aux première, quatrième et cinquième questions et oui aux deux autres, son attitude était considérée comme 100 % positive ; mais s'il répondait non aux deuxième et troisième questions et oui aux trois autres, son attitude était considérée comme négative et se voyait gratifiée d'un zéro. Les différentes combinaisons possibles entre les réponses permettaient d'échelonner les notes de 0 à 100. Et l'on a trouvé que, plus un téléspectateur est assidu, plus son opinion de la science est médiocre, et cela quels que soient son âge, son sexe ou son niveau d'éducation.

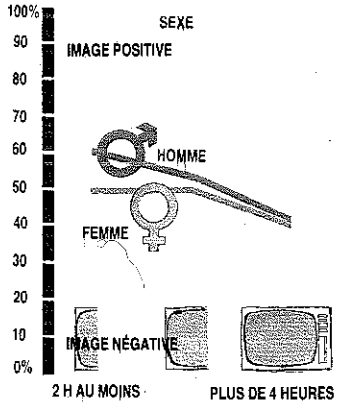
La lecture de magazines spécialisés et la consommation d'émissions scientifiques n'y changent rien ; pis : c'est parmi les téléspectateurs dont le niveau d'éducation est le plus élevé et ceux qui lisent le plus de publications scientifiques que l'on trouve le plus de gens qui ont une mauvaise idée de la science. Est-ce bien la fréquentation de la télévision qui est en cause ? Les gens cultivés n'ont-ils pas une mauvaise idée de la science, justement parce qu'ils la connaissent ? Nenni : s'ils ne regardent pas ou regardent peu la télévision, leur opinion de la science est plutôt bonne. S'ils la regardent, ils n'en ont pas meilleure opinion que les autres. C'est bien la télé qui est en cause (***voir dessin 1***).

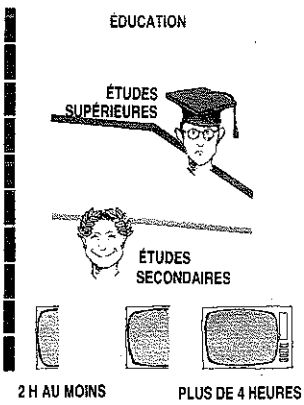
Si la science est desservie par la télé, en est-il de même des savants ? Nouveau questionnaire, sous forme de propositions à accepter ou rejeter :

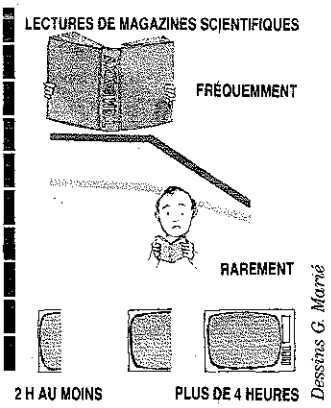
- Les savants font des travaux dangereux ;
- Ils ne s'amusent pas dans la vie ;
- Ils ne se marient pas ;
- S'ils le font, ils s'occupent peu de leur famille ;
- Ils se comportent de façon bizarre ;
- Ils sont fréquemment non-américains ;
- Ils ne sont pas religieux ;
- ils ne pensent qu'à leur travail ;
- Ils ne s'intéressent qu'à la connaissance pure, sans se soucier des conséquences de leurs découvertes.

Là aussi, les réponses furent notées de 0 à 100, 0 pour le négatif absolu (oui à toutes les questions), 100 pour le positif. Et une fois de plus, on constata que, toutes catégories confondues, comme plus haut, plus un téléspectateur est assidu, plus son opinion du scientifique est médiocre. Pas d'influence non plus des lectures scientifiques sérieuses (***voir dessin 2***).

L'équipe du Pr Gerber a aussi cherché à déterminer si les té-

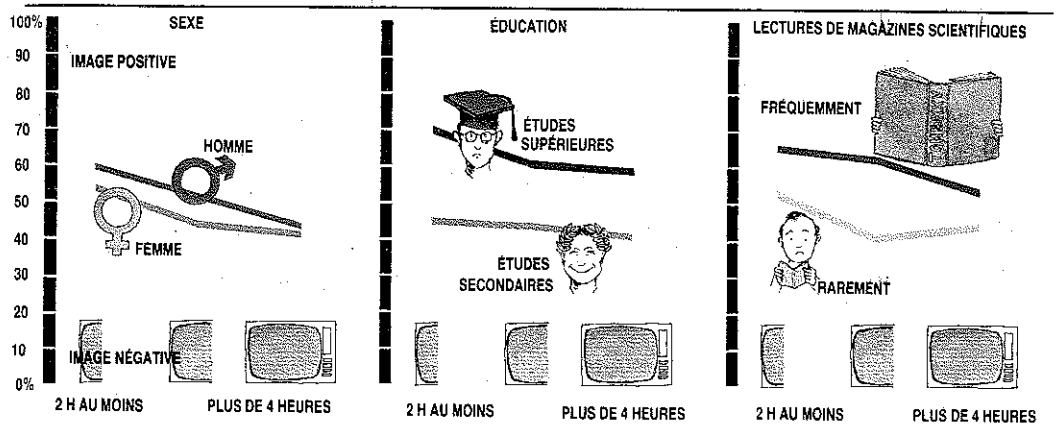






Dessins G. Marié

▶ *1. Le téléspectateur face à la science.*



2. Le téléspectateur face aux savants.

léspectateurs étaient plus enclins que d'autres à souhaiter limiter les activités des savants.

Troisième questionnaire : les savants doivent-ils être autorisés à faire des recherches qui :

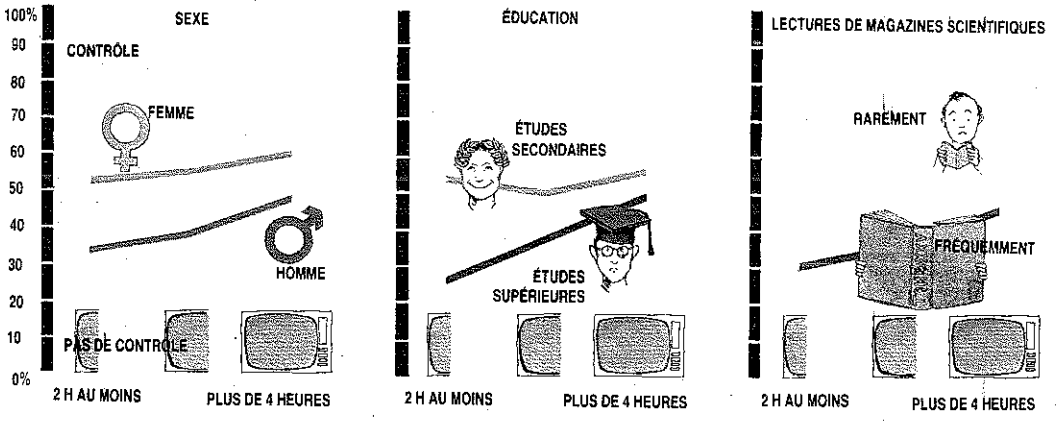
- permettraient à l'homme de vivre plus de 100 ans ?
- créeraient de nouvelles formes de vie végétale ou animale ?
- mèneraient à la découverte d'extraterrestres ?
- permettraient aux savants de décider du sexe des enfants à venir ?

Comme plus haut, les réponses ont reflété un rapport constant entre la consommation de feuilletons télévisés et le sentiment qu'il faut contrôler les activités des savants (***voir dessin 3***).

Conclusion évidente du Pr Gerber : « Les feuilletons télévisés, les films, tendent à renforcer les images populaires de la science et des savants et rendent le public plus critique et négatif à l'égard de la recherche. » Et la consommation de films de fiction détruit l'effet favorable des lectures scientifiques vraies. Même effet des films de cinéma proprement dit, à cette différence près qu'on enregistre une variation de l'image du savant dans le temps. Deux autres études, menées par le Pr George Comstock, de l'université de Syracuse, Etat de New York, le confirment.

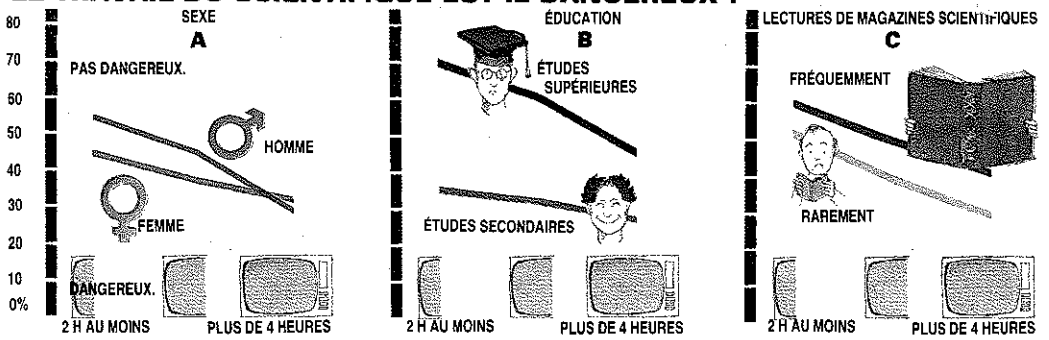
Ces études passent en revue 4 541 films diffusés entre 1939 et 1976, puis 2 240 diffusés entre 1977 et 1984. Elles analysent la façon dont les "innovations ont été représentées à l'écran". « Nous avons retenu pour nos recherches, explique le Pr Comstock, les innovations pour lesquelles l'inventeur était présent à l'écran, et celles qui influençaient le déroulement de l'action. » La seule participation d'armes sophistiquées de dispositifs futuristes, de machines exotiques ne suffisait pas. Les gadgets qui truffent les films de James Bond n'étaient pris en compte dans l'étude que s'ils avaient été mis au point au cours du film et s'ils modifiaient le cours des événements. Les inventions ne font guère florès entre 1939 et 1976 : on ne les retrouve que dans 162 des 4 541 films étudiés, soit dans moins de 4 % des pellicules. Et là, les trois quarts des inventeurs représentés sont des savants (médecins inclus) qui travaillent seuls ou presque, ce qui confirme l'image du savant solitaire. Neuf savants sur dix sont des hommes, les femmes ne faisant leur apparition que dans le courant des années soixante-dix ; la moitié seulement d'entre eux est composée d'Américains et on n'y trouve aucun Noir. Les inventions médicales, les plus fréquentes, représentent 33 % du total.

Ce schéma général ne change guère de 1977 à 1984, si ce n'est que le taux d'invention évoqué



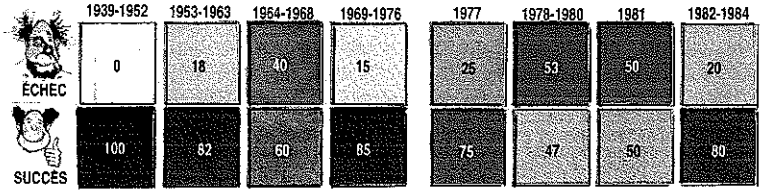
3. Faut-il contrôler les travaux des savants ?

LE TRAVAIL DU SCIENTIFIQUE EST-IL DANGEREUX ?



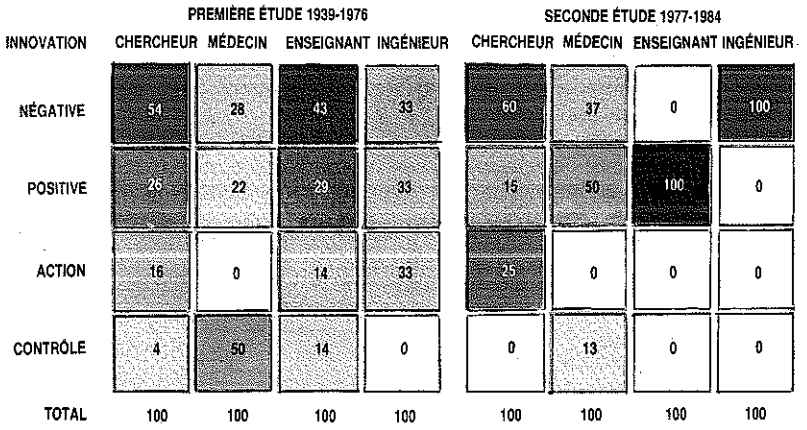
Le simple fait de regarder la TV distord l'opinion du téléspectateur. Plus il reste devant son écran, plus il pense que le savant effectue des recherches dangereuses, et cela quel que soit son sexe (tableau A), son niveau d'études (tableau B), qu'il lise ou non des revues scientifiques (tableau C).

LE MIROIR DU MORAL AMÉRICAIN



Au cinéma, lorsque l'Amérique va bien, les innovations réussissent, comme durant la période de l'après-guerre et le règne du président Reagan (1982-1984). Lorsqu'au contraire tout va mal, les innovations ont tendance à échouer comme ce fut le cas durant la guerre du Vietnam (1964-1968) et la présidence de Jimmy Carter (1978-1980).

LES SAVANTS MALTRAITENT LES AUTRES



Dans les films, si les inventions sont le fait de chercheurs, elles ont plus de chances d'avoir des conséquences négatives pour les autres que si elles ont été mises au point par des médecins ou des enseignants. Entre 1939 et 1976, 54 % des innovations enfantées par les savants sont néfastes, 26 % sont bénéfiques, 16 % modifient le cours de l'action, et 4 % aboutissent à une prise de contrôle par le scientifique. A noter qu'entre 1977 et 1984, c'est la profession d'ingénieur qui est mal vue puisque tout ce qu'il entreprend est négatif, contrairement à l'enseignant.

baisse encore, puisqu'il tombe à 3,2 %, les inventions médicales (25 %) accusant un léger retrait par rapport aux inventions techniques (33 %).

Mais l'image des inventions varie : de la Seconde Guerre mondiale aux années immédiates de l'après-guerre, c'est-à-dire jusqu'en 1952, les conséquences des inventions sont représentées en majorité comme positives : 75 % d'entre elles sont louables et toutes réussissent. Dans 43 % des cas, leur succès est dû aux qualités personnelles des inventeurs. Mais, de 1964 à 1968, le taux de succès des inventions louables tombe à 60 % et, bizarrerie, ces succès ne doivent rien aux qualités personnelles des savants. « Tout se passe comme si, commente le Pr Comstock, la guerre mondiale avait inspiré au cinéma une représentation positive de la science, tout comme d'une société mue par les bons sentiments personnels. C'est la morale de l'effort, du bien public et de la valeur personnelle. »

Mais, dans les années soixante, celles où l'Amérique est en guerre au Vietnam et est déchirée par les conflits raciaux, les films représentent un monde où la majorité des inventions visent à faire le mal et où la valeur personnelle de l'inventeur est négligeable.

La seconde tranche de films, 1977-1984, confirme ce schéma. De 1977-1980, l'Amérique affronte une récession et perd

confiance dans ses institutions et son président, Jimmy Carter : le cinéma offre une image négative de la science. Mais dès qu'en 1981 et sous l'administration Reagan la confiance revient, le cinéma redevient positif à l'égard de la science.

Il n'existe pas en France d'études comparables, si ce n'est celles du Centre national de recherches scientifique (CNRS), d'il y a un an. Analysant l'image du savant dans les bandes dessinées pour enfants, le CNRS en trouve en fait trois : selon J.-P. Dalberra (actuellement au ministère de la Culture) : « Un premier type de savant, au visage rond et au regard ingénu, un deuxième aux traits anguleux et au nez aquilin, et un troisième, humaniste, libérateur, animé par l'esprit de justice et de défense de la civilisation occidentale. » Premier type : Nimbus, Cosinus, Tournesol ; deuxième : Septimus, Miloch, Espérandieu ; troisième : Mortimer, de Champignac.

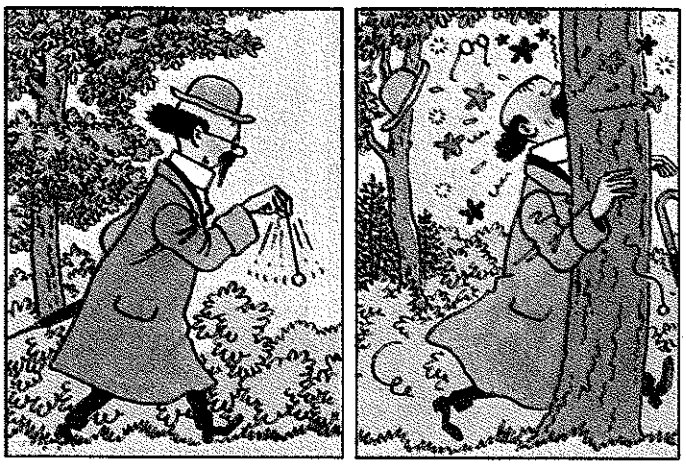
Et ces stéréotypes se retrouvent-ils dans les définitions du savant par les enfants ? Pour le savoir, la Commission culturelle de l'Association des personnels du CNRS demande à 150 enfants de 10 à 14 ans (CM2, 6e, 5e, 4e et 3e) de répondre par écrit à la question : « Qu'est-ce qu'un savant ? »

Et l'on constate que, pour les jeunes aussi, le savant est un solitaire et un ambitieux. « Son cerveau est plein d'images folles, il veut commander la Terre » (Stéphanie, 12 ans) ; « Un savant, ça me fait penser aux explosions et aux bombes » ; « C'est un fou dangereux » ; « Ils nous compliquent l'existence »... Christophe, 11 ans a rendu une copie ornée du seul dessin d'une porte sur laquelle il a écrit en majuscules « DÉFENSE D'ENTRER ».

Dans l'ensemble, il n'y a pour les jeunes que de bons ou de mauvais savants et il y a plus de mauvais que de bons. La bande dessinée française dessert donc autant la science que la télévision et le cinéma américains.

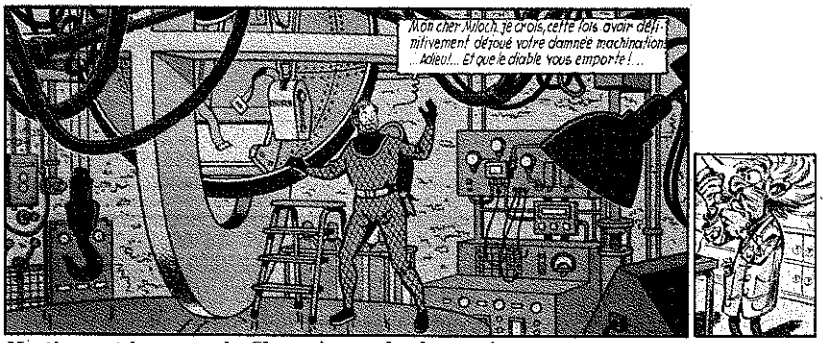
La science mérite-t-elle tant d'indignité ? ●

TROIS IMAGES DU SAVANT



Tournesol, le distrait ;

Miloch, Dieuleveult et Esperandieu, les fous ;



Mortimer et le comte de Champignac, les humanistes.

Gegen-Narkose

Parlamentarier, Journalisten, Wissenschaftler, Zuschauer kritisieren das Fernsehen der USA – Zehn Beispiele

Von Horst Albrecht

Die tägliche Erbitterung oder Volkes Zorn und seine Anlässe

I.

„Das Fernsehen ist die hinterhältigste Institution Amerikas. Denn es kontrolliert den Frieden in unserer Gesellschaft. Es reguliert das Aufsteigen und das Absinken der Wünsche der Massen. Gesendet wird, was die größten Zuschauerzahlen für die Werbespots anzieht, das ist die Formel, nach der Fernsehen in Amerika gemacht wird. Das Fernsehen tut nichts, um das amerikanische Volk zu bereichern. Oder fast nichts."

Leider hat Everett Parker weithin Recht, wenn er so scharf urteilt. Das kommerzielle Medium finanziert sich fast ausschließlich aus Werbeeinnahmen, das nichtkommerzielle „Public Broadcasting System" spielt eine ähnliche Aschenbrödelrolle wie die dritten Programme hierzulande. Die drei großen kommerziellen Gesellschaften ABC, CBS und NBC dürfen laut Rundfunkgesetz zwar nur je fünf eigene Sendestationen besitzen, jede versorgt aber mehr als 200 angeschlossene Stationen; dazu kommt eine Anzahl unabhängiger Sender. Die insgesamt 697 Stationen haben im Jahre 1973 4,565 Milliarden Dollar von der werbenden Industrie kassiert, die Steigerungsrate lag bei 11,6 %. Die größten Brocken kamen von Procter and Gamble (221 Millionen Dollar), General Motors (98 Millionen) und der Ford Motor Co. (84 Millionen). Die Volkswagenwerk AG war mit immerhin 23 Millionen Dollar mit von der Partie[1].

Als besonders geeignete Werbeträger erscheinen den Geldgebern die Krimis (Programmanteil je nach Network 25 – 44 %), alle Arten von Unterhaltungssendungen (32 – 50 %), Spielfilme (10 – 25 %) und Western (bis zu 15 %). Verschiedene Firmen haben sich auf einzelne regelmäßige Sendungen spezialisiert. So werden die „CBS Evening News with Walter Cronkite", vergleichbar der Spätausgabe unserer Tagesschau, „Ihnen gebracht durch Exxon". Ein Autokonzern zwang CBS, allabendlich fünf Minuten Sport einzuschieben, damit die Spots dieser Firma in garantiert lustvoller Umgebung erscheinen können[2]. Aber auch Putzmittelfirmen schätzen die Nachrichten. Als Präsident Nixon am 12. Oktober 1973 seinen neuen Vizepräsidenten Gerald Ford vorgestellt hatte – „Danke schön und guten Abend" –, folgte unmittelbar darauf: „Lysol – tötet Bazillen, wo immer es sie trifft. Tötet Bazillen auch in Ihrer Toilette. Tötet Bazillen, die üblen Geruch verursachen." Dann sah man ein Abflußrohr und hörte es rauschen, Schluß: „Welche Qual in diesem Kanal!"[3] Noch makabrer: Als Walter Cronkite der Nation die Ermordung Robert F. Kennedys mitteilte, wurde der Bericht von der Reklame für ein Mundwasser unterbrochen[4].

Nicht weniger bestürzend sind die Absprachen mit der Industrie, zu denen sich die Fernsehgesellschaften herbeilassen.

ABC läßt seine jährlich 30 Documentaries von Firmen wie 3M, Goodrich, Rockwell bezahlen und gewährt seinen Geldgebern von vornherein die Auswahl der Themen, das Recht zur Änderung der Skripte, zur Prüfung der Rohschnittfassungen und zu jeder Änderung des Programminhalts[5]. Die Unterschiede zwischen Werbespots und Programmumfeld geraten damit nicht allzu erheblich.

Kein Wunder: Kritik am Fernsehen ist in Amerika Volkssport. Der Aufforderung einer Regierungskommission, sich zum Kinderfernsehen zu äußern, folgten mehr als hunderttausend Amerikaner; allein deren Briefe füllen 63 Aktenordner[6]. Freilich: Die Anstalten sind auf solche Briefluten schon eingerichtet, sie lassen ihre IBM-Computer schriftlich antworten. – Eine Filmsatire übers Fernsehen, „The Groove Tube" (etwa: „Die heiße Röhre"), verschafft den Kinobesitzern seit Monaten volle Kassen. Das anspruchslose Filmchen verhohnepipelt die elektronische Konkurrenz mit einem kräftigen Zusatz von Pornographie, „Nur für Erwachsene – Sie werden sich 'nen Ast lachen". Stimmt, das Publikum wiehert dankbar.

Der blinde Riese oder Fernsehkontrolle durch das Parlament

II.

Dem Buchstaben des Gesetzes nach wird das Fernsehen vom Parlament kontrolliert. Seit 1934 überwacht in dessen Auftrag die Federal Communications Commission den Rundfunk. Deren Waffe ist die Entscheidung über die Vergabe der Sendelizenzen; seit Herbst vorigen Jahres muß sich jede Station alle fünf Jahre erneut darum bewerben. In dem sehr präzise festgelegten Verfahren müssen die Sender seither z. B. nachweisen, „daß sie die Probleme, Nöte und Interessen der Bevölkerung in ihrem Sendebereich für Programmzwecke ermitteln und berücksichtigen"[7]. Dazu der Hon. Robert E. Lee, einer der sieben Hochkommissare der Federal Communications Commission: „Wir verlangen, daß die Sender in ihrem Sendebereich Erhebungen anstellen. Und damit ist sehr viel mehr gemeint als nur ein paar Telephonanrufe. Die Umfrageergebnisse müssen uns schriftlich vorgelegt werden. Manche Sender haben sich deshalb wissenschaftliche Stäbe zur Zuschauerforschung zugelegt. Andere versuchen, sich ihre Unterlagen von schon vorhandenen Instituten zu beschaffen und danach ihre Programme zu entwickeln. Damit sind sie ganz schön beschäftigt."

Es steht zu befürchten, daß den Sendern dennoch nicht allzuviel Harm geschieht. Die Kommission hat bisher jährlich 2 800 Lizenzverfahren durchgeführt, dabei wurden in nur 37 Fällen Einwände erhoben, 131 Fälle sind noch ungeklärt. 1964 wurde tatsächlich zum ersten Mal eine Lizenz entzogen, dazu unten mehr; drei weitere Fälle sind noch nicht rechtskräftig entschieden. Dabei lagen allein in den letzten fünf Jahren 247 Petitionen gegen 445 Stationen vor. Hochkommissar Lee meint angesichts dieser Zahlen resignierend: „Wer sind wir schon? Ein paar Mann, die Millionen kontrollieren." Die Kommission hat nicht genügend Mitarbeiter, um die Angaben der Sender wirklich überprüfen zu können, und nicht die Macht, ihre Auflagen auch durchzusetzen.

III.

Neben der Federal Communications Commission gucken das Communications Committee des Repräsentantenhauses und das Subcommittee on Communications des Senats der Fernsehindustrie auf die Finger. Außerdem hat der oberste Mediziner des Landes (Surgeon General) zur ▶

Präsident Nixon: „War das ein guter Krimi! Das war wie – äh – alle diese Sachen! Mein Gott! Da waren – äh da waren Jungs, die jagten Leute – äh – mit Flugzeugen und so Zeugs!" Mr. Ehrlichman: „Ihr – äh – Ihr Fernsehgeschmack ist ja offensichtlich sehr gut. Sie verstehen, das war – äh – eine Betäubungsshow (a narcotics show)."
The Watergate Tapes, 19. April 1971

„Kein Curriculum zeitigt so verheerende Lernerfolge für so enorm viele Menschen wie das tägliche Programm des amerikanischen Fernsehens."
Professor George Gerbner vor dem Unterausschuß für Kommunikation des US-Senats

Frage der Wirkung von Gewaltdarstellungen im Fernsehen eine umfassende Studie in Auftrag gegeben; das Ergebnis liegt in 85 Pfund Forschungsberichten und sieben zusammenfassenden Bänden vor. Wer in der amerikanischen Massenkommunikationsforschung Rang und Namen hat, ist hier zu Wort gekommen[8].

Der Aufwand ist also beträchtlich, das Ergebnis für die Industrie auch hier nicht weiter tragisch. Das Senatshearing zur Studie des Surgeon General verlief für einen der Präsidenten der CBS, John A. Schneider, so: Sen. Pastore: „Es ist uns ein Vergnügen, Dich hierzuhaben, John. Fang bitte an." – Mr. Schneider: „Danke schön. Guten Tag, Senator." Und dann benutzte er die gute Gelegenheit, den Senatoren zu erzählen, was CBS so alles Hübsches sendet. Gewaltdarstellungen wären nach wissenschaftlichen Feststellungen seit 1972 um 25 % zurückgegangen. Aus „Gunsmoke", „Cannon", „Mannix", „Barnaby Jones" und den „Straßen von San Francisco" seien alle Fälle unbegründeter Gewaltanwendung entfernt worden. Daß diese Angaben vom CBS-eigenen Office of Social Research kommen, fällt niemandem weiter auf. Als besonders soziale Taten nennt Schneider die „Waltons", hierzulande im ZDF zu haben. Sen. Pastore: „Ich würde hoffen, daß die Industrie ein Reifestadium erreicht hat, in dem sie ihr eigener Wachhund ist. Bisher sind wir so eine Art Wachhundkomitee. Wir können bellen, aber wir können nicht beißen. Das wäre gegen das Gesetz. Das Rundfunkgesetz verbietet die Zensur, und es tut Recht daran. Das Grundrecht der Meinungsfreiheit geht über alles."[9]

Der Präsident von ABC, Walter A. Schwartz, seifte am nächsten Morgen die Senatoren noch ungenierter ein; er las ihnen anscheinend vor, was seine PR-Leute ihm in die Aktentasche gesteckt hatten. Immerhin verpflichtete er sich dabei, in den nächsten vier Jahren eine Million Dollar für Zuschauerforschung auszugeben.

Bei solchen Hearings kann sich jedermann zu Wort melden, hier gab es die wenigen Lichtblicke angesichts von so viel Inkompetenz. Ein junger Mann, ein Robert L. Thompson, Jurastudent aus Austin in Texas, war der einzige, der es wagte, gegenüber den Fernsehbossen die Dinge beim Namen zu nennen: „Herr Vorsitzender, die Sender kümmern sich doch den Teufel um die Kritik an ihren Programmen, außer einmal im Jahr vor Ihrem Komitee. Die Litanei, die der Präsident von ABC heute morgen hier angestimmt hat, hat doch mit der hier anstehenden Untersuchung fast nichts zu tun. Er redet zwar auch von Sozialforschung und wirft Ihnen damit ein paar Knochen zu, aber auch wenn da etwas Fleisch dran ist, kann das doch nicht über die Gewaltexzesse in den Sendungen dieses Herrn hinwegtäuschen. Ich hoffe sehr, daß jemand von Ihnen sich heute abend die Zeit nimmt, sich einmal das Programm von ABC anzuschauen. Um halb zwölf bringt dieser Kanal den 90-Minuten-Thriller 'K Is For Killing'. Daran werden Sie ermessen können, wie es um die Friedfertigkeit und um die Glaubwürdigkeit der Aussagen von ABC bestellt ist, die Sie heute morgen gehört haben." – Sen. Pastore: „O. K., aber Spaß beiseite, um halb zwölf pflege ich fest zu schlafen. Ich werde einen meiner Beamten bitten, sich heute abend das Programm anzuschauen und mir am Montagmorgen darüber zu berichten."[10]

IV.

Symptomatisch für den Umgang des Kongresses mit dem Fernsehen sind vielleicht die Watergate-Hearings vor dem Senatsausschuß unter dem Vorsitz von Sam Ervin. Wie erinnerlich, hatte das Fernsehen den Skandal der Presse überlassen, namentlich der WASHINGTON POST, und der Berichterstattung in den sieben Wochen vom Einbruch im Hauptquartier der Demokraten bis zur Präsidentenwahl alles in allem nicht einmal eine Stunde Sendezeit eingeräumt (genau waren es bei NBC 41 Minuten 21 Sekunden, bei ABC 42 Minuten 16 Sekunden, bei CBS immerhin 71 Minuten 9 Sekunden). Senator Edward M. Kennedy fiel es zu, den Nachrichtenmann der Nation, Walter Cronkite von den CBS Evening News, nach diesem seltsamen Sachverhalt zu befragen. Sen. Kennedy: „Ich möchte Mr. Cronkite herzlich begrüßen. Außerdem möchte ich mich (zu Cronkite) bei Ihnen dafür entschuldigen, daß ich nicht in der Lage war, bei Ihren Ausführungen und Erläuterungen anwensend zu sein." Folgt die Frage, ob sich die Anstalten bei ihrer Zurückhaltung gegenüber Watergate vielleicht durch die Angriffe des Vizepräsidenten Agnew bedroht gefühlt hätten. Cronkite verneint. Kennedy bedankt sich, weiß anscheinend nicht weiter, er bekommt von einem Stabsmitglied des Komitees einen Zettel zugesteckt und liest die Frage darauf vor. Nachdem Cronkite geantwortet hat, bedankt er sich nochmals ausdrücklich. Und schon ist alles vorbei.

Ein Beobachter stellte fest: „Keiner der Senatoren, auch nicht Kennedy, stellte Cronkite irgendeine Frage, die ihn daran gehindert hätte, den Ausschuß lediglich als Plattform für die Selbstdarstellung der CBS zu benutzen. Keiner von ihnen schien zu ahnen, daß diese Debatte hätte historische Dimensionen haben können. Es war dies die erste Gelegenheit, bei der der Kongreß und die amerikanische Öffentlichkeit das Fernsehen wegen seiner politischen Berichterstattung über Watergate hätten zur Rede stellen können"[11]. Leider war auch das eine versäumte Gelegenheit.

Die papierne Kassandra oder Presse und Fernsehen

V.

Fernsehkritik bleibt dem Bürger überlassen; der erwartet die Bestätigung seiner Ansichten von seiner Zeitung. Jedes größere Blatt hält sich seinen Fernsehkritiker, der täglich eine Kolumne mit seinen Ansichten zu füllen hat. Nicht alle Blätter können sich wie die NEW YORK TIMES einen Jack Gould oder einen Les Brown leisten. Die kleineren begnügen sich damit, die Presseinformationen der Sender zu paraphrasieren. Wie unabhängig man aber auch in diesem Gewerbe sein kann, beweisen zwei Chicagoer Journalisten, Ron Powers von der CHICAGO SUN-TIMES und Norman Mark von der CHICAGO DAILY NEWS.

Powers: „Für unser Fernsehen sehe ich vor allem zwei Gefahren. Einmal die Konzentration von bestimmten Konzernen.

„Fernsehen ist der ideale Werbeträger für schlecht verkäufliche Produkte, denn es ist ein aggressives Medium. Durch das Fernsehen kann man Waren selbst dort hineinquetschen, wo sie unerwünscht sind. Das klingt nicht sehr moralisch, ist aber eine Tatsache, die zum Leben mit dem Fernsehen gehört."
August Priemer, Werbechef der S. C. Johnson Company

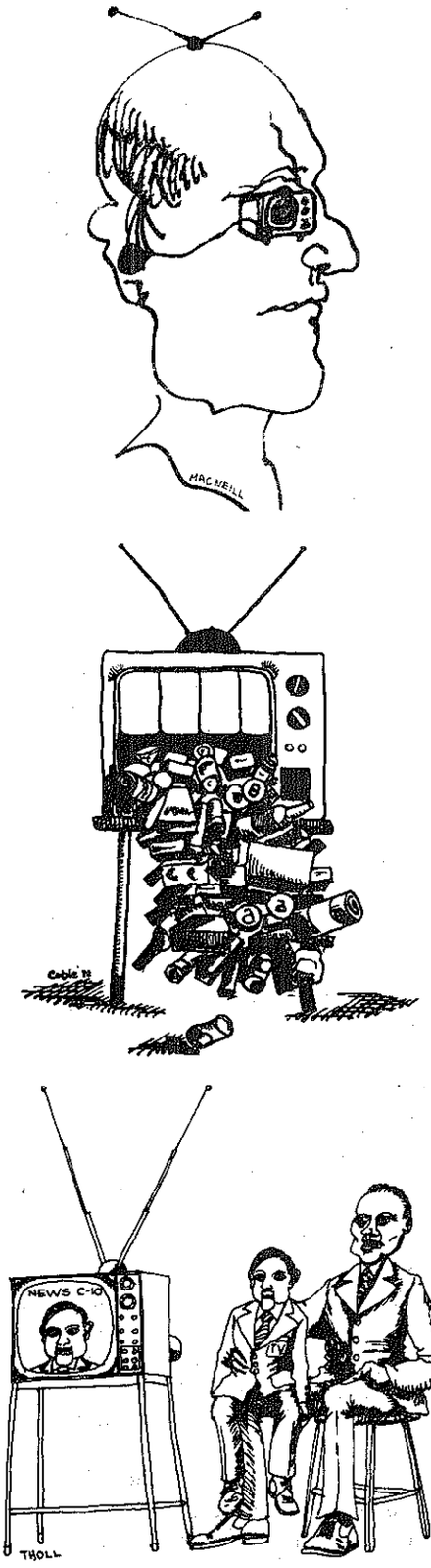
„Fernsehen dient den Wohlhabenden, es ist der Schrittmacher ihrer Wünsche. In erster Linie durch Ihre Werbespots, in zweiter durch unsere Programme – wahrscheinlich in dieser Reihenfolge."
James Duffy, Präsident des ABC Television Network, vor der Association of National Advertisers

„Die Networks wollen nicht Profite machen, sie wollen riesige Profite machen. Und das gelingt ihnen auch. 1972 haben sie ihre Gewinne um 66 % gesteigert, 1973 um knapp hundert Prozent. Damit sind sie der übrigen Wirtschaft weit voraus."
Douglas Cater, Aspen Institute, Palo Alto

Wenn einer davon etwa eine Reihe von Fernsehstationen besitzt und außerdem eine Filmfirma, ein paar Baseballteams und schließlich etliche Zeitungen und irgendwo dazwischen eine Napalmfabrik, dann werden wir auf diesem Kanal nicht eben viel über den Krieg in Vietnam gesehen haben. Und diese Konzentration von fragwürdigen Interessen nimmt ständig zu.

Vielleicht noch gefährlicher ist eine andere Entwicklung. Immer mehr Sender gehen dazu über, Motivationsforscher zu beschäftigen, die sie über den billigsten Publikumsgeschmack auf dem laufenden halten. Damit ist ein fataler Kreislauf oberflächlicher Bedürfnisse kurzgeschlossen. Und diese Motivationsforscher regieren nicht etwa nur die Unterhaltungssendungen. Sie schreiben den Fernsehjournalisten auch vor, was eine Nachricht ist und wie die Leute sie sehen wollen. Dabei geht die Wahrheitspflicht vor die Hunde. Ebenso werden alle eher altruistischen und noblen Regungen in den Zuschauern mißachtet.

Ich habe den Eindruck, die Tragik des Fernsehens liegt darin, daß die Leute es imitieren. Als das Fernsehen gezeigt hatte, wie Evel Knievel mit einem Motorrad über den Snake Canyon sprang, gab es am



Zeichnungen von Gerry Lynas, WIN Magazine, Pratt Institute

Und das ist nicht das einzige Beispiel. Am 26. Februar 1974 wurde in ‚Police Story' gezeigt, wie Jackie Cooper eine Bar ausraubt und dabei drei Menschen umlegt. Am Abend darauf raubte ein Taxifahrer Angela's Restaurant an der 20th Avenue in Queens aus, tötete dabei drei Gäste auf dieselbe sadistische Weise wie auf dem Bildschirm und ließ nicht einmal die dort gezeigten Vergewaltigungen aus. In der Woche darauf wurde im CHEF ein Geiselnehmer gezeigt, der seinem Opfer eine Dynamitladung um den Leib band. Zwei Tage später geschah dasselbe der Tochter eines Geschäftsmannes in Connecticut, ihr Vater sollte damit erpreßt werden. Und so fort. Das Fernsehen hat den Leuten die Phantasie genommen, sogar die kriminelle Phantasie."

VI.

„Die Fähigkeit des Menschen, die Fernsehkanäle zu verschmutzen, ist anscheinend unbegrenzt", seufzt auch Norman Mark von der CHICAGO DAILY NEWS. „Aber diese Luftverschmutzung muß man ja nicht hinnehmen. . . . Was mich sehr beschäftigt, ist der Zusammenahng von Massenkommunikation und politischen Vorgängen. Die James-Bond-Musik entstand zum selben Zeitpunkt, als unser Engagement in Vietnam begann. Etwas später wurden die militärischen Varianten der science-fiction-Filme populär, besonders die „Invasion von der Wega". Sie erinnern sich, die Serie zeigte immer wieder, daß ein amerikanischer Agent imstande ist, jeden Ort im Weltraum zu erreichen und mittels Gehirnwäsche die Führung dieses Gestirns umzukrempeln. Interessanterweise verschwand die Serie aus den Programmen, als unsere Regierung das Pariser Abkommen unterschrieb und unsere Truppen aus Vietnam zurückholte.

Unser Fernsehen funktioniert wie ein riesiger Schwamm, der alles aufsaugt, was die Leute beschäftigt, und uns darin auch ersäuft, wenn jemand von oben draufdrückt. Wir leben in einer Zeit der Arbeitslosigkeit, wie sie dieses Land seit 35 Jahren nicht gesehen hat. Nichts bedrückt die Leute mehr. Das Fernsehen nimmt das alles auf, und was spuckt es aus? Fami-

„Nicht die Fernsehjournalisten sind für unser entsetzliches Fernsehen verantwortlich. Sie stehen unter dem Druck der Werbemanager und der Aktionäre. Sie sind keine schlimmen Menschen, sondern Menschen in einem schlimmen System."
William B. Fore, National Council of Churches

„Was das Fernsehen angeht, sind die meisten Amerikaner Analphabeten. Sie haben wenig oder keine Ahnung von der Struktur der Medien dieses Landes, wer dahinter steckt und wozu sie dasind. Die Leute halten das Fernsehen immer noch für einen Vergnügungsapparat, den ihnen die nette Werbebranche kostenlos zur Verfügung stellt."
Robert Lewis Shayon, Professor an der Annenberg School of Journalism

„Ich weiß, viele Kritiker sagen, das Fernsehen sollte sich mehr um die Bewußtseinsbildung der Zuschauer kümmern. Aber warum eigentlich?"
Robert C. Hornik, Professor an der Stanford University

lienserien, wir haben einen richtigen Familienserienboom. Die Leute, die keine Arbeit mehr haben, werden vom Bildschirm überschüttet mit der Mitteilung: Nichts geht über eine intakte Familie. Und wenn Du schon keinen Job hast, macht nichts, trautes Heim ist Glück allein. – Das andere Wunderheilmittel heißt Nostalgie. Das Fernsehen tröstet die Menschen, indem es ihnen die heile Vergangenheit vorflimmert. Beide Erscheinungen sind nicht neu, das Radio hat es während der Weltwirtschaftskrise in den dreißiger Jahren nicht anders gemacht. Beide Wunderdrogen wirken anscheinend auch heute noch. Sie geben den Leuten die Illusionen, die sie brauchen, um vom miesen Alltag loszukommen, den Status quo zu akzeptieren und sich politisches Nachdenken aus dem Sinn zu schlagen."

Aufklärung für Zuschauer oder Von der Vergeblichkeit wissenschaftlicher Fernsehkritik
VII.

MANNIX. COLUMBO. CANNON. KOJAK. IRONSIDE. Namen amerikanischer Krimiserien, die beiden letzten laufen hierzulande als „Einsatz in Manhattan" und „Der Chef". DIANA, MAUD, HERE'S LUCY, BOB AND CAROL AND TED AND ALICE – friedliche Unterhaltungssendungen. Fällt jemandem etwas auf?

„Mir schon. Die gegenwärtig 22 Krimiserien laufen fast alle unter Nachnamen, die Unterhaltungssendungen unter Vornamen. Kein Mensch weiß. wie Mannix mit Vornamen heißt. Und sogar die Public-Relations-Managerin der derzeit erfolgreichsten Familienserie konnte mir den Nachnamen von Lucy erst nach etlichen Nachforschungen nennen.

Vielleicht halten Sie das für Spinnereien einer vertrottelten Soziologieprofessorin. Sie sollten sich jedoch klarmachen: Die Verwendung des Namens hat eine Funktion. Sie symbolisiert das soziale Prestige einer Person. Sie markiert, wie viel Respekt man ihr entgegenbringen muß. Bei Frauen ist das offensichtlich nicht viel. Die erscheinen schlicht unter ihren Vornamen, schon in den Titeln der Serien. Der Witz dabei ist: Die Verwendung des Vornamens suggeriert Intimität und eine gleiche soziale Rangstufe, nicht etwa die Unterlegenheit des Zuschauers.

Ganz anders die Krimis. Ein Mann sein, einen Ballermann haben, das verschafft Respekt und das Recht auf die Anrede mit dem Nachnamen. Denn die Verwendung des Nachnamens schafft Distanz, Reserviertheit, soziale Überlegenheit.

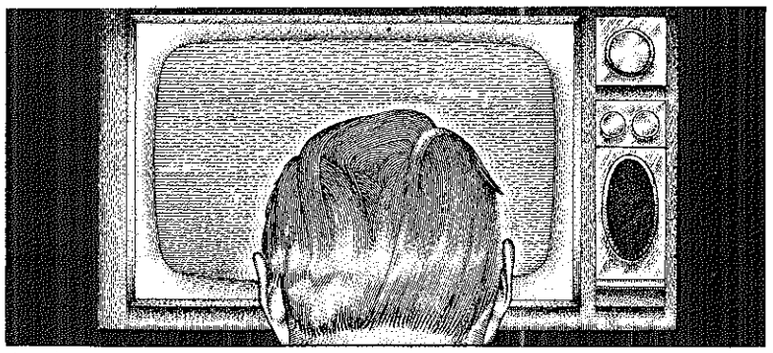
Natürlich hat das Fernsehen dieses Namenspiel nicht erfunden. Aber es hat die schreckliche Macht, solche Namenmuster durchzusetzen – in unablässigen, stereotypen Wiederholungen über alle 697 Fernsehstationen. Die trommeln uns allen ein: Respekt gebührt Männern, vor allem den Ordnungshütern mit Dienstgrad und Pistole, die letzten Endes doch alles durchschauen.

Ein paar smarten Schreibern in Hollywood ist es damit gelungen, die Sprachgewohnheiten einer ganzen Generation zu beeinflussen. Die Macht, die Sprache zu ändern, ist aber zugleich die Macht, die Gesellschaft zu ändern. Wenn ich doch bloß wüßte, wie ich Amerika alarmieren könnte, damit es nicht einem Grüppchen anonymer, niemandem verantwortlicher Fernsehfritzen diese schreckliche Macht überläßt!"[12]

Solche Schreckensschreie sind seit zwei Jahren jeden Samstag und Montag über WHCU und WVBR in Ithaca, New York, und eine Reihe angeschlossener Stationen zu hören. Die Stimme gehört Rose K. Goldsen, Professorin für Soziologie der Massenkommunikation an der berühmten Cornell University.

Jede ihrer 10-Minuten-Sendungen ist ein wohlgestalteter und dennoch emotionsreicher Essay, für die Ausarbeitung nimmt sie sich jeweils 24 Stunden Zeit. Ihr Anschauungsmaterial bezieht sie von drei gleichzeitig laufenden Fernsehapparaten in ihrem Arbeitszimmer. Oder aus langen fintenreichen Telephoninterviews mit Fernsehbossen, die sie gerne in ihren Sendungen zitiert. Oder aus meterlangen Reihen von Hängeordnern voller Zeitungsausschnitte, Prospekte, Kritiken. Oder aus der Fachliteratur, über die sie freilich ein herbes Urteil verbreitet: „Es ist mein wohlerwogenes Urteil als Wissenschaftler, daß die sogenannte Fernsehforschung größtenteils glatter Unsinn ist (just plain nonsense)."[13] Bisweilen läßt sie sich schließlich von den VANDERBILT TELEVISION NEWS ARCHIVES versorgen: „Das ist ein Archiv an der Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, das alle Fernsehnachrichten der drei Networks auf Band aufnimmt und sammelt. Wer wissen will, was 125 Millionen Amerikanern an einem bestimmten Abend mitgeteilt worden ist, kriegt für 7,50 Dollar und eine geringe Pfandgebühr eine Kopie des Bandes zugeschickt. Notabene: Nirgends sonst in Amerika existiert ein solches Archiv, nicht einmal bei den Fernsehgesellschaften.

Denen ist solch eine Sammlung natürlich ein Pfahl im Fleische, obwohl das kein Mensch öffentlich zugibt. CBS hat beim U. S. District Court for the Middle District of Tennessee in Nashville Klage eingereicht. Die Leute von der Vanderbilt University sollen gezwungen werden, alle Bänder abzuliefern, damit sie unter den Augen des Staatsanwalts gelöscht werden können. Die Begründung ist zum Kringeln: Die Nachrichtensendungen bestünden zu 75% aus nicht aktueller Moderation, deshalb müsse CBS das Copyright haben! ABC und NBC geben zu dem ganzen Vorgang keinen Laut von sich, sie überlassen die häßliche Tat lieber still-



schweigend der CBS. Einen Erfolg hat die Geschichte immerhin schon gehabt: Im vorigen Jahr hat CBS damit begonnen, die Bänder mit den Nachrichtensendungen aufzubewahren und 17 Bibliotheken zugänglich zu machen. Aber da kommt nicht jeder heran, Studenten z. B. erst nach dem Vordiplom."[14]

Goldsens Hauptsorge gilt den jüngsten Fernsehzuschauern. Jede ihrer Sendungen beginnt und schließt mit der Mahnung: „Was unsere Kinder in der Welt sehen, hängt davon ab, was wir ihnen zeigen."

Jeder kleine Amerikaner sieht pro Jahr durchschnittlich 27 000 Werbespots. Darunter z. B. auch die mit den Plastikautos, die Kellogg in seine Cornflakespackungen steckt. Kellogg muß das tun, um sein Produkt gegenüber sechzig anderen Cornflakessorten für die lieben Kleinen attraktiv zu machen. Die anderen Hersteller haben natürlich bald nachgezogen. Goldsen: „Was Sie obenauf in den Packungen finden, mag für Sie wertloser Mist sein, es ist ein Stückchen Himmel für Ihren kleinen Sohn, für die Werbeagentur und für den Hersteller." Und dann informiert sie ihr Publikum über das, was an diesen Kinkerlitzchen alles hängt, sie klärt auch noch über die windelweichen Kontrollmaßnahmen der Regierung auf: „Der Vorsitzende der zuständigen Regierungskommission, der Federal Trade Commission, Lewis Engman, kündigte harte Maßnahmen gegen solche Köder an. Wörtlich: ‚Dem Buchstaben des Gesetzes nach ist das Anbieten von Werbegeschenken im Kinderfernsehen illegal.'

Die Werbeorganisationen schrien auf. Sie hielten Konferenzen ab, trafen Absprachen, tagten mit der Regierungskommission und mit Kongreßausschüssen und natürlich mit ihren Rechtsanwälten. Es gab eine Menge Pressekonferenzen, Gebirge von Papier, die Fluggesellschaften machten ihren Schnitt. Doch damit nicht genug. Die National Advertising Division of the National Association of Advertising stellte extra eigene Wachmannschaften auf, um ihre Geheimkonferenzen vor Spionen der Verbraucherorganisationen zu schützen. Mir scheint, die Burschen haben ein bißchen zu viel ferngesehen.

Das Ende war vorauszusehen, die Regierung machte einen Rückzieher. Mr. Engman hätte seine persönliche Meinung darüber geäußert, daß Fernsehhinweise auf Werbegeschenke illegal sein könnten. Außerdem habe er nur einen Vorschlag gemacht.

Allein für solchen Quatsch wie für Werbezeiten mit Ankündigungen von Plastikautos obenauf in Cornflakespackungen geben die Hersteller jährlich acht Millionen Dollar aus. Nicht zu reden von den viereinhalb Milliarden Dollar für Werbung im Fernsehen überhaupt. Was unsere Kinder in der Welt sehen, hängt davon ab, was wir ihnen zeigen."[15]

VIII.

Am weitesten vorgedrungen in die von Goldsen analysierten Zusammenhänge ist Georg Gerbner, Dean der renommierten Annenberg School of Journalism und gegenwärtig wohl führender Kopf in der amerikanischen Massenkommunikationsforschung. Er gibt das große Beispiel dafür, wie man den medienkritischen Affekt durch Einsicht in die Funktion des Trivialen vertiefen kann. Fernsehkritik wird damit wirklich radikal; sie deckt die Rolle des Mediums in einer Gesellschaft auf und erfaßt die herrschenden Interessen.

Gerbner setzt seine Kritik am Fernsehen ähnlich an wie Goldsen: „Die Massenproduktion und die schnelle Verbreitung von Mitteilungen schaffen neue symbolische Umgebungen. Diese künstlichen Welten spiegeln die Struktur und die Funktionen der Institutionen wider, durch die sie vermittelt werden. Und diese institutionalisierten Prozesse massenhaft produzierter Mitteilung schließen andere Verteilersysteme der sozialen Kommunikation kurz und drängen ihnen ihre eigenen Formen kollektiver Bewußtheit auf."[16] Entscheidend ist für Gerbner die Einsicht: „Symbolische Funktionen sind Folgen, die von Kommunikationen herrühren, oft aber mit deren Intentionen oder Ansprüchen nichts mehr zu tun haben. Um diese Funktionen aufzuspüren, muß man ihre symbolische Umgebung analysieren und die spezielle Position der einzelnen Symbole darin."[17]

Mit diesem Ansatz fand Gerbner etwa heraus, welche Rolle das Klischee des Lehrers im amerikanischen Fernsehen spielt: „Die Prüfung des Materials ergibt, daß Lehrer, Schulen, Wissenschaftler ein synthetisches kulturelles Image provozieren, das die ambivalenten Funktionen und paradoxen Schicksale der Erziehung in der amerikanischen Gesellschaft zu erklären und einzuordnen hilft . . . Einerseits sind Schulen ein unvermeidlicher Kostenfaktor, sie amortisieren sich direkt nur in begrenztem Umfang in zeitgemäßen Produkten, Praktiken und Erfolgsaussichten. Andererseits repräsentieren Schulen politisches Kapital und populäre Hoffnungen auf Aufstieg, Gleichheit und sozialen Wandel. Das Bild des Lehrers im amerikanischen Fernsehen spiegelt genau diesen Widerspruch. Armut ist für ihn normal und wahrscheinlich wünschenswert für eine abhängige Institution, die selber keinerlei Macht entfalten sollte. Versagen in der Liebe und Impotenz im Leben überhaupt erlauben es den Pädagogen, ‚gut' zu sein. Wenn man ihnen gelegentlich auch ein messianisches Bewußtsein zubilligt und die Schule all die Träume aufsaugen läßt, die Eltern in ihre Kinder setzen, so ist eben dadurch Bildung zu ihrem Mißerfolg verurteilt. Die Bildungsillusion enthält schon in sich das Ergebnis: ‚Nobel, aber unbezahlbar'. So scheint es nur verantwortlich und realistisch, die Lehrer voller Güte zu zeigen, aber ohne Vitalität und Einfluß . . . Das ‚verborgene Curriculum' solcher Sendungen kultiviert die Illusion sozialer Reform durch Bildung und organisiert zur gleichen Zeit deren unablässigen Zusammenbruch."[18]

Besonders bekannt wurden Gerbners Feststellungen über die symbolische Funktion von Verbrechen auf der Mattscheibe: „In der Studie über Gewalt im Fernsehen fanden wir heraus, daß Gewalttätigkeit auf die verschiedenen sozialen Gruppen ungleichmäßig verteilt erscheint. Gruppen mit geringer sozialer Macht laufen im Fernsehen noch sehr viel mehr Gefahr, zu den Opfern zu gehören, als das in der Wirklichkeit der Fall ist. Das gilt z. B. für Frauen, Unterschichtangehörige und Farbige. Auf diese Weise erscheint Gewalt noch stärker als Demonstration sozialer Macht. Angesichts sol- ▶

„Ich kritisiere das Fernsehen nicht. Aus einem einfachen Grund: Wer es kritisiert, stellt sich selbst ins gesellschaftliche Abseits."
John Rider, Professor an der Southern Illinois University

„Fernsehen ist eine der neuen Technologien, die mit unserer Zivilisation davonlaufen. Wie wir dieses einflußreiche Kommunikationsmittel verwenden, ist für die Entwicklung unserer Kultur ebenso entscheidend wie die Kernspaltung oder die Raumfahrt."
Rose K. Goldsen, Professorin an der Cornell University

„Die Medien sind das Opium des Volkes. Sie ersetzen unsere Gehirne, die Tag für Tag austrocknen, weil wir uns abgewöhnt haben, sie zu benutzen. Wir billigen der Welt der Journalisten mehr Realität zu als der Welt, die uns unsere fünf Sinne zeigen."
Mark Harris im NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE vom 6. 10. 1974

cher Beobachtungen fragen wir uns, was die Krimiserien im öffentlichen Bewußtsein und Verhalten wohl bewirken mögen."[19]

Die Heroisierung der Mächtigen oder die weitere Demütigung der Schwachen durch Fernsehen – ein eminent politisches Thema. Gerbner hat denn auch über seine Forschungen verschiedentlich vor Politikern berichtet, anscheinend ohne sonderlichen Erfolg. Vielleicht sind sie auch vor seiner präzisen Beschreibung des Zusammenhangs von Kommunikation und Kapital zurückgeschreckt: „Amerikas Medien sind kulturelle Waffen des privaten Unternehmertums in der Sphäre der Öffentlichkeit. Die Bilder, die diese Unternehmen in Umlauf setzen, haben zwiespältigen Charakter. Sie suchen einmal, den kommerziellen Interessen des privaten Unternehmertums zu dienen oder diese doch wenigstens nicht zu stören. Zugleich repräsentieren sie die öffentlichen Ideale, die ihnen allgemeine Anziehungskraft, Gültigkeit und Glaubwürdigkeit verschaffen. Deshalb ist das Studium der kapitalistischen Massenmedien und ihrer symbolischen Leistungen eine so außerordentlich komplexe und anforderungsreiche Aufgabe. Diese Aufgabe besteht darin, die wirklich entscheidenden Gesetze symbolischen Verhaltens auf einem Gebiet konfliktreicher institutioneller Interessen herauszufinden und ihren wahren Einfluß auf die Gestaltung menschlicher Konzeptionen und sozialer Verhältnisse einzuschätzen."[20]

Kampf dem Fernsehen: Zuschauer wehren sich

IX.

Bei den oben zitierten Hearings zur Frage der Gewaltanwendung im Fernsehen berichtete Leo S. Singer, Präsident der Miracle White Co., einer Reinigungsmittelfirma in Chicago:

„Es war am Freitagabend, dem 5. Oktober 1973. Ich schaute mir das Fernsehprogramm an, vielmehr, ich versuchte es. Was ich sah, war unerträglich. Alle Kanäle, die ich erwischte, zeigten Krimis, einer brutaler als der andere. Dazwischen Spots mit den Produkten meiner Firma. Da hatte ich die Nase voll.

Ich begann, mich ein bißchen über die Verbrechen zu informieren, zu deren Verbreitung meine Firma jahrelang beigetragen hatte. Ich erfuhr: Jedes Kind in Amerika sah im Jahre 1973, wie mehr als 13 400 Menschen mit Gewalt vom Leben zum Tode gebracht wurden. 80 % aller Sendungen zeigten Gewaltakte gegen Menschen. Der Prozentsatz ist seither zwar nicht weiter angestiegen, aber das Ausmaß an Brutalität hat sich drastisch erhöht. Der Mord im Fernsehen wird heute in allen sadistischen Einzelheiten vorgeführt.

Mein Gott, sagte ich mir, was tun wir der Jugend unseres Landes an? Wofür geben wir unsere Werbedollars aus? Ich schwor mir: Solange ich Präsident von Miracle White Co. bin, wird dieses Unternehmen im Verbrechersyndikat von Werbung und Fernsehkrimi nicht mehr mitmachen.

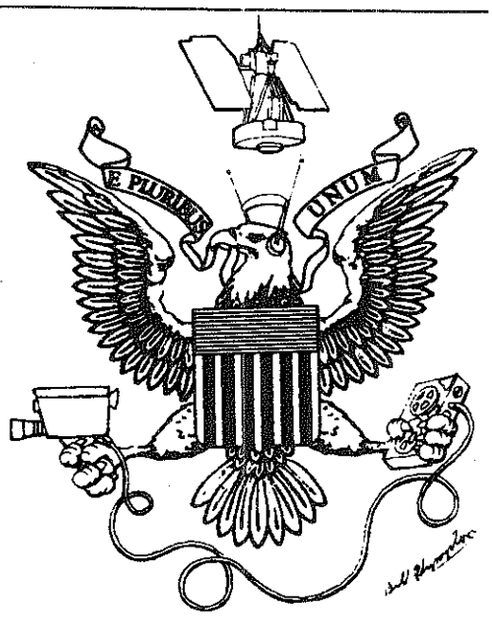
Rasch war mir klar: das genügt nicht. Am 9. Oktober erzählte ich vor dem Lions Club in Chicago von meiner Entscheidung. Ich ahnte nicht, was ich damit anrichtete. Rundfunk und Presse stürzten sich auf meinen Bericht. Mein Büro war durch 35 000 Briefe plus ebenso viele Anrufe blockiert. Ich wurde mit Einladungen bombardiert und war fünf Monate mit Vorträgen unterwegs. Seither widme ich zwei Tage in der Woche meiner Kampagne. Ich habe mir dafür extra einen Stab von Mitarbeitern zugelegt. Wenigstens einige Firmen konnte ich bewegen, genauso zu handeln wie ich. So haben sich Wrigley, der Kaugummihersteller, und MacDonald, die größte Schnellrestaurantkette, mit angeschlossen."

Das Protokoll verzeichnet Staunen unter den Senatoren und Applaus[21].

X.

Jackson, Mississippi. Eine Stadt im Süden der USA, die Bevölkerung besteht zu 47 % aus Farbigen. Die lokale Fernsehstation WLBT-TV, fest in weißer Hand, kommt im Jahre 1964 bei der Federal Communications Commission routinegemäß um die Verlängerung ihrer Lizenz ein. Es passiert Unerhörtes. Eine kirchliche Gruppe ist ebenfalls nach Washington gereist und erzwingt als erstes die Öffentlichkeit der Sitzung. Und dann weist sie anhand der Personalliste der Station nach: Nur ein Zehntel der Angestellten ist schwarz, dieses Zehntel arbeitet ausschließlich in untergeordneten Stellungen, als Hilfsarbeiter oder Putzfrauen. Kein Schwarzer hat einen qualifizierten Job oder gar Einfluß auf die Programmgestaltung. Das Programm diskriminiert vielmehr die schwarze Bevölkerung, mehr noch: Es unterstützt den Widerstand gegen die Gesetze zur Rassenintegration. Nachgewiesen wird das mit Bergen von Programmbeispielen. Das Unglaubliche geschieht: Die Regierungskommission entzieht WLBT-TV die Lizenz und verurteilt die Gesellschaft damit zum Konkurs. Die Bürgerinitiative habe hinreichend bewiesen, daß die Station nicht länger dem vom Rundfunkgesetz verlangten „öffentlichen Interesse" diene, weil sie gegen die Interessen fast der Hälfte ihrer Zuschauer handle[22].

The Network Project



Die Gruppe bestand aus Mitgliedern der United Church of Christ. Ihr Spiritus rector: Dr. Everett C. Parker, heute Direktor des Office of Communication der United Church of Christ an New Yorks Park Avenue. Für viele der in diesem Bericht Genannten die Personifikation von Fernsehkritik in den USA, in der Industrie so gefürchtet wie verhaßt.

In dreißig Jahren hat der kleine graue Mann einige der Karrieren hinter sich ge-

„Der Durchschnittsamerikaner kauft alle drei Jahre ein Buch. Pro Jahr liest er durchschnittlich zehn Stunden darin. Aber sein Fernsehapparat läuft täglich sieben Stunden."
Professor George Conklin, Berkeley

„Fernsehen ist das mächtigste Werkzeug sozialer Kontrolle, das die Erde je gesehen hat. Niemals zuvor hatten so wenige Menschen Macht über so viele. Ich bin sehr pessimistisch im Blick auf die Zukunft dieses Mediums und auf die Fähigkeit der Menschen, damit vernünftig umzugehen."
Andy Horowitz, The Network Project

bracht, die das Fernsehen bieten kann. Er war Autor und Produzent einiger der kühnsten und heute noch unvergessenen Sendungen in den Anfangsjahren des Mediums. Er hat als Dozent in Yale die drei wichtigsten Standardwerke über die Rolle der Kirche in den Medien geschrieben[23]. Und er hat seit 1949 die Medienarbeit der so unterschiedlichen wie zahlreichen Kirchen Amerikas organisiert und war lange Jahre Vorsitzender der von ihm geschaffenen Broadcasting and Film Commission des National Council of Churches.

Die jahrzehntelange Beschäftigung mit dem Fernsehen hat ihn gegenüber dem Medium immer kritischer und erbitterter gemacht. Sein Versuch Ende der sechziger Jahre, die Kirchen zum Streik gegenüber dem kommerziellen Fernsehen zu bewegen, ist gescheitert. Er hat sich danach auf das Problem der Rassendiskriminierung im Fernsehen konzentriert – Jackson war der erste und größte in einer ganzen Reihe von Erfolgen – und wendet sich in den letzten Jahren vor allem dem Kampf um das Kinderfernsehen und gegen die Pornographie zu. Seine Waffen sind die demokratischen Mittel, die das amerikanische Rundfunkgesetz bietet, und die Mobilisierung der Zuschauer. Seine Kirche unterhält in Washington ein eigenes Büro, das Bürgerinitiativen beim Kampf gegen Fernsehstationen vor den Regierungskommissionen berät:

„Wir versuchen damit ganz einfach, die Verfassung der Vereinigten Staaten zu verwirklichen. Deshalb kämpfen wir um Zugang zu den Medien für rassische Minoritäten und für andere unterprivilegierte Gruppen. Wir versuchen, den Leuten klarzumachen, daß die Ätherwellen ihnen gehören und nicht den Unternehmern, die nichts dafür zu zahlen haben und die daran zu Millionären geworden sind. Die Moral der Unternehmer heißt: Ein Maximum von billiger Unterhaltung schafft ein Maximum an Profit. Dagegen fragt das Gesetz nach Interesse, Angemessenheit und Notwendigkeit für die Öffentlichkeit. Die Fairness Doctrine gebietet, daß dabei alle Gruppen der Gesellschaft zu Wort kommen. Wir sorgen dafür, daß das auch geschieht."

Sein zentrales Motiv formuliert Parker mit schlichter Frömmigkeit: „Alles, was Sie zu tun haben, ist: Nehmen Sie Ihre Bibel und lesen Sie nach, wozu Sie aufgerufen sind: Ehrlichkeit und Anstand in den Beziehungen der Menschen zueinander. Ich glaube, was wir tun sollen, ist eine Mission wie die der alttestamentlichen Propheten. Wir sollen mit Händen zeigen auf die Ungerechtigkeiten, die Diskriminierungen, die verdammten Verlogenheiten des amerikanischen Fernsehsystems . . . Wenn Sie wirklich ein versierter Kritiker sind und wissen, worüber Sie reden, und wenn Sie konsequent sind und sich verbissen genug für das öffentliche Interesse einsetzen, verschafft das der Kirche und ihrem Wort auch allen Respekt. Kein Kommunikationssystem kann auf ein Gewissen verzichten. In Amerikas kommerzialisierten Medien sollte die Kirche die Rolle des Gewissens der Gesellschaft übernehmen."[24]

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Researcher Claims:

TV Morality Taking Place Of Religion

Although in the past religion provided the values by which our moral behavior was determined, today TV has taken over that role, according to a University of Pennsylvania researcher.

"TV is the new religion — before children get to be the age at which they go to church, they have already absorbed TV's moral code," said George Gerbner, dean of the university's Annenberg School of Communications.

"Today people are less likely to be in need of the kind of religious guidance that used to be common before the rise of TV."

1985

Pediatricians Criticize Television in U.S.

Mandatory Educational Programming for Children Urged

By Susan Okie
Washington Post Staff Writer

Too much of the wrong kind of television can make children aggressive or overweight, interfere with school performance, encourage them to try alcohol, drugs or sex, and persuade them that the world is more violent, more white and more middle-class than it is.

Those are the conclusions reached by a task force of the American Academy of Pediatrics, which issued a "call to action" on children's television at a conference at Yale University School of Medicine earlier this month.

"No other country in the world has done as poorly for its children as the United States," said Dr. Benjamin Spock, who headed a lineup of experts condemning the lack of quality children's fare on commercial stations.

"At present there are no [commercial] programs for children," he said. "The things that pass for them are really half-hour-long commercials on the life of a doll they are trying to sell."

The pediatric academy announced its support of a bill, currently being considered by committees of both houses of Congress, that would require commercial stations to provide seven hours a week of educational programming for children 12 or younger.

Pediatricians have expanded their concerns about program content to include not only violence, but also television's portrayal of alcohol, drugs, sexuality, the elderly and ethnic groups.

Yet despite more than 3,000 studies of the impact of television on children's behavior, experts disagree over what effects have or have not been proven.

"The big thing we know is that children learn from TV," said Dr. Victor Strasburger, associate clinical professor of pediatrics at Yale. "The real question is what they learn from it."

Studies concluding that children who watch more television are more violent, for example, can be criticized because they do not explain whether television viewing leads to an aggressive personality, or vice versa.

But Strasburger, Spock and other pediatricians say such arguments should not stand in the way of change, because there already is abundant evidence that the world presented to children on prime-time television is not one that adults would wish them to imitate.

"The average American child before reaching adulthood has watched 18,000 murders on TV," said Spock. "It doesn't mean that a sensitive, well-brought-up child is going to turn into a thug, but everybody is desensitized to a degree."

Strasburger said one of his best childhood friends was injured when he jumped out of a second-story window trying to fly like Superman, but that such examples of direct imitation are rare. Instead, he believes more subtle links exist between television and health problems such as accidents, suicide and teen-age pregnancy.

"After 1 year of age, violence is the leading cause of death in American children and teenagers: accidents, homicide and suicide," he said. "None of those are medical. They don't involve drugs that we can give. That makes it very frustrating for pediatricians to deal with."

Strasburger and four other doctors served on a task force to evaluate television's impact on children's health and to advise pediatricians and parents how to respond. Among their conclusions:

- Repeated exposure to television violence promotes "a proclivity to violence and a passive response to its practice." George Gerbner, dean of the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School of Communications said TV violence teaches children and adults that "the world is a very dangerous place in which . . . they are dependent and need protection."
- TV viewing "increases consumption of high-caloric . . . snacks" and can lead to obesity. Although TV characters are almost universally thin, task force chairman Dr. William Dietz found a strong correlation between hours spent watching television in children and obesity in teen-agers.
- Learning from television "is passive . . . and detracts from time spent reading or using active learning skills." Strasburger said that when he sees a child who is failing in school, "My first response is . . . get the TV out of his room."
- TV's portrayal of alcohol and drugs is "unrealistic . . . and indirectly encourages their use." "On TV alcohol is the number one beverage" drunk by series characters, Strasburger said. "In real life, water is." The average child watches about a thousand beer and wine ads a year, he said.
- Sex roles and sexuality as portrayed on TV are "unrealistic and misleading," and "the risk of pregnancy is rarely considered." Strasburger pointed out that sex on soap operas takes place three times more often between unmarried lovers than between husband and wife, and contraception never seems to be a concern.
- Television promotes ethnic and racial stereotypes and an unrealistic view of society. Male characters outnumber females three to one, Gerbner said, and children, the elderly and minorities are all underrepresented. "The child learns a social hierarchy . . . to be put in his or her place," he said.

In an average week's viewing, he added, a child sees 41 policemen, 23 criminals, 12 doctors, 15 businessmen, six lawyers and three judges.

Pediatricians should educate themselves about the health consequences of television viewing, counsel families on the issue, and work with community groups, networks, producers and writers to improve programming, the task force advised.

Positive trends in television, Strasburger said, include the realistic family presented on NBC's "Cosby Show" and the three networks' efforts to purge scripts of cigarettes. "In the 1980s only 2 percent of series stars and 16 percent of series characters smoked," he said. "That's great."

Philip Harding, vice president of social and policy research at CBS Broadcasting Group, took issue with the task force's conclusions, saying they are drawn from one-sided research and "create the impression there has been a consensus. There is not a consensus on the effects of television.

"If you're going to talk about the social effects

"The average American child before reaching adulthood has watched 18,000 murders on TV . . . Everybody is desensitized to a degree."

— Dr. Benjamin Spock

of the media . . . you try to be impartial. You don't concentrate just on negative judgments. Other people just as competent, just as honest, just as well-intentioned have come up with totally different results."

Harding also disagreed with Gerbner's contention that children's cartoon shows contain 20 violent acts per hour. "He has always held that pouring milk on an elephant is an aggressive act," he said, "and he counts that as violence."

Pediatricians and consumer groups don't want to censor television, but to improve its quality and educational value, according to Peggy Charren, president of Action for Children's Television.

"If you had, on 'Knight Rider,' say, everybody buckling their seatbelts, and you did it on all the other programs . . . gradually all of us would buckle our seatbelts," she said.

Gerbner called television a "symbolic environment" that deserves its own environmental movement. "Whoever tells most of the stories to the children of a culture influences, in a very fundamental way, the way people grow up," he said. "For the first time in human history, it's no longer parents, the school or the church, but television that tells most of the stories." ■

Steps Parents Can Take

Parents concerned about the effects of television on their children can take the following steps, according to Dr. Victor Strasburger:

- "Take back control of that little box." Regulate the number of hours your child watches TV (a maximum of one to two hours a day is his suggestion) and the kinds of programs, depending on each child's age.
- Watch with your child, and talk about programs. "Discuss, particularly, violent programs or sexy programs," he said. "It's a great icebreaker. Programs we would ordinarily consider objectionable, if a parent is watching, lose their objectionability."
- Suggest alternatives. "Given the choice," said Strasburger, "most children would rather be playing."
- Be a role model: read, play games, look for other recreations besides television yourself. "If Dad is a blob sitting in front of TV every night," he said, "the kids will grow up the same way."
- If you subscribe to cable, ask your company for a lock-out box so you can limit your child's access to channels you object to. Peggy Charren of Action for Children's Television said companies are required by law to provide boxes for a reasonable, one-time charge.
- For more information, write to Action for Children's Television, 46 Austin St., Newtonville, Mass. 02160.

— **Susan Okie**

Personalities

Actor and salad-dressing maker **Paul Newman** plans to build a $6 million outdoor camp for children with life-threatening diseases on a 400-acre YMCA site in Connecticut, **Ann Reznikoff**, a spokeswoman for Newman, said yesterday. She said that plans for the camp are still "embryonic" and many details still unclear.

Ursala Hotchner, an executive with Newman's Own Salad King food company in Westport, Conn., said the actor was approached recently by the Torrington-area YMCA for help in refurbishing an old 400-acre camp near an existing YMCA day camp. Construction is set to begin in the spring of 1986 and the first campers are scheduled to attend by the summer of 1987. The camp will be known as the Newman's Own Hole in the Wall Camp, and children attending the YMCA day camp may share some facilities with the Newman camp.

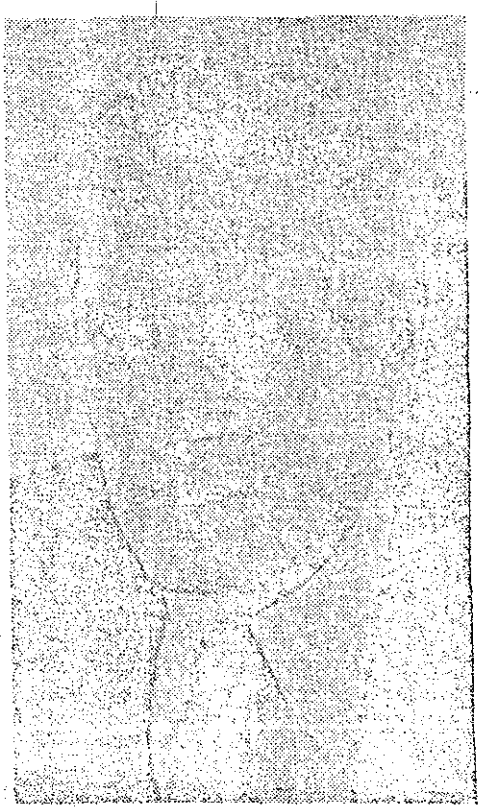
YMCA Executive Director **Tom Colligan** said the camp will serve ambulatory children with ailments such as congenital heart disease, hemophilia and cancer.

Rosalynn Carter's Forum

Former first lady **Rosalynn Carter** kicked off her first symposium on mental health policy yesterday in Atlanta, listening as **George Gerbner**, dean of the communications school at the University of Pennsylvania, blasted the media's portrayal of the mentally ill.

"Stigmatization used to be done by ancient and medieval religion," said Gerbner. "Today it's done by the mass media." He accused the media of often projecting an inaccurate image of the mentally ill.

The symposium, the first of four annual meetings to be chaired by Carter, is sponsored by Emory University's psychiatry department with a $100,000 grant from the Gannett Foundation. "I've been looking forward to today and becoming more active in the cause of good mental health," said Carter, who chaired the President's Commission on Mental Health during the Carter administration. During the discussions, she sat in the front row beside her husband, **Jimmy Carter**, who said he had "come here as an interested spouse."



PAUL NEWMAN

End Notes

At a meeting Thursday, the 100 members of the Collectors Committee of the National Gallery announced their purchase of an abstract painting by California artist **Sam Francis**. The work, titled "White Line," was purchased for slightly less than $700,000 and is on display in the East Building of the gallery . . .

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TV is like 'new tribal religion'

By KAREN DOUGLAS
Staff Writer

Television is no longer entertainment, "it is essentially a ritual," says a nationally-recognized communications researcher, explaining that most viewers watch by the clock, "not by the program.

"In terms of its functions, of what it does in our lives, it's like the coming of a new religion — a tribal religion by the most powerful electronic means."

GEORGE GERBNER, dean of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania and author and editor of numerous articles, reports and books on mass communications research, was in Lansing Thursday as the third speaker in the 1984-85 Town Hall lecture series.

During the past 20 years, the Hungarian native — who has earned both a master's and doctorate from the University of Southern California — has directed U.S. and multi-national mass communications research projects under contracts and grants from numerous organizations, including the National Science Foundation, the U. S. Office of Education, and the Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior.

"Television has presented us with a giant cultural mainstream of ideas and points of views from all over the world, and (is) unlike any other medium," Gerbner said.

FOR MOST PEOPLE who are "monopolized" by television, there is nothing else like it during the day or the night, the communications professor told the 1,200-member audience. It has reduced and eliminated isolation, and it can be enjoyed by the very young or the very old.

With the TV set on an average of seven hours a day, "You can be plugged into the arts, the sciences and the politics of your day, and this is an enormous attraction for people who have had very little or nothing of that kind," Gerbner said.

"Where little else remains, television will be a faithful companion."

BUT, BECAUSE of the power and control it exerts over human lives, the types of programming should be viewed more responsibly by society, Gerbner said.

"For example, during the first six years of life a child will see 35,000 or 40,000 stories about the world each year in the form of television programs, news or commercials," Gerbner continued.

"By the time the child is six or seven years old, and off to school, tastes, values, images of life and other people, according to our research, are fairly well-formed," he said.

IT IS A SAD commentary, Gerbner continued, that the United States is one of the few civilized countries in the world that cannot afford to have its best artists, writers, and its best talent do even ½ hour of programming . . . during prime time.

Television is not free, but, considering the billions of dollars that are spent on it, television still is one of the cheapest forms of formal education, socialization and culturation, Gerbner said.

"Not only is it not free, it is heartily financed by a form of hidden taxation without representation.

"EVERY HOUSEHOLD in the United States pays about $150 to $160 a year for television service in the price of the products that are being advertised. In other words, we pay when we wash — not when we watch."

Gerbner said he does not advocate "censorship" of the television medium, but feels schools should encourage students to study what he calls "the liberating arts" of literature, the arts and the sciences. He also believes that parents can set a good example for their children by watching only those programs which have some value.

The message of television is the "message of society," Gerbner said.

"If there is no hope for it, there is no hope for our culture."

Staff photo by GINGER SHARP

George Gerbner admits the good and powerful things TV can do, but warns against it becoming a "new religion."

The American Jewish Committee

Philadelphia Chapter • 1616 Walnut St., Suite 2106 • Philadelphia, Pa. 19103 • (215) 732-4000

January 16, 1985

TO: DEPARTMENT CHAIRMEN AND INTERESTED FACULTY

FROM: AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: "A CONFERENCE ON THE MEDIA: SHAPER AND REFLECTOR OF VALUES"

You are invited to attend "A Conference on the Media: Shaper and Reflector of Values", to be held Wednesday, January 23, 1985, at Temple Rodeph Shalom, 615 North Broad Street, Philadelphia, from 3:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. Dean George Gerbner, of the Annenberg School of Communications, will address the plenary session, and release conclusions from recent studies concerning the role of the media in shaping cultural conceptions on violence, sex, and the family.

Dinner and a panel discussion will follow the plenary. Representatives of the secular and religious press will further explore the topic in a panel discussion scheduled from 7:15 to 9:00 P.M.

Conference attendance fee, including the cost of dinner, is $10.00. Registrations will be accepted at the door. Advance registrations can be made by returning the enclosed tear-off sheet to the American Jewish Committee, 1616 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103.

Please post the enclosed brochure and circulate to members of your department. For further information contact the American Jewish Committee at 732-4000.

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REGISTRATION FORM

Mail check or money order for $10.00 payable to American Jewish Committee to:

Media and Values Conference
American Jewish Committee
1616 Walnut Street
Philadelphia, Pa. 19103

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone No. office _____ home _____

Please respond by Friday, January 18th.

For further information call: (215) 732-4000

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE*

Rabbi Richard Address
Union of American Hebrew Congregations

The Rev. Randolph Bracy
Metropolitan Christian Council of Philadelphia

Samuel D. Caldwell
Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Religious Society of Friends

The Rev. William T. Cherry
United Methodist Church

Daniel C. Cohen
American Jewish Committee

Sister Gloria Coleman
Cardinal's Commission on Human Relations/ Urban Ministry
Archdiocese of Philadelphia

Dr. David M. Eisenberg
Union of American Hebrew Congregations

Dr. Murray Friedman
American Jewish Committee

The Rev. C. Edward Geiger
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Shellie Greenspun
American Jewish Committee

Rabbi Susan Harris
Union of American Hebrew Congregations

The Rev. Stephen J. Mather
Presbytery of Philadelphia

Rev. Msgr. Charles E. McGroarty
Family Life Bureau
Archdiocese of Philadelphia

Nancy Nolde
Metropolitan Christian Council of Philadelphia

Rev. Michael C. Picard
Cardinal's Commission on Human Relations/ Urban Ministry
Archdiocese of Philadelphia

Rabbi Seymour Rosenbloom
Congregation Adath Jeshurun, Elkins Park

Rabbi Jeffrey Salkin
Temple Judea, Doylestown

Rabbi Michael Swarttz
Board of Rabbis of Greater Philadelphia

Rabbi David A. Wortman
Board of Rabbis of Greater Philadelphia

** Organization affiliation provided for identification only.*

A Conference on the Media:

Shaper and Reflector of Values

Temple Rodeph Shalom

615 North Broad Street

Philadelphia, Pa.

3:00 – 9:00 P.M.

Wednesday

January 23, 1984

THE MEDIA:

Shaper and Reflector of Values

This conference has been organized by a group of individuals from mainline Christian and Jewish communities concerned about the conflict between the deterioration of moral values and the simultaneous threat to freedom of expression represented by some of the more extremist elements of our society.

On the one hand, we believe the widespread use of gratuitous instances of violence and sexual suggestiveness in the media has contributed substantially to the contemporary rejection of traditional values of marriage, home, and the family.

On the other, we are increasingly concerned with the rise of extremist elements who in an effort to restore those values are willing to tolerate the erosion of First Amendment guarantees of freedom of conscience and expression.

The conference will examine these conflicting concerns and seek to identify new alternatives to this contemporary dilemma.

PROGRAM

3:00 - 3:30 PM	Registration
3:30 - 4:45	Plenary Session
	Welcome: Rabbi David Wortman, Executive Director, Board of Rabbis of Greater Philadelphia
	Opening Statement: Samuel D. Caldwell, General Secretary, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Religious Society of Friends
	Keynote Speech: Dr. George Gerbner, Dean, Annenberg School of Communications, University of Pennsylvania
5:00 - 6:00	Small Group Discussions
6:15 - 7:00	Dinner (The cost of dinner is included in the registration fee)
7:15 - 9:00	Panel Discussion
	Moderator: Dr. Murray Friedman, Executive Director, American Jewish Committee
	Panel:
	John Bull, Assistant to the Executive Editor *The Philadelphia Inquirer*
	Chuck Gingold, Program Director, KYW-TV, Philadelphia
	Rev. Paul Murphy, S.J., Founder, Morality and Media, Massachusetts.
	Nancy Nolde, Director of Communications, Metropolitan Christian Council of Philadelphia
	Conference Summary: Rev. Msgr. Charles E. McGroarty, Director, Family Life Bureau, Archdiocese of Philadelphia

Interfaith meeting asks whether free expression is eroding values

By Michael D. Schaffer
Inquirer Staff Writer

Representatives of mainstream religious groups, concerned that freedom of expression has contributed to the erosion of moral values, have begun exploring ways of maintaining those values without damaging individual freedom.

About 100 representatives of Protestant, Jewish and Catholic organizations met yesterday at Congregation Rodeph Shalom, 615 N. Broad St., to take part in "A Conference on the Media: Shaper and Reflector of Values."

They heard George Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania, talk about the pervasive impact of television, which he has described as replacing religion as the central source of value orientations.

The conference was sponsored by the Interfaith Coalition on Values and the Family, composed of "about 25 clergymen and clergyman-types, meeting for a little over a year and a half," according to Murray Friedman, regional director of American Jewish Committee in the Middle Atlantic region.

The conference was the first public program sponsored by the coalition.

Religious liberals have fought hard for the very conditions that allow the existence of such things as "the blatant and degrading use of sex, [and] violence in the mass media, entertainment and advertising industries today," said Samuel D. Caldwell, general secretary of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, the Quakers.

"Frankly, as a religious person, and a liberal who is part of a tradition with a long history of commitment to the protection and extension of civil liberties, I am finding myself increasingly uncomfortable with the fact that the very freedoms of speech and expression I and my civil libertarian friends have labored to protect are often eroding other fundamental values we cherish," Caldwell said in opening the conference.

One Jewish member of the committee that planned the conference asked whether it is necessary "to choose between Torah [religious law] and the Constitution," Caldwell said. "This is the kind of bind many thoughtful religious people, of liberal and other persuasion, now find themselves in."

Religious people also are asking themselves whether free expression has gone beyond common decency and common sense. "Are we really willing to put up with all of the immoral filth that pervades our public places and now, increasingly, invades our private spaces as well, through television, cable vision, VCRs?" Caldwell said.

Those questions have made him uneasy, Caldwell said. He said he believed that the Moral Majority had responded to the erosion of traditional values by regarding the First Amendment as irrelevant and being "willing to throw the baby out with the bath water. That makes me nervous."

"I don't share that view, but we feel the dilemma strongly," Caldwell said.

It is necessary to start a dialogue on the issue in the community at large, and yesterday's conference was an initial step in that direction, Caldwell said.

"It's a search," said Friedman of the American Jewish Committee. Several interesting ideas are already emerging, one of them to work with media representatives in order to "help them to be free enough to be able to explore the fuller dimensions and possibilities of their media," Friedman said.

Friedman said he was encouraged that so many different groups were cooperating in the coalition and said it was evidence of "a deep concern which has caused people to be willing to submerge their differences."

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TV SETTING STANDARDS
FOR SOCIAL BEHAVIOR,
SAYS MEDIA RESEARCHER

Although religion once provided the moral framework for human relations, television has established contemporary standards for social behavior, said communications researcher George Gerbner yesterday (Jan. 23) at an ecumenical conference on the media.

Gerbner, who is dean of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania, was the keynote speaker at "A Conference on the Media: Shaper and Reflector of Values," sponsored by the Interfaith Coalition on Values and the Family.

"The religious values that governed the lives of men and women for centuries are no longer the primary influence on how we relate to each other," Gerbner said. "The pervasiveness of television in our culture has changed the way we view ourselves and the world."

Television has changed the way we view ourselves and the world because its violent content creates an exaggerated sense of mistrust and insecurity, Gerbner explained.

"Television presents a mean and dangerous world in which violent crime occurs more than 10 times as frequently as it does in reality. When women are involved in televised violence, they are more likely than men to be the victims," he said.

The researcher has found that there is a strong link between the portrayal of women on television and their status in

(MORE)

the minds of viewers. In most viewers, he said, television cultivates a belief that women are not equal to men.

"Television has become more sexy but not less sexist," Gerbner said. "Most nudity and other forms of explicit vulnerability involve women, while men are shown as powerful aggressors.

"Sexual relations and practices are discussed freely and frequently in this decade, but this superficial openness still perpetuates old-fashioned images of women, who are often shown in weak roles dependent upon strong men."

In order to determine television's effect on the perception of women, researchers at the Annenberg School developed a "Sexism Index" from responses to social surveys from the National Opinion Research Center. Respondents who expressed beliefs that women are not suited to politics, should not work outside the home if their husbands support them, and should leave running the country to men, were placed in demographically matched groups of low, medium, and high television viewers.

"We found in most groups that the degree of sexism increased with the amount of time spent watching television," Gerbner said. "Even viewers who described themselves as liberals were prone to sexist beliefs as their viewing increased."

According to Gerbner, these conclusions support the "mainstreaming" effect he and his colleagues have attributed to heavy television viewing.

"The television experience blurs many traditional distinctions, cultivates a relatively insecure and anxious attitude toward others, and tends to maintain or even enhance feelings of inequality of place and power," he concluded.

"We need an effective mobilization of religious leaders, along with parents, educators and public officials -- not to censor the media -- but to recognize television's symbolic violence and exploitive sex as instruments of inequity and injustice in our lives."

 Daily Pennsylvanian

Annenberg researchers outline effects of religious television

By SUSANNE SHERLIP

Religious television programs have little effect on local churches or churchgoers, according to a recently completed study by researchers at the Annenberg School of Communications.

Annenberg Dean George Gerbner said yesterday that the study was commissioned by several religious groups who were concerned with the effects of religious programming.

"The sponsors wanted to know if the 'electronic church,' or TV ministries without outside curches, cut into local church attendance," he said.

Gerbner said the Annenberg study concludes that religious TV has converted no people, has attracted few viewers and has had virtually no effect on ordinary church attendance.

Stewart Hoover, an assistant professor of radio, TV and film at Temple University, said earlier this week that the researchers analyzed 101 religious programs to determine the size of their viewing audience.

"We found in major ways that religious TV is not watched more than regular TV," Hoover said. "The audience size is only about 12 million viewers."

The researchers then surveyed people across the country to find out whether religious TV had any effect on local church funds.

"We found the audience for the religious broadcast did not harm the real church by taking away their funds," Hoover said.

He added that a comparison of religious TV to prime time TV showed that religious viewers are, for the most, already devout people who support some local church. "There doesn't seem to be that those who are non-religious are converted by watching religious TV," Hoover said.

Gerbner added that religious TV generally appeals to those upset by the abundance violence and sex on TV.

"The 'electronic church' with its prominent ministries, expresses a fairly stable, coherent, and conservative world view that serves more to rally believers than to recruit or convert others," Gerbner said. "They are greatly dissatisfied with what they perceive to be contemporary morality and interested in spreading the Gospel more than social justice."

Hoover added that religious cable television had no more effect on non-believers or church funds than did ordinary religious TV.

Hoover said that religious broadcasters, such as Pat Robertson and Oral Roberts, had hoped that the study would show that they attract a large audience and convert many viewers. Meanwhile, the churches sponsoring the study hoped to prove that religious TV damaged church attendance and contributions.

"Everybody won a little bit from the study so no one was really dissatisfied," Hoover said.

But he added that some Main Line churches already have criticized the study's findings. "They were angry that we did not find that religious broadcasters had more of a negative impact," Hoover said.

Gerbner said that the research has led to other important conclusions about TV and religion: "We discovered that regular TV expresses and satisfies some religious needs. TV lets people know a lot about the world, values and ethics — anyway a commercial is a short sermon."

Gerbner said that the real challenge to the church is conventional TV. "The new religion of our times is really TV," Gerbner said.

Panel looks at media morality

By MARK JOFFE
Of the Exponent Staff

Is there some way of stemming the "widespread use of gratuitous instances of violence and sexual suggestiveness in the media" without eroding the First Amendment's "guarantees of freedom of conscience and expression?"

Some 100 representatives of Jewish, Protestant and Catholic groups convened at Congregation Rodeph Shalom last week to wrestle with that question. They talked about how to reverse what they see as a "deterioration of moral values" in this society without resorting to censorship and other encroachments on personal freedom.

Sponsored by an ad hoc group called the Interfaith Coalition on Values and the Family, the conference featured a keynote address by Dr. George Gerbner, dean of the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School of Communications, and a panel discussion by representatives of the media and the clergy.

The meeting opened with a welcome by Rabbi David Wortman, executive director of the Board of Rabbis of Greater Philadelphia, who said in a follow-up interview that the time has come for Jews and other mainstream religious groups to stand up for community values.

Because of First Amendment scruples, Jews and liberals, said Wortman, "have stood aside" from condemning what some see as the commercial media's attack on family values. That aloofness created a "vacuum of value leadership in the community that was rapidly filled by the Christian Right."

Wortman believes Jews "are concerned about family values" and should work to find a way to promote them other than the methods used by such groups as the Moral

(Continued on Page 40)

Participants in "A Conference on the Media: Shaper and Reflector of Values" (from left) are Samuel D. Caldwell; Rabbi David Wortman; Rabbi Susan Harris; Dr. George Gerbner; Dr. Murray Friedman, the chief conference organizer; and Monsignor Charles E. McGroarty, who gave a closing summary.

Interfaith panel examines media role in shaping values

(Continued from Page 5)

Majority. "None of us," he emphasized, "is advocating censorship."

Another speaker expressed reservations, though, about the fight against censorship. "I am finding myself increasingly uncomfortable with the fact that the very freedoms of speech and expression I and my civil liberties friends have labored to protect are often eroding other fundamental values we cherish," said Samuel D. Caldwell, general secretary of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends.

Gerbner's prepared remarks focused on the role of television, which he said has "replaced the church as the central source of value orientations" in this society. He said the typical American household watches television an average of seven hours each day, during which the viewer can witness 16 "entertaining acts of violence" in prime time alone.

"We need an effective mobilization of parents, educators, religious and political leaders and other citizens for liberation," he said, "not just to combat symbolic violence and exploitive sex as such, but the larger structure of inequity and injustice behind it."

But participants in the subsequent panel discussion could not agree on what direction such a mobilization should pursue. Rev. Paul Murphy, a Jesuit priest and founder of the Massachusetts-based organization called Morality and Media, called for tight regulation of television and vigorous enforcement of indecency statutes.

John Bull, assistant to the executive editor of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, agreed that "television does sometimes lead to violence," but added, "I ask you, what is the alternative — censorship?"

Chuck Gingold, program director of KYW-TV, argued that the best way to avoid violence and sex on television is to turn off the set. "I don't read every book in the library, and you sure as hell shouldn't watch every show on TV," he said.

Gingold said what television broadcasters do is "dictated by what people like or dislike," as expressed in nightly ratings. "People vote on these programs night in and night out," he said. "I don't think morality is the type of thing you can perpetrate on people."

Nancy Nolde, director of communications for the Metropolitan Christian Council of Philadelphia, came closest to the middle ground on this issue. "I am convinced the threat of censorship far outweighs the threat of pornography," she said.

She suggested such possibilities as a second public television network and an interfaith religious network. "The only alternative is to seek greater diversity," she said.

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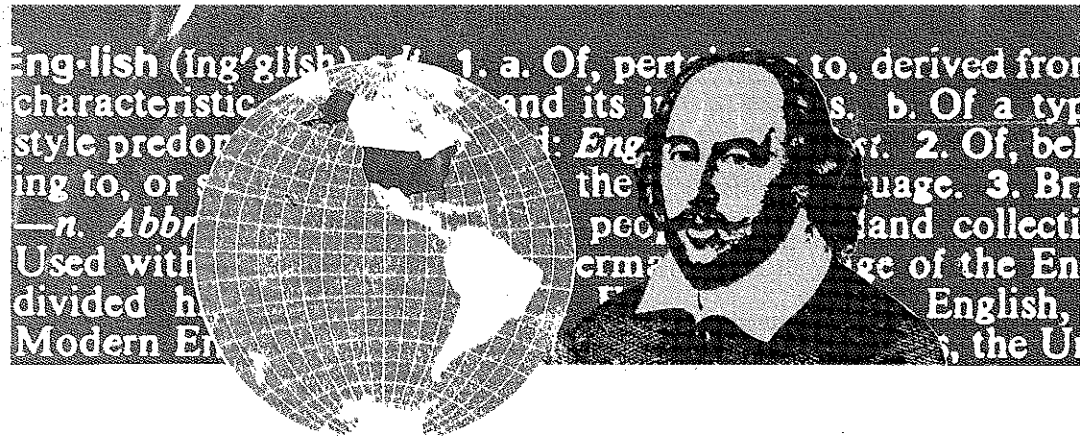
Dean George Gerbner:

F.Y.I.

Lorraine Meyer

Lorraine B. Meyer
Assistant Director



It's at Home Where Our Language Is in Distress

The shortcomings of schools, waves of immigrants, TV addiction—all are taking a toll on U.S. linguistic skills.

English may be the toast of Paris and Peking, but back here in River City it's got trouble, trouble, trouble—

- Trouble because some 27 million adult Americans are functionally illiterate—unable to read a newspaper ad or a product label—and the total grows by the day.
- Trouble in that millions of other adults read barely well enough to scrape by, and 1 million children age 12 to 17 cannot read above a third-grade level.
- Trouble shown by the verbal scores of college-bound high-school seniors on the Scholastic Aptitude Test, which fell from an average of 466 in 1967 to 424 in 1981 and have risen only 2 points since then.
- Trouble documented in a survey by the National Opinion Research Center that finds the language ability of the U.S. population has dropped ever since the 1950s.

Doubly worrisome is that the ranks of the illiterate and marginally literate are swelling at the very time that rapid technological change makes proficiency with words and concepts more and more important.

The most seriously crippled are condemned to live in poverty or its shadow because they cannot fill out a simple application form or read a job manual. The nation spends up to 6 billion dollars annually on welfare and jobless aid for the illiterate, who account for as many as three fourths of the unemployed, one study estimates.

But the literacy problem goes far beyond this hard core. It also afflicts millions who, as college graduates, are considered well educated. In fact, many graduates have a weaker command of English than their parents.

Analytic ability is waning. The National Assessment of Educational Progress, a federally supported research organization, finds "little evidence of well-developed problem-solving strategies or critical-thinking skills" among youngsters. Richard Mitchell, an English professor at Glassboro (N.J.) State College and editor of the *Underground Grammarian,* says that if literacy is defined as the ability to fathom complex ideas, then "many very highly schooled people today are essentially illiterate."

The Rise of "Bonehead English"

Why is a country in which English took root more than 360 years ago facing mounting difficulties in passing on to its young this rich linguistic heritage?

Much of the blame is laid at the doorstep of the education establishment. Analysts say that in reaction to the student unrest of the '60s—and the chorus of demands that students be allowed to "do their own thing"—schools and colleges watered down their curricula and ended up giving short shrift to reading, writing and critical thinking.

In its 1983 report, "A Nation at Risk," the National Commission on Excellence in Education concluded that "secondary-school curricula have been homogenized, diluted and diffused to the point that they no longer have a central purpose. In effect, we have a cafeteria-style curriculum in which the appetizers and desserts can easily be mistaken for the main courses."

One sign of the dilution: In the late 1960s, 85 percent of high-school graduates received four years of English; a decade later, only 41 percent were getting that much. At the same time, enrollment shot up in less demanding remedial courses—"bonehead English"—in high school as well as in college.

The discipline of writing helps to develop and refine thought, yet many teachers cut back on time devoted to the principles of composition. The upshot: A dismaying number of high-school and college students write prose that is next to incomprehensible.

A recent sampling of high-school writing included this from a New York senior: "Teachers don't have enough energy to keep the kids interesting, and they don't explain their selves enough." A junior in Iowa wrote: "I think that students sould not be able to particapat to extra activities if failing in school."

Students frequently dash off only a single draft of a short piece. Writing is checked more for spelling and grammar than for grace or logic—and checking often is done by a poorly paid teacher

Heavy viewing of television can blunt verbal skills or retard their development.

WIL BLANCHE—DPI

not well equipped for the job. The average college-bound high-school senior planning to major in education scored 28 points below the national average on the verbal part of the SAT in 1984.

In his book *The Leaning Tower of Babel*, Richard Mitchell shows why some educators are poor teachers of writing. He quotes from an article shot through with errors in spelling and grammar: "The Cheerleaders cheered the Drill Team performaned. The motivation and the momentous was there. It worked as clock word or a puzzle each part fell in place at the right time. If you were at the statium with me. I am sure you would have been satisfied with the performance."

The author of those words? A high-school principal.

Legacy of "Look-Say"

Another setback to literacy, say many experts, grew out of an experiment in reading instruction that went awry. In the 1930s, schools shifted substantially to a "look-say" approach. Pupils were made to learn each new word by reciting it aloud, without breaking it into vowel-and-consonant combinations.

Advocates saw look-say as a way to make reading less mechanical, but it now appears that it left many children ill-prepared to cope with unknown words and made them poor spellers. Before this problem was documented convincingly in the late 1960s, a few generations were taught by this method.

Also working against the development of reading skills are textbooks that have been "dumbed down" to the point of repelling young people from the printed word. "The moment textbooks started wooing students by giving them the poetry of Bob Dylan and not that of Dylan Thomas, then what did the language have to look forward to?" asks John Simon, author of *Paradigms Lost: Reflections on Literacy and Its Decline.*

Many analysts also fault a system of permissive promotions in which students who cannot read properly are nevertheless passed to the next grade. In a report on the American high school, Ernest Boyer, president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, contends that schools that advance language-deficient students without providing special help perpetrate "a cruel hoax." Eventually, he argues, the students "drop out or get a piece of paper that is worthless."

Many of these young people end up among the ranks of the functionally illiterate, whose numbers are growing by more than 2 million every year.

The increase in English-language illiteracy stems as well from the swelling tide of immigrants entering the United States—530,000 or more legally and an unknown number illegally each year. According to the Census Bureau, about 11 percent of the population now reports speaking a language other than English at home, with Spanish predominant by far.

The spread of non-English speakers has been accompanied by expansion of bilingual education. Teachers give instruction in major subjects such as math and science in the students' native languages, most commonly Spanish, while limiting English training primarily to language classes.

Defenders of bilingualism argue that it allows students to advance academically in other subjects while they are learning English, in contrast to the old "sink or swim" approach in which all instruction was in English. At one point, arguments were also mustered on behalf of classroom use of the dialect called "black English," which gained a temporary foothold in a few schools and then fizzled.

As the debate over bilingual education continues, critics insist that it discourages children from learning English. "The primacy of English is being challenged," argues Gerda Bikales, executive director of U.S. English, a group that seeks to give the language official status in the Constitution. "There is a general belief, nurtured to some extent by bilingual education, that English is not all that necessary."

Even so, most experts warn against making bilingualism a scapegoat for the nation's literacy problem. Jonathan Kozol, author of a soon-to-be-published book, *Illiterate America,* says illiteracy is not "a consequence of U.S. 'generosity' in immigration policies. It would remain a serious problem even if we had no immigrants."

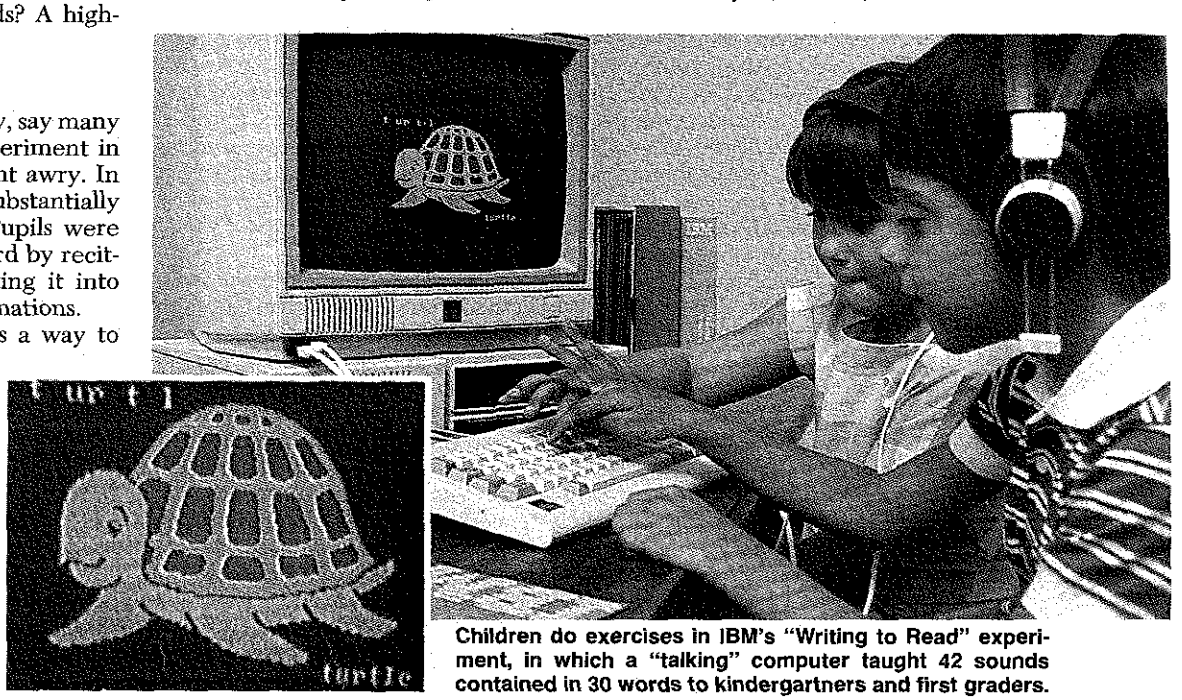
TV Makes "Rich Kids Dumber"

Next to the shortcomings of the schoolhouse, television comes in for the biggest share of the criticism. For some analysts, in fact, it looms as the chief culprit. "In its short lifetime, television has become the major stumbling block to literacy in America," argues Jim Trelease, author of *The Read-Aloud Handbook.*

Statistics show that young people spend hours vegetating, as critics see it, before the television screen, while the time children devote to recreational reading keeps shrinking as they get older.

Although many analysts treat television viewing as a uniform evil, some studies suggest that its effect varies with intelligence and social class. Researcher Michael Morgan of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst has found that youngsters from affluent families who watch a lot of TV do less well on tests of reading and language skills than youngsters from similar backgrounds who are light viewers.

At the same time, however, young-



Children do exercises in IBM's "Writing to Read" experiment, in which a "talking" computer taught 42 sounds contained in 30 words to kindergartners and first graders.

sters from low-income families who watch a lot of TV do better on standardized tests than low-income children who are light viewers. "Poor kids get smarter and rich kids get dumber," says George Gerbner, one of the nation's leading television researchers. "TV represents a limitation for those who have had the advantages of our civilization."

Television affects adults as well. Researchers have found that heavy TV viewers do less well than light viewers on tests of verbal intelligence.

Indeed, the whole range of electronic communications offered by modern life often serves to blunt formal language skills. Where individuals used to write letters, they now frequently make telephone calls. Even most business executives no longer really write letters. Instead, they talk into a dictating machine.

In the face of widespread concern about the state of U.S. literacy, some analysts take a more measured view. They argue that, although real problems exist, Americans age 25 or older are more literate than those who preceded them in that age group. In 1910, fewer than 14 percent had graduated from high school and fewer than 3 percent from college, the analysts point out. By 1984, 73 percent had graduated from high school, 19 percent from college.

With fewer marginal students dropping out and more high-school graduates going to college, those regarded as educated are a less elite group now than in the past. One hundred years ago, says School Superintendent Jack French of Bristol, Va., "by the fourth or fifth grade, many of the poorer students had quit school to go behind the plow, and only the better students stayed. Today, we are teaching all levels."

This democratization of education has had a leveling effect, pulling the bottom up and the top down, scholars acknowledge. One indication of decline at the top: The proportion of students scoring above 600 on the verbal portion of the SAT dropped from 10 percent to 7 percent between 1973 and 1983.

Still, publishers are selling more books today per capita than at any time in U.S. history. "People are reading more than ever," insists John Dessauer, director of the Center for Book Research at the University of Scranton.

"The collective intellectual capital of the United States is greater than it has ever been," argues Arthur Wise, senior social scientist at the Rand Corporation. "Average test-score performance masks the fact that higher percentages of our population are attaining greater levels of knowledge."

The Wellsprings of Reform

Even those who hold an upbeat view concede there is a lot of room for improvement. Now, in the face of public pressures generated by poor student performance and reports proclaiming U.S. education to be in a dismal state, schools are taking action.

Many are overhauling the way reading is taught. In most schools, the look-say method has given way to phonics, with youngsters taught to break words into letter sounds. The return to phonics is credited with a recent rise in reading scores among 9-year-olds.

Television, too, is in the phonics act. "Electric Company," a Public Broadcasting Service program now seen by 3 million children in school and 5 million at home, has for some time been teaching youngsters how various combinations of letters create new words.

School systems are putting more stress on writing as they begin to shift from emphasizing just spelling and grammar. Increasingly, they call on students to write short stories and essays.

Teachers in Brooklyn and Birmingham elementary schools get children to take more care with writing by discussing ideas in advance and then having them revise their drafts several times. In Montgomery County, Md., youngsters are encouraged to write as early as the kindergarten year, during which they keep journals filled with pictures and letters. Educators believe that starting early promotes better writing in succeeding years.

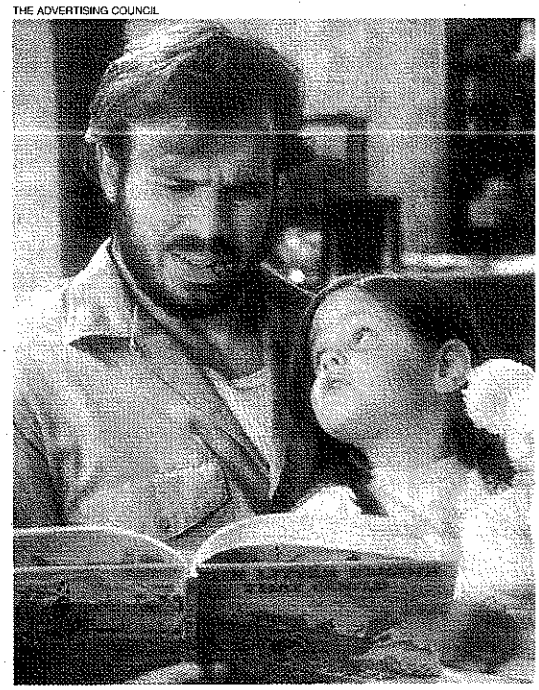
The close relationship between reading and writing was demonstrated in a special program, "Writing to Read," tested by the International Business Machines Corporation. About 22,000 kindergartners and first graders, aided by a computer that can mimic a human voice, learned 42 sounds contained in 30 words. The children practiced writing the sounds in workbooks and then combined them into new words, from which they composed stories. Their reading performance surpassed national norms.

Many teachers acknowledge that the computer is an important literacy tool. The word processor makes writing easier by allowing a student to edit a composition on the screen without having to start over on a clean sheet of paper with each revision.

The new focus on developing basic skills has been accompanied by widespread competence testing throughout the nation. Many states require students to pass tests of basic skills before they can graduate from high school, and some school systems take such re-

THOMAS COGILL FOR *USN&WR*

THE ADVERTISING COUNCIL



The push is on for adult-literacy education, pictured at left. TV spot, above, depicts functionally illiterate father trying to read bedtime tale.

sults into account in making decisions on other promotions.

Yet educators insist that schools can do only part of the job, that help from parents is vital in producing children who can read, write and think well. Analysts contend that Japanese and Chinese first graders have higher reading-achievement scores than first graders in the U.S. partly because parents in those countries spend more time reading to their children.

Adult illiteracy is also drawing increasing attention. As part of an Adult Literacy Initiative begun by President Reagan in 1983, 50 colleges and universities are using federal funds to train and pay students to teach adults to read. In December, 11 national organizations launched a campaign, in cooperation with the Advertising Council, to recruit volunteers to work with illiterate adults and direct people to literacy clinics.

Corporations are spending hundreds of millions of dollars to establish basic-skills programs for their employes. The Business Council for Effective Literacy has been set up to get corporations more involved.

The B. Dalton book chain has pledged 3 million dollars to help combat adult illiteracy, an effort that includes grants to literacy organizations.

Experts see all of those steps, from kindergarten through adulthood, as significant strides. But there is concern that the efforts may not be enough to meet the constantly growing demands.

"The advent of the Information Age raises to new levels of urgency the need for all students to be effective in their use of the written and the spoken word," says Boyer of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

This is war. Some specialists warn that illiteracy is so widespread that nothing less than crash programs at all levels of society can cope with the problem. "We need an all-out literacy war in the United States," declares author Kozol.

Scholars warn that if the battle is not won the nation's very survival as a democracy could be jeopardized. Says a Library of Congress report: "We must face and defeat the twin menaces of illiteracy and aliteracy—the inability to read and the lack of will to read—if our citizens are to remain free and qualified to govern themselves." □

By ALVIN P. SANOFF and LUCIA SOLORZANO

Gobbledygook, That "Normally Occurring Abnormal Occurrence"

College officials used to talk to one another. No longer. Today, they *articulate* with one another.

Gym classes once were in the physical-education department. No longer. At Rutgers University, they are in the department of *human kinetics.* In many schools, what was the library is now a *learning-resource center.*

Those are just a few examples of a language disorder known as "educationese," variants of which afflict business, science and medicine. Its governmental form is gobbledygook, a term coined in the late 1930s by a Texas congressman after he spent months reading official reports larded with bloated, empty words.

A more serious ailment is newspeak, euphemism gone bonkers to the point of standing truth on its head—such as the Ministry of Truth, which in the George Orwell novel *1984* propagated lies.

Plain-English advocates despair over such linguistic maladies. "They debase the language and obscure thought," charges Lt. Col. Robert Murawski, associate professor of English at the Air Force Academy.

Murawski, who advises the White House on clear writing, contends that "the real danger is not grammatical flubs but clotted expression that makes ideas needlessly complex."

Signs of improvement pop up from time to time. Last year, Navy Secretary John Lehman ordered the service to stop using certain terms that took root in the 1970s. A *Navy correctional facility* is once more a brig. *Unaccompanied officer personnel housing* is back to BOQ—bachelor-officer quarters. *Human resources* once again are people.

Commerce Secretary Malcolm Baldrige heartened purists when he ordered word processors in his agency programed to reject such terms as *task out* and *liaison with.*

"Gem" collectors. The bright spots, however, do not outweigh the assaults on clear communication, according to W. T. Rabe, head of the Unicorn Hunters, a plain-English group at Lake Superior State College in Michigan, and William Lutz, head of the English department at Rutgers University and editor of the *Quarterly Review of Doublespeak.* Rabe and Lutz offer these examples:

- *Predawn vertical insertion,* a White House coinage for the invasion of Grenada by parachutists.
- *Wood interdental stimulator,* Pentagonese for toothpick.
- *Experienced cars,* latest automotive euphemism to displace previously owned or used cars.
- *Normally occurring abnormal occurrence,* the nuclear industry's description of something that goes wrong all the time.
- A *therapeutic misadventure,* medical jargon for an operation that kills the patient.

Why do such linguistic atrocities persist? Sometimes, people want to make the common things they do seem more important. Thus, an elevator operator becomes a *vertical-transportation-corps member.*

Officials in government and industry use foggy phrases to hide harsh truths. An airline's report to stockholders referred to the "involuntary conversion of a 727." It was, in fact, a plane crash that killed three passengers. Medical experts and social scientists often create a jargon so abstruse that it discourages outsiders from second-guessing them.

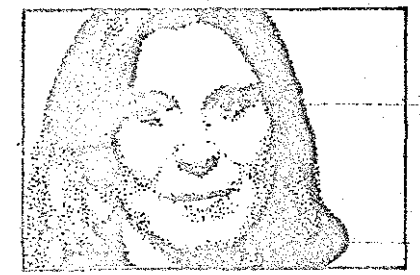
"Pollution of the language keeps getting worse," complains Professor Lutz of Rutgers. "No one wants to talk directly any more."

By SUSANNA McBEE

DRAWING BY DANA FRADON; © 1984 THE NEW YORKER MAGAZINE, INC.

"I'll wait out here for you, Hal. My generation doesn't read."

By DOROTHY STORCK



Compliments, complications

The Journal of Communication is published quarterly by the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania, and it is a gem.

It studies with infinite patience and detail the ways in which human beings manage to bring messages to each other. (It often places heavy emphasis on television, which is understandable since the editor of the Journal is George Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School and acknowledged maven on the mores of TV.)

In the 1984 autumn issue, the Journal published a lengthy study on compliments — who gives them, who gets them, when, where, why, and how often.

The report was written by professors Mark Knapp and Robert Hopper of the University of Texas and Robert Bell of the University of Pittsburgh, and the language is endearingly academic ("The compliment is a speech act worthy of study because it is ubiquitous, valued, and problematic"), but also direct ("Compliments are as critical to social success as oxygen is to breathing.")

Inquirer
2/28/1985

p. B1

Threatening

Compliments, not surprisingly, can turn out to be tricky as well as tender. They can also be threatening.

"Because the act of judgment is often associated with persons of unequal status," the report states, "compliments can create distance between people. . . . Two-thirds of the 245 people observed receiving compliments later reported they felt uncomfortable, defensive, or cynical in response to the compliment. Making an 'appropriate' response to a compliment can be difficult."

The researchers give one example of a compliment-giver anticipating this difficulty and providing what they call an "assist":

"I'm going to xerox that letter you sent and give it to all my students. It was awfully nice of you to send it."

"Well . . . I . . ."

"Besides, my mailbox was empty!" (Both laugh.)"

To my mind, that "assist" came dangerously close to nullifying the compliment, but the researchers consider it, and comments like it, a kindness in a society that distrusts compliments to the point of "compliment phobia."

Self-esteem

It seems that we are like children yearning for the sweet stuff, but afraid to eat it for fear of getting a stomach ache. It has, alas, to do with self-esteem.

When you are complimented on what you are wearing, do you find yourself saying, "Oh, I've had this dress for years" or "Thanks, but my wife bought it"?

If someone says you look as if you've lost weight (the *ultimate* compliment in thin-struck America), do you reply, "Yeah, but I've got 10 more pounds to lose"?

If you are praised on the job you have done, do you minimize it by saying, "I can't take all the credit," even if you can take all the credit?

If you respond to compliments this way, you are like fully a third of the people in the study.

Predictably, the content of our compliments is mostly concerned with personal traits, appearance, and possessions rather than with our total personality or performance, although these latter compliments, scarce as they were, were considered far more "meaningful" to the members of the study group.

Accomplishment

In an interesting comparative study of Japanese and American compliment patterns, the Japanese rarely commented on personal appearance. They emphasized instead matters of accomplishment and taste.

I remember, a year or so ago, becoming remarkably impatient with compliments about my looks (I had lost a few pounds) when I was yearning to hear praise about a rather substantial award I had won.

It is not surprising that more compliments come down the line of status than go up. (People who compliment the boss are often accused of apple-polishing, or worse.)

Women give more compliments, and get more, than men, but the most common "gender composition" is male-female rather than same-sex. The reasons are somewhat sad.

"Women," according to the report, "consider compliments from other women as being less sincere, whereas men reported difficulty in giving compliments to other men because it didn't seem 'appropriate conduct.'"

Thus we stand, bashful, beclotted, and distrustful in the face of praise.

Think about it, and thank you for reading this column. It shows that you are perceptive and able to maintain an open mind. *Wait* a minute. Don't turn the page. I'm telling you you're perceptive and ... oh, well.

Courtesy of Jim Hallaran

GUARDIAN 25/3/85

Christopher Reed gets the picture of how television may form some bad habits

Why move 'n munch is a normal lunch

THE student of America, puzzled by the paradoxes of Reaganism and the New Populism, the beatification of the medical profession or even why Americans have such slovenly eating habits, can turn to Professor George Gerbner.

Dean of the Annenberg school of communications at the University of Pennsylvania, his may not be the last word but his 17 years of studies into television's influence on social dispositions such as these are well worth examination.

Dr Gerbner and his researchers studied light and heavy viewers — the latter watching more than four hours a day, nearly half the total US audience. They found that in comparisons of the two types, heavy viewers from otherwise very different social groups tended to share social and political perceptions more than light viewers, blurring traditional differences and particularly eroding working-class consciousness.

Commercial television's need for vast audiences pulls its content, and its viewers, towards mainstream blandness. Thus heavy viewers tended to regard themselves as "average," "middle class" and politically "moderate" in spite of their actual status or opinions, a pattern unique to television, Dr Gerbner found.

In fact, their opinions were often well to the right of what would normally be regarded as centrist, especially on topics such as race, minorities, personal rights, freedom of speech, and law and order. This probably reflects television's portrayal of a dangerous and nasty world through its dramatisation of crime, and obsession with disaster and mayhem on the news.

Heavy viewers were not conservative on economics and social services, however. Here they demonstrated the populist distrust of big government and resentment of taxes, and the paradoxical demand for beneficial government services, and the quick economic fix.

Dr Gerbner believes this stems from commercial television's "mass mobilisation for consumption." As a temple devoted to advertisers' glorification of instant gratification, it is bound to encourage fast and simple solutions to material desires.

These paradoxes can be more readily understood on a closer examination of the world American television creates and those who live in it. Average viewers see 300 screen characters a week in prime time, portrayed in apparent realism but bearing little relation either to their counterparts in real life or the viewers' real world.

Violence is seen six times per hour in prime time, of which two incidents per evening are fatalities, so that a 16-year-old heavy viewer will have seen about 7,000 screen deaths. Women and older people, although actually under-represented in comparison with reality, are disproportionately the victims. Young white males dominate in violent scenes and are least likely to be victims — the opposite of the real world where they are the most prone to injury or death, after young black males.

Tele violence further contributes to heavy viewers' reactionary opinions. Minorities who see themselves more often on the losing end of violence are more fearful than they need to be of their own victimisation. One result of this apprehension is increased support of right wing law and order oppression.

Dr Gerbner's findings on television's causal influence on social attitudes can often vividly illuminate previously mystifying behaviour.

Why, for instance, do Americans eat and drink in public so much? They gobble and gulp junk food and soft drinks while going up in lifts, driving their cars, or shopping. Dr Gerbner points out that each evening's prime-time, shows nine acts of eating and drinking, mostly on the run. Families sitting down to a balanced meal are hardly ever shown. He believes it is connected to an attempt to resolve frustration, a point echoed by US dieticians who constantly warn America's overweight millions against "compulsive eating."

The implications of all this are troubling, and could presage some volatile politics. Dr Gerbner says: "We are only now discovering our environment of symbols and messages and realising that as with other things, these are also mass produced.

"Perhaps what we need most of all is a prime-time programme alerting viewers to the hidden political messages behind the messages they know about."

Study Assesses Effects From TV Evangelism

By PETER KERR

Religious television shows are not cutting into church attendance as some social scientists and religious organizations had suggested in recent years, according to a study of religious television programming released yesterday.

The two-year study, conducted by the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School of Communications, also found that religious broadcasts appeal to 13.3 million people — 6.2 percent of American television viewers — who, for the most part, already have strong religious beliefs. The programs, the study suggested, fail to reach large numbers of viewers who are not actively religious, nor do they seem likely to make many new converts.

"This is both good news and bad news for evangelical broadcasters," said Dr. George Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School. "The good news is that they do not reduce the number of people going to local churches. On the bad side, we found they are reaching a stable audience of those who are already religiously active."

Big Increase From 1960's

The study, which was commissioned by a group of more than 30 religious organizations, represents the most extensive research to date on the phenomenon of "electronic church" programs. Since the 1960's the number of evangelical radio and television stations has risen dramatically, from fewer than 150 in the mid-1960's to more than 1,000 this year, according to the National Religious Broadcasters, an umbrella organization for television and radio evangelical groups.

But some religious organizations questioned whether television preachers, who often espouse fundamentalist beliefs, were taking people and money away from local churches by providing worshippers with an alternative at home. This was a major subject of discussion in a 1980 conference of religious organizations and social scientists under the auspices of the National Council of Churches and the United States Catholic Conference in New York City.

The study, designed to clarify the effects of religious programs, was supported both by groups that produce evangelical broadcasts and so-called mainline groups, such as the National Council of Churches. The Gallup Organization in Princeton, N.J., assisted in the project, which cost $175,000.

The study found that viewers of religious programs were mostly people who attended churches and made contributions to religious organizations. These viewers also tend to be older, have lower incomes and less education than people who do not watch religious programs.

In addition, they are more likely to live in the South or Middle West, are more likely to have fundamentalist religious attitudes and more likely to be disturbed by what they see as moral laxity on regular television programs.

Those Who Watch Regularly

The study found that regular viewers of religious programming of any denomination numbered about 6.2 percent of the total number of people in television households, or about 13.3 million people.

Viewers of religious television, the study found, are no less likely to attend services than churchgoers who do not view such programming. The audience for religious programs, the study found, generally sees the programs as a complement to more traditional religious activities.

Another finding of the study was that religious programs, like other television fare, tend to underrepresent women, the elderly, children and members of minority groups.

Representives of religious groups that supported the study appeared to draw varied conclusions from the data.

The New York Times/William E. Sauro

Dr. George Gerbner, dean of Annenberg School, speaking yesterday about the results of study.

"These are a very small number of viewers from a homogeneous group of people," said William F. Fore, a spokesman for the National Council of Churches. About the programs, Mr. Fore said, "I do not believe this is good evangelism, and I think the study shows that."

But David W. Clark, the vice president of marketing for the Christian Broadcasting Network, a major producer of religious programming in Virginia Beach, Va., said the study provided support for his organization's type of evangelical programming.

"We finally have an absolute finding that the programs don't decrease attendance at local churches," Mr. Clark said. As for the findings that the size of the religious programs' audience was limited, Mr. Clark said he believed the programs would reach more Americans if the programs were presented at more popular time periods. Most of the producers of the religious programs, he said, can only afford to buy television time late or early in the schedule when relatively few viewers are watching.

LA TÉLÉVISION

Plus c'est beau, placebo

« TU AS vu ce qui est arrivé à J. R. dans Dallas hier ? » — « C'est terrible, non ? » Fini le temps où l'on s'adressait aux gens en leur parlant de la pluie et du beau temps ! Voilà où nous en sommes rendu selon les études réalisées par le professeur George Gerbner. Mieux connu en tant que directeur du *Journal of Communication*, M. Gerbner poursuit ses recherches sur l'impact de la violence à la télévision à l'Annenberg School of Communications au États-Unis.

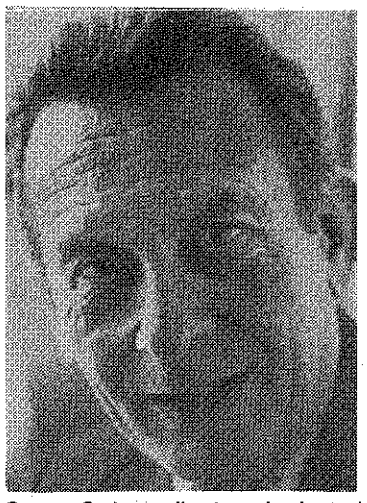
Sa conférence a été l'un des événements les plus appréciés du colloque *TViolence*, colloque organisé par l'Association nationale des Téléspectateurs, les 29 et 30 mars. Dans ses nombreuses recherches, il a étudié plus de 1500 émissions diffusées aux heures de grande écoute et analysé environ 15 000 personnages.

La violence, selon lui, n'existe pas seulement sous la forme de meurtres, d'agressions, de viols, etc. Une distribution inégale peut devenir une forme plus subtile de violence. Lors de ces études, M. Gerbner a découvert qu'à la télévision on ne retrouvait qu'une femme pour trois hommes, que les jeunes représentaient seulement 1/3 de leur pourcentage réel et les vieillards, seulement 1/5. De plus, ces groupes déjà sous-représentés aboutissent le plus souvent dans des rôles très dévalorisants. Par exemple, si vous êtes un jeune Noir, vous n'aurez aucun modèle auquel vous rattacher alors que la population renforcera ses préjugés racistes. Les personnages n'ont même pas encore ouvert la bouche et la télévision a déjà véhiculé plusieurs valeurs. C'est dire la puissance de ce médium.

La télé est devenue une forme de religion qu'on pratique en moyenne sept heures par jour aux États-Unis. A cause d'elle ou grâce à elle, riches, pauvres, citadins, ruraux, tous ont la même culture télévisuelle.

Mais la télévision est-elle le reflet de la réalité ? En un certain sens, oui. Par contre, la violence est plus présente à la télé que dans le milieu de la plupart des gens. Les valeurs véhiculées sont déjà dépassées, la télévision est loin derrière le changement des mentalités, elle retarde même leur évolution. Les études de M. Gerbner prouvent que plus les gens regardent la télé, plus ils croient que « la place des femmes est à la maison et celle des hommes à la gestion du pays ». Selon lui, la télé est un outil d'aculturation qui nous présente un monde cohérent, un monde mythique dans chaque foyer. Ce monde semble tellement réel qu'on finit par s'y laisser prendre.

Pour ce qui est de la violence plus facilement identifiable au petit écran, un agresseur masculin fait 12 victimes. Tandis que pour chaque femme agresseur, il y aura 16 victimes. La femme qui réussit à obtenir un certain pouvoir serait-elle plus méchante que l'homme dans la même situation ?



George Gerbner, directeur du *Journal of Communication* : « *Plus les gens regardent la télévision, plus ils surestiment le caractère violent de la société.* »

Les gens, en regardant la télévision, surestiment le caractère violent de la société et développent une crainte face à leur environnement immédiat qui devient dès lors très insécurisant. Du même coup, aussi paradoxal que cela puisse paraître, la violence peut leur sembler un moyen légitime de régler un conflit. A la télévision, une demi-heure suffit pour régler bien des problèmes. C'est pourquoi on adopte une solution rapide : la violence. □

Michèle Goyette.

VIOLENCE

A chacun sa censure

« LE C.R.T.C. *(Conseil de la radiodiffusion et des télécommunications canadiennes) n'a pas de pouvoir de censure sur la programmation des différentes stations. Il ne peut que leur faire des recommendations* » disait M. Roger Hébert, directeur du bureau régional du C.R.T.C. lors du colloque *TViolence*. Pour les différentes stations c'est donc chacun pour soi ou l'auto-réglementation. Il existe quand même certaines lois comme celle concernant la pornographie mais elle se résument à peu de choses.

Depuis 20 ans aux États-Unis on étudie la violence à la télévision. Environ 3000 études ont été menées sur le sujet. Résultat : pas de consensus sur le rapport de cause à effet entre la violence télévisée et la violence réelle. Selon M. Hébert, la télévision ne remplacera jamais les parents, l'école ou...la gardienne.

Tout le monde est d'accord là-dessus. Les enfants sont confrontés trop jeunes à la télévision. Ils auraient besoin de l'assistance des parents. Selon M. Pierre Monette, directeur du Service jeunesse de Radio-Canada (la seule station ayant répondu à l'invitation de l'Association nationale des Téléspectateurs), Radio-Canada s'impose beaucoup de rigueur dans le choix de sa programmation, mais le bombardement d'émissions américaines aura tôt fait de réduire les effets de cette politique à une influence très minime. Par exemple, dans les instructions adressées aux réalisateurs et monteurs de Radio-Canada, on énumère une liste des scènes à éviter : torture, cruauté envers les enfants ou les animaux, gros plans sur des visages crispés par la douleur, armes que les enfants pourraient se procurer, pendaisons, etc. Ce ne sont que des critères de base auxquels on doit apporter des nuances surtout lors de l'achat d'émissions faites à l'extérieur de la « maison ». Ces émissions sont souvent réalisées avec des politiques sur la violence beaucoup plus larges.

Les dessins animés diffusés le samedi matin sur les réseaux américains montrent une violence souvent excessive mais ce sont tout de même ces émissions qui volent la vedette. M. Monette affirme que, dans quelques années, la compétition pourrait être encore plus féroce. En 1984, 46% des foyers québécois étaient « câblés » et on ne peut exercer aucun contrôle sur cette invasion américaine.

Toujours selon M. Monette, l'Association nationale des Téléspectateurs, au lieu de s'attarder aux politiques des réseaux québécois, devrait plutôt sensibiliser les parents à exercer un meilleur contrôle sur leur télévision à la maison. Plusieurs foyers possèdent deux appareils, ce qui rend la tâche des parents encore plus difficile. Avec les ondes de la télévision qui chargent l'air que l'on respire, il appartient à chacun d'exercer son pouvoir de censure...à la seule pression d'un bouton. □

M. G.

La vidéoclipie

Clip ! Clip ! Vite, vite, les images se suivent et ne se ressemblent pas.

LES VIDÉO-CLIPS sont sexistes et violents, tout le monde est d'accord là-dessus. La *National Coalition on Television Violence*, association américaine, a conclu, après s'être tapé 900 clips, qu'il y avait 17,9 manifestations de violence, parfois empreinte de subjectivité sexuelle, pour chaque heure de visionnement.

La violence physique est bel et bien présente dans les clips, mais dans quelle mesure influence-t-elle le spectateur ? Aucune étude n'a prouvé que les consommateurs de violence étaient des agresseurs, tout comme rien ne prouve que les consommateurs de pornographie soient des violeurs.

Selon Charles Perraton, professeur de communications à l'Uqam, présent au colloque *TViolence*, la violence que l'on peut percevoir dans les vidéo-clips n'est pas la plus dangereuse. Pire serait la violence engendrée par la forme même du vidéo-clip.

Le clip, composé d'images qui se suivent mais ne se ressemblent pas, apparaît rarement seul. A la télévision ou dans les salles de visionnement, les images défilent au son de la musique de Bryan Adams, Pat Benatar, Billy Jœl, et depuis quelque temps Paul Piché, etc., pendant une demi-heure, une heure ou 24 heures sur 24. Charles Perraton compare le spectateur de vidéo-clips à une vache qui regarde passer un train dans la prairie.

Les plans se succèdent si rapidement que le spectateur n'a même pas le temps de regarder l'heure. Il est captif d'une bande-annonce. Car le clip est une réclame publicitaire, un outil promotionnel, et on va même jusqu'à payer pour le regarder.

« *Le clip*, dit Charles Perraton, *est la locomotive de la télévision. Il nous forme à notre future profession de spectateur, qui consomme en restant au degré zéro de la performance, en ne faisant que voir ce qu'on donne à voir.* » Après le palmarès musical, c'est au tour de la télévision de se vidéoclipiser. Vous avez remarqué la vitesse à laquelle défilent les nouvelles dans les bulletins télévisés ; mieux, vous avez compté le nombre de plans compris dans un mini-reportage de deux minutes ?

Pour souligner la visite de Jœ Clark en URSS, le *Téléjournal* de Radio-Canada nous a présenté, le 2 avril dernier, un reportage de trois minutes, pendant lequel j'ai pu compter au moins 36 plans différents. Ce qui donne une moyenne d'un plan toutes les cinq secondes. (Je devais être tellement attentive à mon calcul, tant les plans se succédaient rapidement, que je n'ai même pas « regardé » le reportage.) Eh bien, si le vidéo-clip est agressant avec sa moyenne d'un plan toute les trois secondes (les téléromans en comptent un aux 20 secondes), que dire des reportages des bulletins télévisés.

La technique vidéoclipique, rejeton de notre société *fast-food*, est tellement pratique : le nombre d'informations contenues dans un bulletin de nouvelles est phénoménal, et le téléspectateur s'attend à plus qu'un bulletin radiodiffusé : il veut des images. L'adulte, autant que l'enfant, est capté, fasciné par le changement ultra-rapide des images et des sujets. De plus, il n'a pas de temps à perdre : il veut consommer son information comme il consomme son café instantané. □

Sylvie Chenette

AFTERMATH OF A RAMPAGE

Girl Was 'So Scared I Had to Go Home'

By **LEON TAYLOR**
Daily News Staff Writer

"It was Easter time," the girl said. "I thought we would have some fun. But everybody was running around breaking windows and stuff.

"It was crazy."

Kimbalina Smith, 15, was explaining how a crowd of thousands of teen-agers turned into a near-riot along the Chestnut Street Transitway on Sunday.

Smith, of South Philadelphia, said it's "like a tradition" for teen-agers to gather on the renovated, four-block shopping corridor on Easter. Friends decked out in their Easter finery link up on Chestnut Street and go to the movies, visit the arcades or just stroll.

But things got out of hand on Sunday when thousands of youths began fighting, smashing windows, looting and running in panic. Police estimate there were about 5,000 youths on the transitway at the height of the incident.

Smith said she and her friends left the area soon after the violence began.

"I had to leave," said the 10th-grader. "I was so scared I had to go home. [The police] were letting the horses and dogs loose and all. Mainly, what you was doing was just running from people to keep from getting hurt."

David Abrams, 15, of Willingboro, N.J., said the fighting started in the line of people who were waiting outside the Duke and Duchess theater, 16th and Chestnut streets, to see "The Last Dragon," a martial arts film.

"Some kids couldn't get in the movies because the line was so long," said Abrams, who went to the transitway on Easter with a cousin from Philadelphia. "They just started fighting because they didn't want to go to the end of the line."

The fighting intensified once the crowd from the previous showing of the film poured into the street, Abrams said. Soon, there was a general panic.

"We watched it for a while, but it got so rough out there that we just left," he added. "They was just running back and forth. The cops were chasing them and everything."

The transitway is a "natural place" for youths to meet during the holidays, said one teen-age girl who would not give her name.

"A lot of times there ain't nothing else to do," she said. "At least here you've got a lot of movies and places to eat and things to do and look at. You can come down here and have a good time."

Police might never know exactly what started the rampage. But Norman Bailey, 16, has his own theory.

"I've been down here a few times [on Easter Sundays]," Bailey said. "This time there were more kids down here than usual. All the parents and families and stuff were over at the Gallery [at the city-sponsored Easter promenade] so I just think everybody over here felt freer to go off."

Staff Photography by **Susan Winters**

Passers-by view damage on Chestnut Street Transitway caused by disturbance by crowds of youths on Sunday

Don't Blame the Movie, Expert Says

By **JULIA LAWLOR**
Daily News Staff Writer

Could the antics of "Bruce" LeRoy Green — star of the violent rock 'n' roll martial arts comedy, "The Last Dragon" — have been the inspiration for the Easter Sunday rampage on Chestnut Street?

"As far as I can tell it started there," Police Commissioner Gregore J. Sambor said on Sunday. "Apparently they come out and all want to be kung fu masters."

"To attribute that to a single exposure like the kung fu program is basically scapegoating," George Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania, said last night. "There's no way to reliably say it was the movie that triggered it. It might have, but not necessarily."

About 4 p.m. on Sunday, thousands of youths converged on Chestnut Street between 18th and Broad just as the afternoon showing of "The Last Dragon" at the Duke and Duchess theater, on Chestnut near 16th, let out. Some had been turned away from a theater playing a popular blood-and-gore feature, "Friday the 13th, Part V," and others were just walking the streets or in arcades playing video games.

Sambor apparently thought "The Last Dragon" was enough of an instigator that he planned a meeting between police and area movie-theater managers. According to Lt. Al Lewis, spokesman for the department, the meeting will be held soon to discuss the possibility of the police being notified in advance when such films are shown.

But according to Gerbner, who has been studying the effects of television and screen violence on people for the past 15 years, the solution is just not that simple.

The majority of people exposed to such violence on the screen, Gerbner said, learn not to be violent themselves, but tend to become insecure and afraid.

"It's the so-called 'mean world' syndrome," he said. "Some people learn the lesson of aggression and perpetrating violence, but most learn insecurity, apprehension and fear. They learn that they live in a mean world and that they must be on their guard. They end up demanding protection, even approving oppression if it means more security."

In his research, Gerbner has found that children's programming contains between 20 and 25 violent acts per hour, and that there is an average of six violent acts per hour on prime-time television — including "two entertaining murders a night."

"You grow up with that, and you get into this kind of a situation, and most kids expect this kind of behavior. All you need is a few kids to act, whether or not they're coming out of a particular movie," Gerbner said.

Movies geared toward the teen-age audience also must offer a heightened level of violence, he said, to compete with television's steady diet. Kung fu movies offer an "uninterrupted sequence of violence," he said. "It's a bigger dose, but it's viewed selectively."

A report released in 1982 by the National Institute of Mental Health confirmed Gerbner's findings, noting that some viewers learned aggressive behavior and others learned to be "victims" after exposure to TV and screen violence. The report was based on an earlier study by the U.S. Surgeon General's office in 1972 that linked TV viewing to aggressive behavior in children.

But the 1982 report stressed that "no single study unequivocally confirms the conclusion that televised violence leads to aggressive behavior."

In fact, Gerbner speculated that it might have been something entirely different that sparked Sunday afternoon's wild looting, dubbed a "concentration of exuberance" by one police official.

"You have problems every spring, everywhere that teens celebrate," Gerbner said. "The police knew very well there was a danger, that's why they moved the Easter parade inside. They didn't expect this sudden emergence of several thousand people in a limited area.

"It was a beautiful day," he said. "Spring seems to release these energies. Everybody living on a campus knows that. That's why universities organize events so the students can let off steam — like Spring Fling, or going to Fort Lauderdale."

City Eyes Changes on Chestnut St.

By **CAROLYN ACKER**
and **STEVEN A. MARQUEZ**
Daily News Staff Writers

The business hours of movie theaters and arcades on the Chestnut Street Transitway might have to be regulated to prevent another incident like the Easter Sunday outbreak of looting and vandalism, Mayor Goode said yesterday.

Goode said at a press conference that he would meet with Chestnut Street and city business leaders today to discuss "what kind of standards we can establish on the arcades as well as the movie theaters themselves."

"I think if we're going to have a sound retail district, that we cannot continue to have three theaters and two arcades within that two-block area," Goode said of Chestnut Street between 15th and 17th, where most of Sunday's looting occurred. "We'll continue to have problems if we have that."

There were numerous theories about what caused the Easter melee, which lasted about two hours and involved as many as 5,000 teen-agers and young adults.

Some said it was simply the result of too many exuberant youths in too little space. Others pointed to video arcades, or the movie theaters, or inadequate police protection, or the mall-like transitway, or kung fu.

Goode also raised a new theory – hormones.

"Now and then there are some kinds of chemistry that go to work inside of young people's bodies that contribute to something like this," he said. "I'm not here to stand and explain why that happened, but it did

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More Inside

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Warning: this TV show may turn you into a neurotic, right-wing slob

Christopher Reed in San Francisco

PROFESSOR George Gerbner, television expert, likes to quote the 17th Century Scottish thinker, Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun, who wrote: "If a man were permitted to make all the ballads, he need not care who should make the laws."

Dr Gerbner's point is that the small screen is now our balladeer, the source of the stories, legends and characters that shaped an earlier culture. Yet because of the pervasiveness of TV, its influence on our attitudes today goes beyond ephemeral politics and the law and into fundamental social dispositions.

Now dean of the school of communications at the University of Pennsylvania, Dr Gerbner and his research team have been studying television for 17 years. His conclusions have been published mainly in academic journals, but his findings on America's TV society — with important implications for the rest of the English-speaking world — are provocative enough to deserve a wider audience.

Even a casual student of Americana who has been puzzled by the paradoxes of Reaganism and the New Populism, the social beautification of the US medical profession, or even why Americans have such slovenly eating habits, may turn to Dr Gerbner for enlightenment. His may not be the last word on these phenomena, but such striking examples of nature imitating artifice at least merit serious consideration.

Dr Gerbner has separated people into "light" viewers, those who watched up to two hours a day, and "heavy" viewers, who see four hours or more. He found that in comparisons of the two types, heavy viewers from otherwise very different groups tended to share social and political perceptions more than light viewers, blurring traditional differences and particularly eroding working-class consciousness.

Commercial television's need for vast audiences pulls its content, and its viewers, inexorably towards mainstream blandness.

Thus heavy viewers tended to regard themselves as "average", "middle class" and politically "moderate" despite their actual status or opinions, a pattern unique to television, Dr Gerbner found.

In fact, these "moderates" opinions were usually well to the right of what would normally be regarded as centrist, especially on matters of race, minorities, personal rights, freedom of expression, and law and order. This reflects television's portrayal of the world as dangerous and nasty through its dramatisation of crime and obsession with disasters and mayhem on the news.

Heavy viewers are not conservative on economics and social services however. Here they demonstrated the populist distrust of big government and resentment of taxes, and its paradoxical demand for beneficial government services and the quick economic "fix".

Dr Gerbner believes this stems from commercial television's "mass mobilisation of consumption". As a temple devoted to advertisers' glorification of instant gratification, it is bound to encourage fast and simple solutions to material desires.

These paradoxes are more readily understood upon a closer examination of the world television creates and those who people it. Average viewers see 300 screen characters a week in prime time. They are portrayed in apparent realism but bear little relation either to their real-life counterparts or to the viewers' real world.

They see 30 police officers, seven lawyers, three judges, 12 nurses, and 10 doctors a week, but only one engineer or scientist. Service or manual workers make up 10 per cent of TV characters but 65 per cent in real life. Men outnumber women three to one.

The popular male age range is from 25 to 55 but for women it is only 25 to 35.

Blacks appear on TV at the rate of 75 per cent of their real presence in life, and Hispanics one-third, and both are shown disproportionately in minor capacities. Blacks appear together with whites only two per cent of the time. The most popular peak viewing character is a well-off white male in the prime of life in a professional or managerial position.

Violence is seen six times an hour in prime time and two incidents each evening are fatalities (so that a 16-year-old heavy viewer will have seen about 7000 screen deaths). Women and the elderly, although actually under-represented in comparison with reality, are disproportionate victims. Young white males occur most often in violent scenes but are least likely to be victims — the opposite of the real world where they are the most prone to injury or death after young black males.

If these figures represent television's version of "mainstream" reality, and heavy viewers really believe they are average moderates, it is hardly surprising that their actual views emerge as conservative.

TV violence further contributes to heavy viewers' reactionary opinions. Minorities who see themselves more often on the losing end of violent encounters are more worried than they need be about their own victimisation. One result of this apprehension is increased support of right-wing "law and order" oppression.

Aggravating the anxiety is TV's preoccupation with crime — among the week's 300 characters are 23 criminals and crime is at least 10 times more frequent on the screen than in real life. Nor are children spared; during their weekend daytime programs, the "kid-vid ghetto" as advertisers know it, there are 18 violent acts per hour.

A curious side-effect of the violence is the role of medicine. Violence rarely causes pain or suffering, and never seems to need medical attention on the TV screen. On average, only six to seven per cent of main characters ever require treatment. Nevertheless, the medics themselves are beyond reproach; less than four per cent are shown as evil — half the percentage shown in other professions.

Doctors are also characterised as more fair, more sociable and warmer than other characters and are rated as more intelligent; more rational and more stable and fair than the (female) nurses. The doctor "symbolises power, authority, and knowledge, and possesses an almost uncanny ability to dominate and control the lives of others", a power extending to the emotional and social life of the patients.

If this helps to explain the demi-god status of American doctors, the daytime soap operas must contribute to what foreigners see as America's national hypochondria.

Nearly half of all soap opera characters are involved in health crises. Half the pregnancies end in miscarriage and 16 per cent in the mother's death. Health, or lack of it, is the most frequently discussed topic and the second most common location in soap operas is a doctor's surgery. Of all professionals shown, 68 per cent are in medicine.

This preoccupation with health could have something to do with the characters' reckless attitude toward it. Car seat belts are hardly ever worn on TV and few safety precautions are taken at work. Eating, drinking or talking about food occur nine times an hour in peak time, yet characters are nearly always sober and slim.

In these statistics appears an item which surely explains why Americans eat and drink in public so much — gobbling and gulping junk food and soft drinks while going up in lifts, driving their cars or shopping. TV characters eat on the run all the time and scenes of families sitting down to a balanced dinner are hardly ever shown.

Dr Gerbner links this constant eating of snacks with an attempt to resolve frustration, a point echoed by dietitians who constantly warn America's overweight millions against "compulsive eating".

Junk food is much advertised on television, of course, and its social critics are quick to blame the commercials. However, Dr Gerbner believes that in many cases the programs are "worse" than the ads.

Under US law, cigarette advertising and the depiction of the act of swallowing an alcoholic beverage are prohibited (in beer commercials toasts are eternally proposed but never drunk).

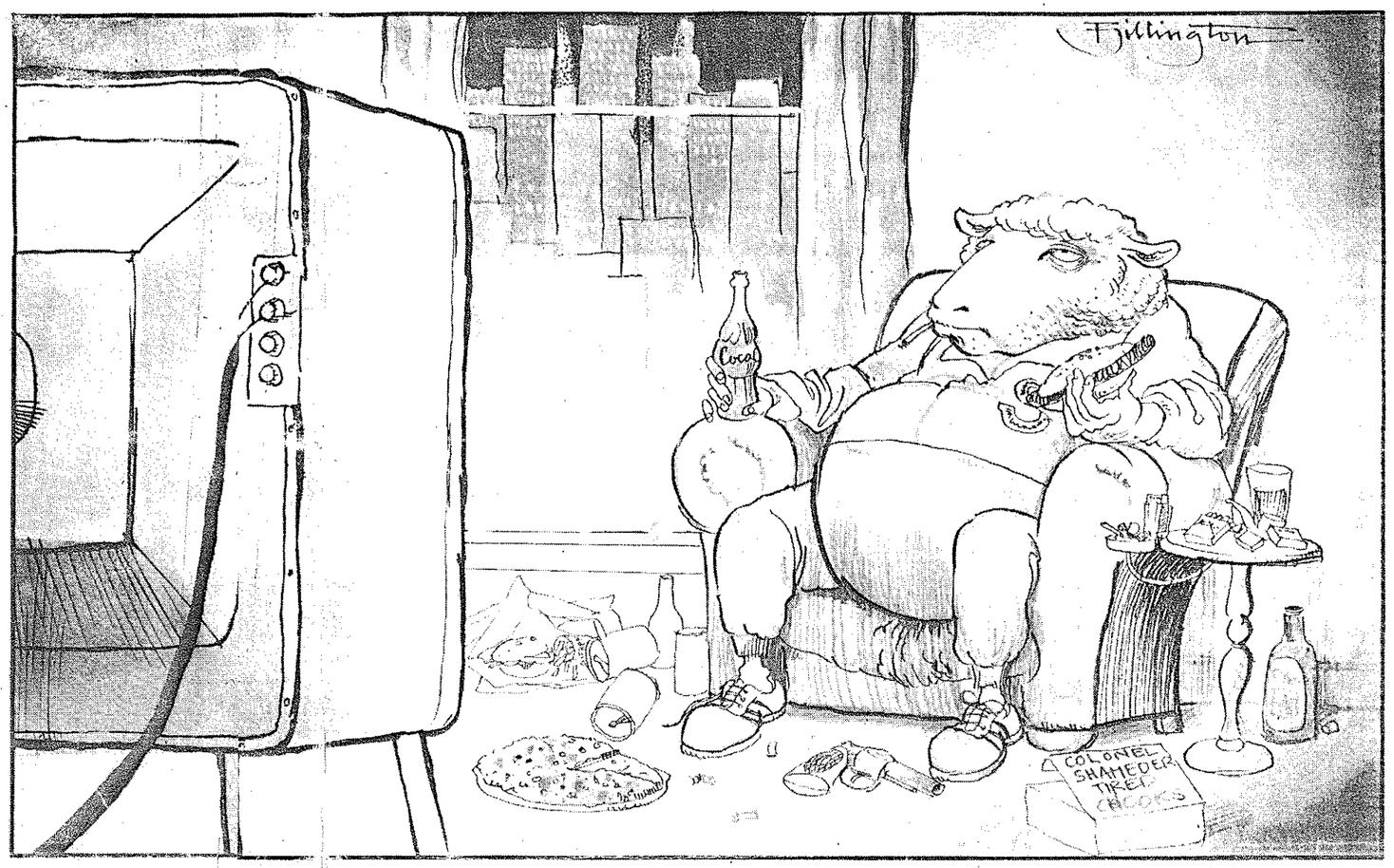
But also, Dr Gerbner believes, "commercials are more responsive to the prevalent moods and social feelings. The price of one commercial can be more than a 50-minute show, so the advertisers have to be more sensitive to an audience which will buy".

As the criterion for television's content is cost per 1000 viewers rather than pure income from commercials, shows may be put together with little concern for quality or accuracy in the eternal quest for the impossible: a show that costs nothing and is seen by everyone.

The implications of Dr Gerbner's findings are troubling. As people demand more but are unwilling to pay, they could presage some volatile politics, too.

He says: "We are only now discovering our environment of symbols and messages — rather than in the conventional sense of our surroundings — and only now realising that as with other things, these are also mass produced. We should alert our citizens to this as a major policy consideration. Perhaps what we need most now is a prime-time program alerting viewers to the hidden political messages behind the messages they know about."

A good idea, but simpler would be a warning like the one on cigarette packets, on American soap operas. It would say: "This show may turn you into a neurotic, right-wing slob."



COMMENTARY Tom Shales

6270

WASHINGTON—If there were such a thing as phobophobia, the fear of developing a phobia, might it not be induced by watching a TV talk show on which phobics discuss their fears? Or maybe the alternate reaction would occur in some viewers: They would become fearful because they had no unreasonable fears and worry that there was nothing in their lives interesting enough to be worthy of a TV talk show.

Phil Donahue recently did an hour on phobias, with recovered phobics and a therapist who has had success controlling if not curing such modern problems as agoraphobia, the fear of leaving the house.

It's not far-fetched to theorize that except for programs like Phil's, TV may be an agoraphobe's worst enemy, since it encourages staying home and living vicariously through the tube. Nobody ever comes on the screen and says, "OK, you've had enough TV, now go out and face the world."

Dr. George Gerbner of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania has statistics to prove that heavy viewers of television violence have an exaggerated fear of the real world and the possibilities of encountering violence in it. Could there be a link between what Gerbner calls the "mean world syndrome" and the seeming rise in cases of agoraphobia? He hasn't said so.

At first glance it would appear that Phil Donahue is doing a tremendous public service, in addition to providing a fascinating hour of TV, with programs such as that on the phobics.

People with similar problems can look in and see others who share the phobias and, in most cases, have shown that the problems can be beaten or at least managed. They can see that they are not alone and that there is hope. No one will ever know how many minds are set at ease by simple exposure to topics such as phobias that have, for the most part, gone undiscussed in popular forums.

Then at second glance, you wonder about the people watching Donahue and feeling a little guilty that they have no Donahue-worthy syndromes. They may wonder if there isn't something suspect about the fact that they are level-headed and well-adjusted and pretty much able to cope. They may even begin imagining they have the symptoms being discussed on the program.

Is Phil Donahue doing a public service by presenting a show on phobias?

Obviously, if Phil Donahue or anyone else worried too much about possibilities such as this, the range of topics that can be dealt with openly on television would shrink to a peanut. But the persuasive capacities of television to induce imitative behavior are certainly not insignificant. If they were, Bristol-Myers wouldn't spend all those billions training you to want their products.

More worrisome than Donahue are the TV movies portraying social and psychological problems, usually in the guise of national group therapy, but really in the quest for ratings.

After a recent ABC movie about teen-age suicide, there was at least one reported case of an adolescent who took her life in precisely the manner depicted on the program. The usual answer in such cases is that the idea was already in her head. But what if something in that film activated the dormant thought, and increased, if only by a critical millimeter, the likelihood something horrible would occur?

Another ABC movie, "Love Lives On," portrayed a young woman who was first addicted to drugs, then diagnosed as having terminal cancer, and then became pregnant. She was made a heroine in the film because she elected to give birth even though doctors warned it would shorten her life and that the child was at risk of being born with birth defects and addicted to morphine. Her response: "Let's go for it." This was romanticized as bravery.

That film was just a simple-minded tear-jerker. But it could have served some useful function. The parents of the young woman could have pointed out to her the wisdom of using birth-control devices. More than 3,000 teen-age girls become pregnant every day, it has been estimated, and of these, 42% have abortions. Yet the networks are terrified of the subject of birth control. They love presenting titillating sex stories, and refuse to accept advertising for contraceptives.

The power of television is often discussed, but can never be scientifically calibrated. No regulation can remove the possibility that some programming will lead to adverse social effects and even personal tragedies.

The most we can hope for is a sense of responsibility in those who make and control programming. Every time they err, especially in the pursuit of sensationalism and ratings, we should let them know, and loudly, so they can hear it over the din of the applause.

The Washington Post

Daily News 5/21/85

Dr. Geo. Gerbner
Dear
Annenberg School
U of Pa.
from Liz Smith

LIZ SMITH

Prince and Madonna—together at last

'TV DEPICTS a prosperous, white, middle-class world in which men outnumber women by 3 to 1; the very young and the very old are under-represented; complex problems are solved nightly by strong, violent action; and non-whites are generally shown as stereotypes attempting to upset the proper social order. The underlying message is that if you don't fit into this world—if you don't share in its prosperity or in its power structure—you are a lonely misfit and have only yourself to blame."

This is **Lars-Erik Nelson** commenting on work by **Dr. George Gerber**, dean of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania.

●

PRINCE'S No. 2 movie, to follow the popular "Purple Rain," will co-star **Madonna** (who is on the cover of Time

Ado About Nothing" ... to **Richard Riddell's** "Big River" lighting ... to the revival "Joe Egg" ... to **Whoopi Goldberg's** one-person show ... to the ensemble acting in "Balm in Gilead" ... to **Heidi Landesman's** set for "Big River" and to the sound design/music of a play for **John DiFusco**, "Tracers," **Nigel Hess**, "Much Ado About Nothing," as well as "Cyrano de Bergerac."

The committee also voted special awards to **Gerard Alessandrini** and "Forbidden Broadway" for a consistently high level of irreverence ... to the cast and crew of "The Mystery of Irma Vep" for their quick-change wizardry ... to **Claudette Colbert** and **Rex Harrison** for the continuing "Pleasure of Their Company" ... to Vetco for their courage and craft in "Tracers" in giving voice to the trauma of Vietnam.

The Drama Desk awards—they dare to be different!

6/1/85

Dear Jane & Liz
And Smith's Autumn.
You're not even a rock star.
Congratulations,

MS

NY Times 5/28/85

Scientists Stereotyped

PHILADELPHIA, May 27 (UPI) — Television's stereotype of the mad or eccentric scientist has made some viewers fearful of the future, researchers at the University of Pennsylvania said today.

Results of a survey of 1,600 viewers are to be presented to the American Assocation for the Advancement of Science, meeting in Los Angeles.

"Television entertainment is the main source of widely shared information about science and technology," said George Gerbner, dean of the university's Annenberg School of Communications. "We found that heavy television viewing enhances anxiety and inhibits appreciation of the benefits of science."

Image of scientists is hurt by TV, Penn survey finds

Television's stereotype of the mad or eccentric scientist has made some viewers fearful of the future, researchers at the University of Pennsylvania said yesterday.

A two-year, nationwide survey of 1,600 viewers by the university's Annenberg School of Communications found that television heightens public anxieties about science and scientists. "Heavy viewers surveyed on their impressions of scientists on TV were more likely to believe that they do dangerous work, don't have much fun, rarely engage in family life and were apt to have odd, peculiar personalities," said George Gerbner, dean of the school.

INQ 5-29-85

Scientists View Themselves in TV Hall of Mirrors

By SANDRA BLAKESLEE
Special to The New York Times

LOS ANGELES, May 29 — In the movies their deeds tend to hurt other people. In novels they wield strange forms of radiation. On prime-time television they have the highest mortality rate of any professional group, getting killed more often than soldiers, private detectives or police officers.

They are fictional scientists, and their image in popular literature, film and television was analyzed here Tuesday by real-life scientists attending the 151st meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

The multidisciplinary association has in its membership 136,000 scientists and engineers. About 15 of them showed up at a symposium on "Hollywood and Science," along with 150 other people whose work is associated with science.

Older and Stranger

Many powerful and lasting images about scientists reach the public through the entertainment media, said the symposium's organizer, Dr. Rae Goodell, an expert on mass communications at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. "Are they realistic?" she asked the panel, which included Leonard Nimoy, the actor who plays the scientist Mr. Spock on the "Star Trek" series.

According to the research of George Gerbner, dean of communications at the University of Pennsylvania, 7 out of 10 prime-time dramatic programs on television deal with science and technology. The average viewer sees 11 physicians and one or two scientists every week. Scientists on television are a bit older and "stranger" than other professionals. Many are foreign-born, and for every bad scientist in a major role there are five good ones.

Science, Dr, Gerbner said, is perilous. For every fictional scientist who fails, only two succeed. In contrast, for every doctor who fails, five succeed and for every law enforcer who fails, eight succeed. One in 10 scientists on prime time is killed, making their profession the most dangerous on the airwaves.

George Comstock and Ni Yang, scientists from Syracuse University, have been studying science and innovation as it appears in the movies. In looking at the content of more than 6,500 films, they reported that less than 4 percent of the movies made from 1938 to 1984 dealt with innovation in the plot.

On the other hand, Professor Comstock said, the movies are extremely fond of portraying the products of scientific achievement, the high-technology props in conventional spy, space and adventure stories.

Perhaps real innovation is so rare and demanding, he said, "it is something few people can identify with."

The consequences of what scientists do in the movies, Dr. Comstock said, are more often negative than positive, especially for innocent bystanders.

Fearful and Bizarre Events

The fictional scientist when exaggerated is likely to wield fearful rays that cause bizarre transformations or even resurrection, said Dr. Spencer R. Weart, head of the Center for the History of Physics at the American Institute of Physics in New York.

Invisible rays appeared throughout the comics and movie serials of the 1930's and the monster movies of the 1950's and are still being fired in the fantasy epics of children's animated television shows of the 1980's, he said, yet real science has not developed much in the way of ray weaponry.

"Rays are perceived as the power of science itself made visible," Dr. Weart said. The roots of the image can be traced far back in world culture. Whereas witches, sorcerers and mesmerizers once wielded it, today it is used by scientists. Popular culture exploits the psychological power of ray symbolism, he said, which may help explain popular attitudes toward nuclear power and laser weaponry.

Scientists make good villains because they are highly intelligent, said J. Ronald Milavsky, a vice president of the NBC network. But he said public opinion surveys indicated the public tended to trust rather than mistrust scientists.

Mr. Nimoy, the actor, said he sought out scientists in preparing ideas for science fiction movies. Gone are the days, he said, when "we can present a cigar-shaped spaceship that leaves a trail of smoke."

"We want to be credible," he said.

NYT 5-21-85

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NYT
5-30-85

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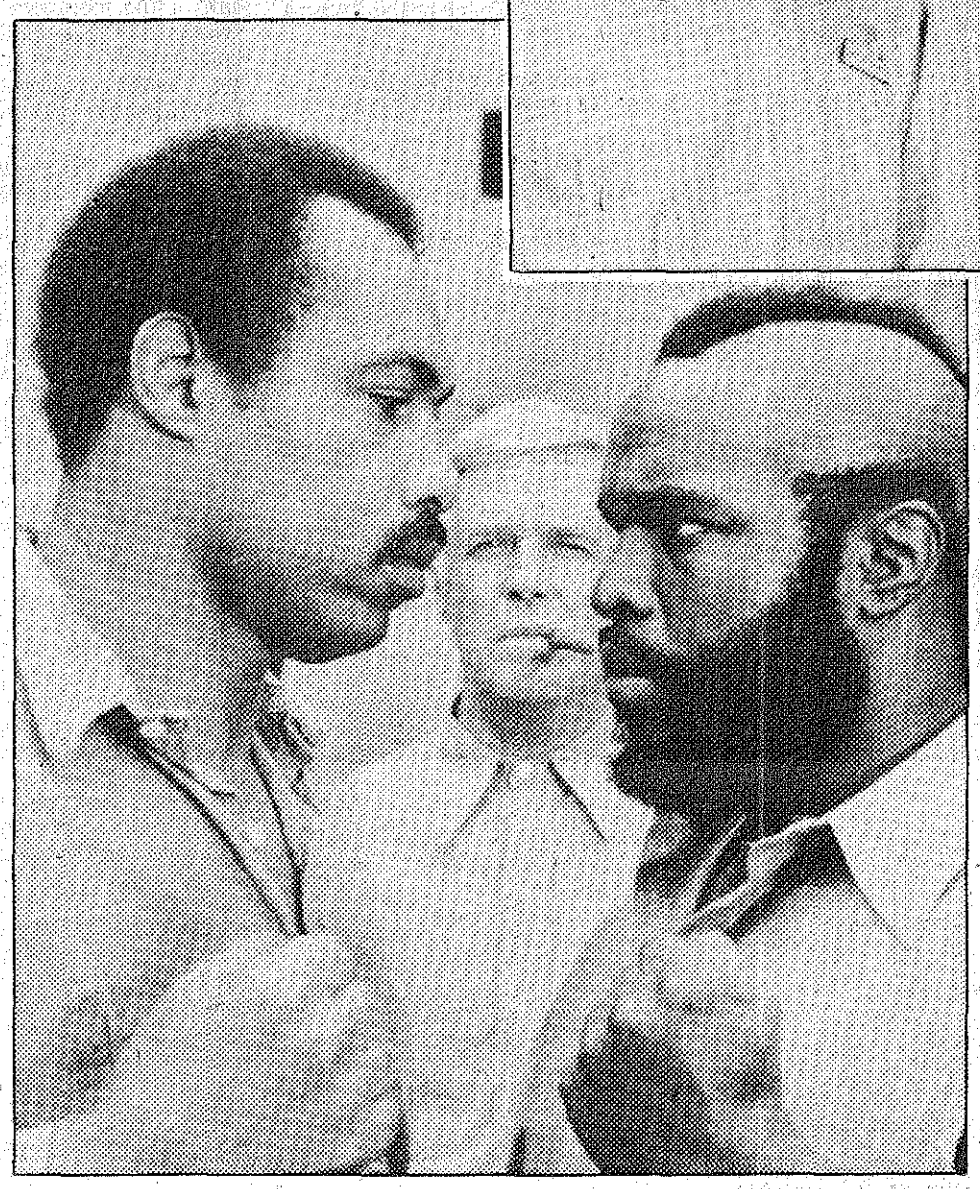
INQ 5-29-85

TV as a shaper of culture: life imitates unreality



The A Team is part of TV's preoccupation with crime. Top: Trapper John, MD. TV doctors are beyond reproach.

BY CHRISTOPHER REED

Mr. Reed is a San Francisco freelance writer.

SAN FRANCISCO

PROFESSOR George Gerbner, an authority on contemporary television, likes to quote the seventeenth-century Scottish thinker, Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun, who wrote: "If a man were permitted to make all the ballads, he need not care who should make the laws."

Dr. Gerbner's point is that the TV screen is now our balladeer, today's source of the stories, legends and characters that shaped earlier cultures. Yet because of the pervasiveness of TV, its influence on our attitudes may go beyond ephemeral politics and laws and into fundamental social dispositions.

Now Dean of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania, Dr. Gerbner has been studying TV for 17 years. His conclusions have been published mainly in academic journals, but his findings on North American TV society are provocative enough to interest a wider audience.

Even a casual student of the United States, puzzled by the paradoxes of Reaganism and the New Populism, the social beatification of the U.S. medical profession, or even why Americans have such slovenly eating habits, may turn to Dr. Gerbner for enlightenment. His may not be the last word, but he offers startling examples of life imitating artifice.

The popularity of so many exported U.S. TV shows and what some critics call U.S. cultural imperialism may also mean that many of his findings apply to the rest of the industrialized English-speaking world.

Dr. Gerbner's studies cover light viewers (those who watch up to two hours a day) and heavy viewers (four hours and above). Commercial TV's need for a vast audience pulls its content and its viewers toward mainstream blandness. Thus, heavy viewers tended to regard themselves as "average," "middle class" and politically "moderate" despite their actual status or opinions, Dr. Gerbner found.

In fact, these "moderates" were usually well to the right of what would normally be regarded as centrist on such social matters as race, minorities, personal rights, freedom of expression and law and order. This reflects TV's portrayal of the world as dangerous and nasty through its dramatization of crime and violence and obsession with disasters and mayhem.

Heavy viewers were not conservative on economics and social services, however. Here they demonstrated distrust of big government and resentment of taxes, yet they demand beneficial government services and the quick economic "fix".

Dr. Gerbner believes this stems from commercial TV's "mass mobilization of consumption". As a temple devoted to the glorification of instant gratification via its advertising, TV is bound to encourage fast and simple solutions to material desires.

The world on the small screen, and those who people it, are far from reality. Average viewers see 300 screen characters a week in prime time. They are portrayed in apparent realism, but bear little relation to their real-life counterparts or to the viewers' actual world.

Watchers see 30 police officers, seven lawyers, three judges, 12 nurses and 10 doctors a week, but only one engineer or scientist. Service or manual workers comprise 10 per cent of the screen cast but are 65 per cent of the real world. Men outnumber women on TV three to one.

The popular male age range is from 25 to 55, but for women 25 to 35. People under 18 are a third, and those over 65 a fifth of their actual presence in the U.S. population.

Violence is seen six times an hour in peak time, of which two incidents per evening are fatalities (so that in 10 years a heavy viewer will have seen about 7,000 screen deaths). Women and the elderly, although actually under-represented in comparison with reality, are disproportionately the victims. Young white males occur most often in violent scenes, but are least likely to be victims — the opposite of the real world where they are the most likely — after young black males — to be injured or killed.

Since this is TV's version of mainstream reality, no wonder heavy viewers believe they are moderates and no wonder their opinions are conservative. TV violence contributes to apprehension and increased support of right-wing "law and order" campaigns.

Aggravating the anxiety is the medium's preoccupation with crime — among the week's 300 characters are 23 criminals and crime is at least 10 times more frequent on the screen than in life. Nor are children spared: during their weekend daytime programs, the "kid-vid ghetto," as advertisers call it, there are 18 violent acts an hour.

A curious side-effect of the violence is the role of medicine. Screen violence rarely causes pain or suffering and never seems to need medical attention. On the average, only 6 to 7 per cent of major characters require treatment.

Nevertheless, the doctors are beyond reproach: fewer than 4 per cent are shown as evil — half the percentage shown in other professions. Doctors are also characterized as fairer, more sociable and warmer than other characters and are rated as more intelligent, more rational and more stable and fair than the (female) nurses. The MD "symbolizes power, authority and knowledge and possesses an almost uncanny ability to dominate and control the lives of others".

If this helps to explain the demi-god status of physicians, the daytime soap operas must contribute to what strikes many foreigners as rampant U.S. hypochondria.

Nearly half of all soap opera characters are involved in health-related occurrences. Half the pregnancies end in miscarriage and 16 per cent in the mother's death. Health is the most frequently discussed topic. The second most common location in the soaps is a doctor's surgery.

This preoccupation with health could have something to do with the TV characters' reckless attitude toward it. On most shows, seatbelts are rarely used and few safety precautions are taken at work. Eating, drinking or talking about food occur nine times an hour in peak time, yet characters almost always remain sober — and slim.

TV may explain why Americans eat and drink in public so much — gobbling and gulping junk food and sticky drinks while going up in elevators, driving cars, or shopping. TV people eat on the run all the time (one commercial shows two men eating pizzas while practicing basketball) and scenes of families sitting down to a balanced dinner hardly ever appear in the shows. Dr. Gerbner links this constant snacking with an attempt to resolve frustration, a point echoed by U.S. dieticians, who constantly warn the overweight millions against compulsive eating.

Junk food is much advertised on TV, of course, but Dr. Gerbner believes the programs are "worse" than the commercials.

As the advertising criterion for TV's content is cost per 1,000 viewers, rather than pure income from commercials, TV shows may be put together with little concern for quality or accuracy in the infinite quest for the impossible: a show costing nothing but seen by everyone.

"We are only now discovering our environment of symbols and messages," says Dr. Gerbner, "rather than in the conventional sense of our surroundings — and only now realizing that, as with other things, these are also mass-produced. We should alert our citizens to this... Perhaps what we need most now is a prime-time program alerting viewers to the hidden political messages behind the messages they know about."

Simpler might be a warning like the one now carried on cigaret packets, to precede a soap-opera or prime-time drama: "This show may turn you into a neurotic right-winger."

TV doesn't serve science well

The Penn Paper 5/30/85

By Jan Snyder

Television heightens public anxieties about science and scientists with foreboding images of the future, according to a Penn study that surveyed 1,600 viewers across the nation.

Heavy TV viewers—even those who watch science documentaries and read magazines about science—are influenced by dramatic presentations portraying scientific endeavors as risky and dangerous, said researchers at the Annenberg School of Communications.

Results of this two-year study, which was funded by the National Science Foundation, were released Tuesday, May 28 in Los Angeles at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

"Television entertainment is the main source of widely shared information about science and technology," said Dr. George Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School and senior author of the report. "We found that heavy television viewing enhances anxiety and inhibits appreciation of the benefits of science."

Gerbner said the effects of prime-time TV dramas were most apparent in higher-income, college-educated individuals who would otherwise be more positive about science.

Science and technology appear in seven out of 10 entertainment programs broadcast during prime time, according to the researchers' analysis of program content. Watching these programs appears to cultivate critical attitudes toward science and scientists even though the characters and plots are not necessarily negative, Gerbner said.

"Scientific work on television may be risky and dangerous, but it isn't all bad and, contrary to stereotypes, certainly not 'mad,'" he explained. "It is only when scientists are compared to other professionals that they appear less favorable."

For instance, scientists are rarely portrayed as villainous, with an average of five "good" scientists for each "bad" one. But in comparison, for every "bad" law enforcer there are 40 who are "good," the researchers found.

Also, scientists' rate of success in their work pales in comparison to other professions. For every scientist in a major role who fails, two succeed. But for every law-enforcer who fails, eight succeed.

Although other jobs, like police work, are commonly associated with peril, 10 percent of TV's scientists are killed, giving them the highest fatal casualty rate of all occupational groups on television.

Television scientists are usually white males who are a bit older and often more eccentric than other professionals. More of them are of foreign nationality as well.

"Heavy viewers surveyed on their impressions of scientists on TV were more likely to believe that they do dangerous work, don't have much fun, rarely engage in family life, and are apt to have odd, peculiar personalities," Gerbner said.

Most respondents said that, all things considered, science is more promising than threatening. However, the heaviest TV viewers frequently expressed concerns that science creates more problems than solutions.

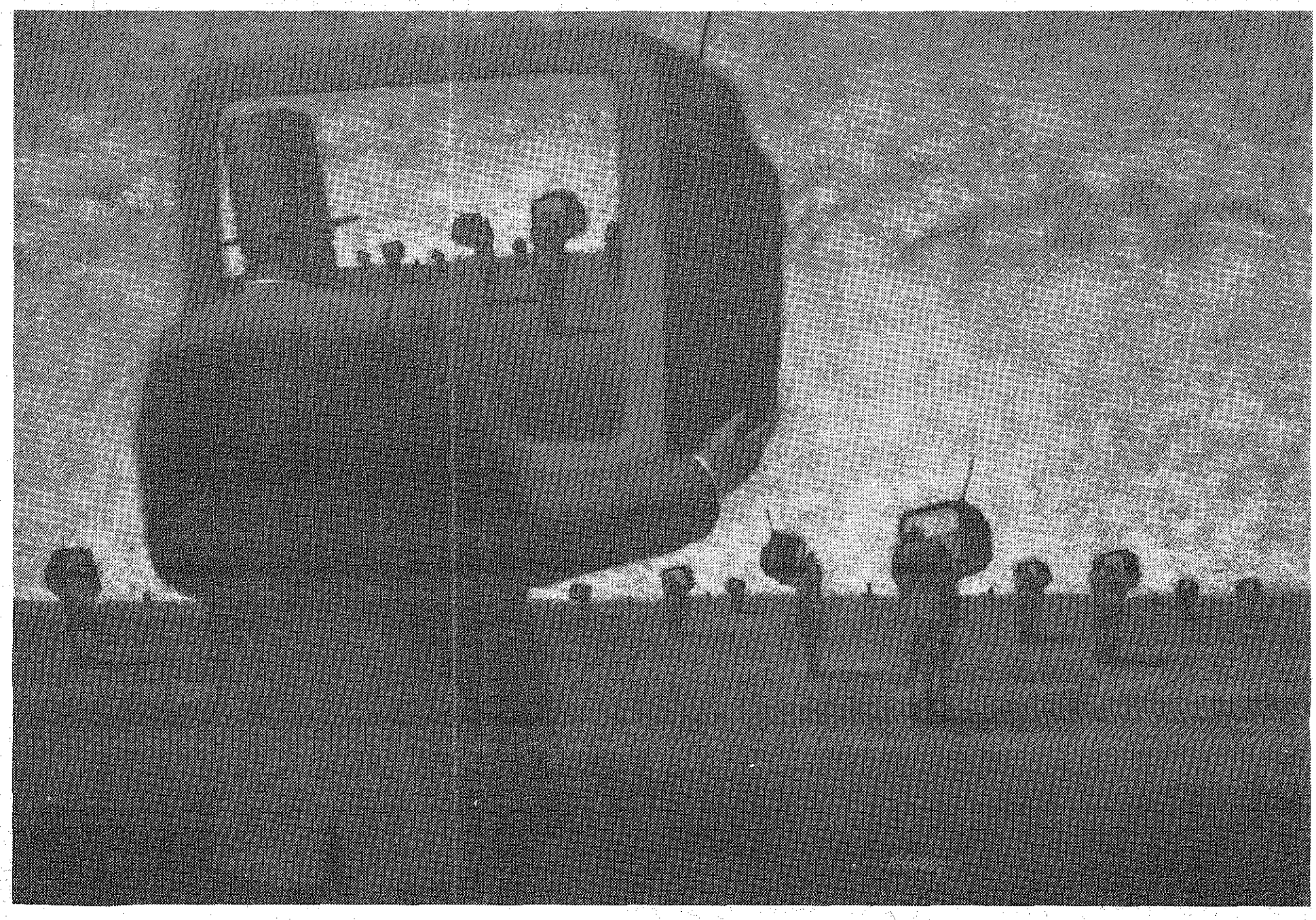
"One of those 'problems' may be nuclear power plants," Gerbner explained, "since heavy viewers are more critical of them."

"Space exploration is also in disfavor. We found that heavy viewers, regardless of their gender, age, or educational level, would spend less money on it."

The report concludes, "Television's contribution to popular conceptions of science and scientists blends with other social and cultural influences into a mainstream that tends to be more critical and negative than the views of comparable groups that watch less television."

VIDEOCULTURE 1

TV — for better or worse, a window on the world



Series by Rushworth M. Kidder / Illustration by Rob Colvin

IN the summer of 1938, the American essayist E. B. White first saw the flickering image on a small television screen. That fall, with characteristic prescience, he described in Harper's magazine its significance.

"I believe television is going to be the test of the modern world," he wrote, "and that in this new opportunity to see beyond the range of our vision we shall discover either a new and unbearable disturbance of the general peace, or a saving radiance in the sky. We shall stand or fall by television — of this I am quite sure."

Forty-seven years later — and exactly 50 years after broadcast television began in Berlin in 1935 — White's dilemma is still with us.

For some, television is indeed "a saving radiance in the sky" — the most wide-reaching communications medium ever developed, able to knit cultures as never before. For others, it is "an unbearable disturbance of the general peace," rending the fabrics of home, school, church, the political process, and everything else it touches.

On several things, however, the two sides agree:

It is a medium of unprecedented impact — easily capable of reaching hundreds of millions of people with the same message at the same exact moment.

It involves an industry which, in the United States last year, garnered more than $18.8 billion in estimated advertising revenues and on which American viewers spent well over 200 billion hours.

It has at its heart an object — the television set — so commonplace that more American homes have one than have indoor plumbing.

And it is just now undergoing profound change — through the development of cable technology and videocassette recorders, through the shift toward governmental deregulation, and through the increasing sophistication of audiences.

WHAT, broadly considered, is the impact of television on American culture?

From dozens of interviews in the past two months with broadcast executives, academic researchers, media reform proponents, government regulators, television journalists, educators, clerics, and specialists in various kinds of television production and broadcasting, these points emerge:

- Although public television has a vital role to play as a balance to the networks, broadcast television remains primarily a commercial phenomenon, largely guided by financial, not aesthetic or social, criteria.
- New developments — high-definition pictures, stereo broadcasting, digital transmission — will greatly upgrade the technical quality of TV in the next decade. But programming, barring the unforeseen, may remain pretty much as it now is.
- Television, unlike print, favors movement over stillness, simplification over complexity, specificity over abstraction, personality over conceptualization, and the present over both past and future. It is at its best in moments of shared national experience — the first walk on the moon, the funeral of Anwar Sadat, the 1984 Olympics — and at its worst when it tries to explain complex conceptual issues.
- Some of the most serious complaints against television relate to its supposed effects on children — its portrayal of violence and sensuality, its impact on reading scores and reasoning abilities, its shortening of attention spans, its encouragement of passivity,

First of five parts. Tomorrow: Television's impact on the family.

'Television was supposed to be a national park — a great resource to be used for the public good.' Instead, 'it has become a money-machine.'

— Fred W. Friendly

and its commercialism. Yet it has undoubtedly helped children, especially those from minority backgrounds, to learn English, gain some basic computational skills, and broaden their experience.

● Despite criticism, there is little enthusiasm for censorship, given the widely felt need to protect First Amendment freedoms.

● Finally, research on the social impact of television is notoriously difficult to conduct. Because it is expensive, it is hard to find funding sources that have no vested interest in the results. And because television is so widespread, there are virtually no "non-television communities" to use as control groups.

TELEVISION," laments Columbia University media guru Fred W. Friendly, "was supposed to be a national park" — a great resource to be used for the public good. Instead, he says, "It has become a money-machine."

Citing last month's sale of an independent Los Angeles station, KTLA-TV, to the Tribune Company for $510 million — thought to be the largest sum ever paid for a television station — he complains that "it's a commodity now, just like pork bellies."

It's a point that draws wide agreement. Both critics and proponents of the peculiarly American structure of commercial television (in most other nations, television is entirely or largely supported and operated by the state) note that the financial structure of the medium, perhaps more than any other factor, shapes television's effect on American culture.

Even supporters of that structure note that the goal of commercial television is not to deliver programs to the viewer. It is to deliver viewers to advertisers — who have been known to pay more than $1 million a minute for commercial time. The networks, says TV Guide correspondent Neil Hickey, are "not in the news business, they're not in the entertainment business, they're not in the sports business — they are in the time-selling business."

George Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania and one of the nation's foremost researchers on the social effects of television, agrees. "The product is not the production," he says. "The product is the delivery of the largest number of people at the least cost."

As a result, he explains, scriptwriters and producers "get no reward for quality." He adds that "the way the institution is set up, there is no premium, there is no special reward, for quality."

Not surprisingly, television producer Lee Rich disagrees. As executive producer of "The Waltons" and president of the company (Lorimar Inc.) that produced last month's CBS miniseries "Christopher Columbus," he sees commercial television as the only place where substantial funds for production are available. "I think it's overcommercialized," he concedes, "but I don't know what to do about it. I think we just have to bear it, because nobody else is paying for it."

Brian Winston, a British sociologist and former television producer, whose books "Bad News" and "More Bad News" provide detailed studies of television news, takes an even sterner view.

Mr. Winston takes issue with the notion that TV programming is "concocted by cigar-chomping Philistines of one sort or another whose only interest is in making bucks" — and who must therefore be "resisted as an alien imposition on what would otherwise be the natural good taste of the community." Such an attitude is an "unreconstructed elitist view" and "ignorant nonsense," says Mr. Winston, who currently teaches film at New York University.

By its very nature, he says, television is not an elite medium, like books, but a popular one that traces its historical roots to the penny press, the fairground booth, and vaudeville.

IS the *quality* of TV programming, then, the point? From his unique perch as president of the Public Broadcasting Service, Bruce Christensen thinks it is: "We're not driven by the highest ratings, although we want to know people are out there. Our concern is for the quality of the program and its importance to society."

According to dean Gerbner of the Annenberg School, however, a concern for artistic quality entirely misses the point of mass television. Television watching, for him, is not an intellectual act but "a ritual."

His own studies of "heavy viewers" — those who watch for more than four hours a day and constitute the majority of television users — convince him that there are profound differences between "television culture" and "book culture."

Book readers, he says, exercise great selectivity over their reading materials, and they exercise great concentration. Heavy viewers, on the other hand, absorb television "like the wallpaper" in more offhand ways and tend to "watch by the clock and not by the program."

In his view, this "mass ritual" is not entirely bad. Such viewers, he says, have never been in the book culture. For them, "television is an enormous enrichment to cultural horizons," which brings them "into the mainstream of our political, social, and cultural life."

Despite all the hype of the ratings and the attention paid to heavy viewers, however, editor Les Brown of the highly regarded Channels magazine offers a different view. It may be true, he says, that "tonight 90 million people will be watching television at 9 o'clock."

"But 140 million people *won't* be watching," he adds, "and that's not counted a negative vote, that's called *neutral*.

"It's the television junkies voting tonight for our popular culture," says Mr. Brown, "and our not watching is not considered a protest." ■

What the numbers mean

THE figures are staggering. In 1984, 84.9 million American households (98 percent of them) had television sets. They kept them in use 7 hours and 8 minutes a day, making television-watching far and away the most popular leisure-time activity ever.

Even if those households had only one person watching for those seven-plus hours — a very conservative estimate — the American public would have invested 217 billion hours before its sets last year. That's more than double the number of hours spent by the American armed forces in fighting World War II for a full year.

But how accurate are the numbers, and how are they generated?

The primary source of audience statistics is the A. C. Nielsen Company in Northbrook, Ill., a market-research firm founded in 1923. In 1940, it began issuing radio-program ratings generated by an "Audimeter" — which, when attached to a radio, recorded whether it was on or off and to which station it was tuned.

Today, Audimeters are wired to the television sets of 1,700 "Nielsen"

Please see **RATINGS** next page

Can UHF and LPTV compete with DBS and MMDS on my VCR?
Making sense of TV technology's alphabet soup

For many Americans, *television* still means *broadcast television:* over-the-air programs supplied by the three commercial networks (CBS, NBC, ABC), the federally funded Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), or the nation's 654 VHF (very high frequency) and 552 UHF (ultra high frequency) operating stations.

From 1940 (when NBC broadcast America's first network television program) until the mid-'70s, that was essentially correct. A decade ago, however, two major developments in the distribution system began a shift that has had profound consequences:

● **VCRs.** In 1975, Sony introduced the Betamax, a videocassette recorder (VCR) that allowed viewers to record programs off the air or play recorded tapes. Selling originally in the $1,300 range, VCRs are now available for less than $200. The result: Nearly 1 American home in 5 already has one, and estimates are that by 1990 the VCR "penetration" will reach 50 percent. In 1984, Americans bought more than 100 million blank videocassettes, probably using most of them to "time shift" programs for later viewing.

What worries broadcasters, however, is not time-shifting. It's the growth of rentals and sales of videotaped programs by video shops. Dealing in everything from operas and Hollywood movies to self-help programs and pornography, this fledgling video-shop business posted an impressive $1.6 billion in revenues in 1984 — nearly one-fifth of the advertising revenues ($8.2 billion) earned by the networks last year.

● **Cable.** In 1976, Home Box Office persuaded viewers to begin paying for television — by distributing movies directly to the home by means of a cable connecting the television set with a "head-end" distribution point. With that came the surge of growth of cable television, which also provided subscribers with clear reception and a choice of up to 120 channels. Cable, with basic monthly charges averaging $8.92 in 1984, now reaches more than 42 percent of the nation's homes and last year generated revenues of $7.5 billion.

Both cable and VCR, by significantly improving viewers' freedom of choice over what and when they watch, have substantially cut the networks' share of the prime-time audience. In November 1979, for example, the networks took 91 percent of that audience; by last November, that figure had fallen to 85 percent for broadcast-only homes — and it was down to 68 percent for homes with cable.

Meanwhile, other new technologies have developed:

Please see **TECHNOLOGY** next page

'85?

THE TEN BEST CENSORED STORIES OF THE YEAR

Project Censored reports on the big national stories the news media didn't cover

A

BY TIM REDMOND

Late in December 1983, a Mexican electrician named Vicente Sotelo hauled some old medical equipment out of a warehouse and sold it for $10 to a scrap metal dealer in Juarez. Neither Sotelo nor the operators of the Jonke Fenix junkyard realized that the rusted machinery had been used to administer radiation therapy to cancer patients, and that enough Cobalt-60 was tucked inside to kill hundreds and hundreds of people.

Sotelo began to dismantle the equipment before he even reached the scrap dealer, dislodging in the process roughly 1,000 radioactive pellets into the back of his pickup truck. At the junkyard, the tungsten wheel containing at least 5,000 more pinhead-sized pellets was tossed about by a huge electromagnet suspended from a crane, scattering the pellets across the yard. In the next few weeks, more than 700 tons of radioactive steel made its way through a Mexican foundry and into the United States.

It was by far the worst radioactive spill in the history of North America. According to *Science* magazine, some 200 people in Juarez, many of them children, received a lethal dose of radiation. Thousands more have been exposed to the contaminated steel, and it may be decades before the extent of the damage is fully known.

If that information comes as a surprise to you, you aren't alone. The Juarez accident is one of the ten major news stories censored by the national media in 1984, according to a news media watchdog group.

Since 1976, Project Censored, the brainchild of Sonoma State University communications Professor Carl Jensen, has published an annual guide to the most important stories that received the least attention by

major newspapers, wire services and network broadcasters. The project demonstrates the staggering power of the mass news media to manipulate public perceptions by controlling the flow of information to millions of Americans.

Jensen's mass communications students sifted through hundreds of nominations for "Censored" stories — exposes, investigations, news reports and events covered by local newspapers and magazines but never picked up by the national news media. A panel of prominent national media observers selects the ten top stories the major news media wouldn't touch, plus 15 runners-up (see sidebars).

The 1985 selections tend to contradict the Reagan administration claim of a "liberal bias" in the national media. In fact, the Project Censored judges found that the national media ignored or downplayed a number of important stories critical of the administration, and in more than one instance squelched reports that might have changed the course of the 1984 elections.

The selections also point to the growing chill of multimillion dollar libel suits by public figures such as William Westmoreland and Sen. Paul Laxalt of Nevada.

Here, then, are the details of the ten top "censored" stories of 1984:

1. The Well-Publicized Soviet Military Buildup Was a Lie.

Two little-known but highly authoritative defense industry journals published reports in 1984 showing that Reagan administration officials intentionally distorted the size of Soviet military expenditures and lied about the Soviet arms buildup. The stories in *Aviation Week* and *Space Technology and Defense Monitor* showed that:

- In 1983, the Central Intelligence Agency revised downward its estimate of Soviet military strength. Between 1976 and 1981, the CIA estimates showed, the Soviet Union made no significant increase in military spending and its arsenal increased in size by only 2%. In the same period, the U.S. military was growing at a rate of 4% a year, a rate that has since increased to more than 9%. The administration justified that massive buildup by claiming it was a response to increased military spending by the Soviets.

"Like the bomber and missile 'gaps' of the past that later proved illusory," the Project Censored judges said, "we now find . . . that Moscow has not been expanding its effort at the rapid rate that was once believed."

- The CIA estimates the size of Soviet military expenditures by computing what Soviet military equipment would cost if it had been built and purchased in the U.S., using American dollars and U.S. defense contractors' prices. It's no surprise that this often leads to massive overestimations of the real cost of Soviet weapons systems. For example, the Project Censored judges explained, "the CIA asks a U.S. corporation to compute what it would cost to build a new T-72 tank, a figure which even the CIA admits has very little to do with how much the item costs the Soviet government."

2. Reagan's Attacks on Civil Liberties

In 1917, at the urging of President Woodrow Wilson, Congress passed the Espionage Act, which later sent hundreds of Americans to prison for opposing World War I. In 1940, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Smith Act, under which even more Americans went to prison for opposing World War II. In 1950, President Truman's Internal Security Act provided the legal means to send still more citizens to prison for their opposition to military intervention in Korea.

In 1984, President Reagan proposed a series of bills that together would have criminalized domestic opposition to U.S. intervention in the Third World and authorized FBI investigations of legal political activity. The bills, which went largely unreported by the news media, would have given the secretary of state the right to determine unilaterally which groups or governments are "terrorists," based on their "acts or likely acts." The legislation would have forbidden anyone charged under it from challenging the secretary of state's designation.

Only The Guardian, a national left weekly published in New York, and the Wall Street Journal reported on either of the two bills, HR 5613 and S. 2626, the Project Censored panel said. "If successful," the panel concluded, "Reagan's efforts to curtail the people's right to dissent could eaily pave the way for our intervention in Central America or elsewhere."

3. Nicaragua's Fair Elections

Virtually every major newspaper, broadcast network and newsmagazine in the United States ran slanted and unfair accounts of the 1984 Nicaraguan elections. The impression carried to the American public was precisely what the Reagan administration had tried to claim: that the ruling Sandinistas rigged the election, censored dissent and prevented opposition parties from participating.

That, Project Censored said, could not be further from the truth. A report in the small-circulation journal *Christianity and Crisis,* titled "What Really Happened on November 4th?" explains in detail how the Sandinista party went to extraordinary lengths to ensure fair elections and give the Nicaraguan opposition every opportunity to gain seats in the National Assembly.

"Had the Sandinistas wanted to 'rig the election,'" the judges said, "they would have chosen the United States' version of representative democracy in which the 'winner-take-all' format would have given the Sandinistas virtually all of the seats in the Assembly. Instead, the proportional form of representation was chosen, based on Western European models . . . this method actually favors the opposition and supports the means to form political power bases at the national level, something the American political system thwarts."

4. The CIA and the Death Squads

More than 20 years ago, during the Kennedy administration, CIA operatives began to recruit, train and finance a pair of organizations in El Salvador known as ORDEN and ANSENAL. Despite the passage of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1974, which outlawed the ex-

penditure of U.S. funds for "law enforcement forces of any foreign government, or any program of internal intelligence or surveillance on behalf of any foreign government," the CIA has continued to train and support the leaders of the two organizations.

Although most U.S. citizens have not heard the names ORDEN or ANSENAL, nearly everyone is familiar with the organizations the two have fostered, equipped and controlled: the notorious Salvadoran "Death Squads."

The continuing illegal role of the CIA in supporting the death squads was reported by *The Progressive* in May 1984. No other major news media outlets have seen fit to repeat the charges or to investigate on their own, according to Project Censored. "If this information were widely disseminated," the panel stated, "public outcry could force a reassessment of CIA policy in El Salvador and help restore honesty in our government, beyond the rhetoric of freedom."

5. Worst Radiation Spill In North America Still Spreading

"The 6th anniversary of Three Mile Island, March 28th, 1985, received more U.S. press attention than the worst radiation spill in North America, which is slowly killing more than 200 Mexican citizens," according to the Project Censored judges.

The grisly tale was first reported in the March 1984 issue of *Science*, the journal of the National Association for the Advancement of Science. The Guardian picked up the tale in June 1984, as did It's About Times, the bimonthly newspaper of the Abalone Alliance. But, curiously, the hideous accident never found its way into the national media.

In fact, the only publicity even remotely related to the accident occurred when the Nuclear Regulatory Commission discovered that several hundred tons of contaminated steel had been used for kitchen table legs and reinforcement beams sold in the United States. But that "brief flurry" died down, the Project Censored panel said, after NRC officials claimed all the contaminated tables were discovered and returned to Mexico.

"What is now known," the panel said, "is that sixty junkyard employees are expected to die of cancer or leukemia, and an estimated 200 other citizens in Juarez are also expected to die or display signs of leukemia within the next few years. And the crisis isn't over, for not all of the spilled material has been accounted for, and some Mexicans are still being irradiated unknowingly."

6. The Red Herring of 'Left-wing' Terrorism

On Aug. 5, 1984, the Italian magazine *L'Espresso* reported charges by the head of Italy's national security agency that the United States was allowing the most-wanted terrorist in the world, Stephano Delle Ciaie, to operate unmolested throughout the western hemisphere. Ciaie, one of the principals in the bombing of a Bologna railway station in 1980, "makes Carlos the Jackal look like a pacifist," according to the Project Censored team.

But Ciaie is a right-wing terrorist, and to the Reagan administration and much of the U.S. news media, only leftists qualify for the "terrorist" label. *Covert Action Information Bulletin*, a quarterly magazine, reported on the right-wing "fascist network" in the fall of 1984 in an article including the information from *L'Espresso*, as well as five other blatant examples of right-wing terrorism that have been all but ignored by the U.S. news media.

"Since the closing days of World War II, the United States has attacked 'left-wing' terrorism while supporting 'right-wing' terrorism around the world as a means of fighting Communism," the Project Censored experts concluded.

7. The Tragedy of Transkei

South African apartheid is very much in the news these days. But largely ignored is one of its most devastating effects: the mass deportation of thousands of blacks to a harsh, dry wasteland incapable of sustaining its growing population. The African drought that brought the Ethiopian famine to millions of American TV viewers in the past year has caused equal devastation in Transkei, the "independent homeland" on the eastern coast of South Africa. Yet few in the U.S. news media have bothered to report the misery and famine that the South African government is struggling to keep secret.

The Project Censored panel said the effects of this news media blackout will be devastating: "Unless immediate action is taken," the panel reported, "the blacks forced into Transkei surely will die. Starvation and malnutrition will claim the young and old first, then work on the survivors. Finally, Pretoria won't have to worry about world opinion any more, for it will have achieved the ultimate goal of its separatist movement — genocide."

8. 1984 Arrived While The Press Slept

Throughout 1984, The New York Times and Washington Post reported on the demise of NSDD-84, President Reagan's National Security Directive that would require the use of lie detectors and impose lifetime censorship on federal employees. The reports, however, were premature. By the end of 1984, the Reagan administration had put in place the largest censoring apparatus ever known in the United States.

Also in 1984, the American Civil Liberties Union joined Barry Goldwater and the CIA pushing for the passage of a bill that would free the CIA from the scrutiny of the Fredom of Information Act.

Angus Mackenzie, an associate at the San Francisco-based Center for Investigative Reporting, published accounts of both NSDD-84 and the bizarre ACLU-CIA union, but none of the major news media picked up the information. In fact, Mackenzie told the Bay Guardian, the Washington Post rejected one of his stories, saying the information was inaccurate. "It's amazing," Mackenzie said. "Everybody has been walking around saying NSDD-84 is dead, and that's simply not the truth."

"While columnists debated the 'relative' veracity of George Orwell's predictions for 1984," the Project Censored panel said, "Ronald Reagan seized the initiative, tore up the Bill of Rights and flushed it down the toilet with an audacity that would have flabbergasted Orwell. And the press missed the story."

9. Three Stories That Might Have Changed the Course of the 1984 Elections

In the months before the 1984 elections, several ma-

jor stories surfaced that might have changed the way the voters viewed the Reagan administration. None of them received nationwide publicity, however, and Reagan swept into office again in a landslide.

The stories all involved Reagan's top associates and political appointments: Ed Meese, his nominee for attorney general; Sen. Paul Laxalt, his best friend in Congress and head of his re-election effort; and Charles Z. Wick, his friend and director of the U.S. Information Agency.

Meese, as Paul Rauber reported in the Bay Guardian, confirmed during testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee that he had directed the California National Guard in the late 1960s — and thus had been the head of a major covert operation designed to crush the movement against the Vietnam War. Rauber revealed that Meese was directly in charge of the California operations of the Garden Plot/Cable Splicer programs, which gathered computerized files on 18,000 U.S. citizens. Laxalt, meanwhile, used a $250 million libel lawsuit against the Sacramento Bee to scare the major media away from publishing information about his alleged ties to organized crime in Las Vegas. And all the major news media ignored a report by *Mother Jones* on the rash of abuses at Wick's nursing homes in Southern California.

10. The Myth of the 'Peaceful Atom'

When the Israeli government bombed a nuclear reactor in Iraq a few years ago, it argued that the Arab state was using the by-products of the reactor to develop nuclear weapons — a clear violation of international law, embodied in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. "The same thinking would suggest that the next target for Israeli bombers might well be Great Britain," the Project Censored panel reported.

Specifically, the panel cited a series of reports in British newspapers, none of which received attention in the United States, that clearly showed how the U.S. and Britain had systematically violated the treaty and how both nations are now using plutonium produced in and for civilian reactors to manufacture nuclear bombs.

In fact, the British press reported, the former director of Britain's Central Electricity Generating Board now admits that this is the case. When told of assertions by British officials that no civilian plutonium is used for nuclear weapons, the director, Lord Christopher Hinton, replied: "I am absolutely certain that statement is incorrect. They shouldn't tell such bloody lies."

Story? What story?

Most major newspapers celebrate the end of each year with lists of the ten biggest news stories of the previous 12 months. But neither of the daily papers in San Francisco has published the Project Censored information, and bureau chiefs at local United Press International and Associated Press bureaus say they don't think they'll cover it, either.

"I think we did get a press release on it," Marty Thompson, AP's bureau chief, told the Bay Guardian. "I don't think we'll do anything, though. I'm not sure it's a local story."

"I haven't seen anything on it," explained Dick Harnett at UPI. "I think we might have covered it once, a few years back, though."

Neither AP nor UPI picked up on the three local stories that made the list, either. Richard Reynolds, promotion director for *Mother Jones*, told the Bay Guardian he sent advance copies of the Charles Z. Wick story to the Los Angeles Times, AP, UPI and every major TV network, but "nobody ever called us."

"It was one of those stories nobody seemed to want to pick up," Reynolds said.

The local wire services had ample access to the Bay Guardian's report on Ed Meese, and Harnett even remembers the piece. "As far as I could tell, though, it was old news," he said. "All of this stuff happened ten or 15 years ago. I'm not sure we should stick somebody with that sort of stuff this far down the line."

And, according to the publishers of the three local stories, neither the Examiner, the Chronicle nor any other local paper picked up any of the articles, although the Oakland Tribune did run an op-ed piece detailing the Meese charges.

'It boggles the mind'

Mackenzie, who has spent years reporting on domestic surveillance and freedom of information issues, told the Bay Guardian he still can't believe the media ignored NSDD-84. "The misinformation is amazing," he said. "People kept telling me the document had been rescinded. Reporters, lawyers, nobody seemed to realize this is happening."

Mackenzie said the most frightening aspect of the measure is that "it's aimed directly at the press. The idea is to stop 'leaks' — that means bureaucrats who happen to talk to a reporter. For the media to miss such a calculated attack on the media — it boggles the mind."

Mackenzie claimed the coverage of his piece on NSDD-84 was "absolutely zero." In fact, he said, The New York Times ran several stories claiming that the directive had been rescinded. "Somebody wrote them a letter to the editor and quoted a story of mine, and they ran that letter. But they haven't changed their tune, and they've never sorted it all out," he said.

Harnett said he hadn't seen either of Mackenzie's stories, the piece on NDSS-84 or the Mediafile article on the ACLU and CIA. "I don't get the dang thing," he said of Mediafile. "I really should."

Laxalt and libel

Most of the "Censored" stories for 1984 involve indirect censorship — in other words, the media decided not to pursue them. In at least one case, however, two major TV networks, CBS and ABC, actively decided to squelch a story involving Sen. Paul Laxalt and organized crime in Las Vegas.

According to a Village Voice account dated March 12, 1985, Mike Wallace, senior corespondent for *60 Minutes*, the top-rated CBS news magazine, had bragged publicly in September 1984 that the segment on Laxalt would "possibly change the course of the November elections."

ABC's *World News Tonight* was also onto the story, which revolved around Joseph Yablonsky, former

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head of the FBI's Las Vegas office and a renowned expert on the mob. Both stories were scheduled to go on the air between Sept. 21st and Sept. 23rd. Neither of them ever aired.

The death of the Laxalt story was due either to vicious competition between the arch-rival networks, or to fear of Laxalt's libel lawyers, or both, depending on whom you ask. According to Lowell Bergman, the *60 Minutes* producer who worked with Wallace on the story, Yablonsky himself helped kill the piece. In fact, Bergman told the Bay Guardian, Yablonsky's on-camera testimony was virtually all that *60 Minutes* had on Laxalt that hadn't already been in at least one major daily newspaper.

"The whole story was based on a collection of information that had been in the Wall Street Journal and other places," Bergman explained. "But with the election coming up, we thought people ought to know about this guy who was heading the president's re-election campaign."

Yablonsky had promised Wallace an exclusive interview, but as the airdate for the show approached, Bergman said, CBS staffers began to hear word that the former FBI agent had broken his promise.

"We had reports that he was talking to ABC News," Bergman said. "We asked him, and he denied it. But eventually, he admitted he'd spoken to ABC."

Credibility or cowardess?

According to the Village Voice, Wallace demanded that *60 Minutes* pull the segment as soon as he heard that Yablonsky had not kept his word. Bergman said the situation was less dramatic. "Basically, we went on hold," he said. "As far as we were concerned, the guy had damaged his credibility by lying to us. We decided to wait and see whether ABC News went with the piece."

Before either network showed its hand, however, Laxalt's lawyers got into the act. On Sept. 20th, the Voice reported, Seymour Shainswit, Laxalt's New York attorney, hand-delivered letters to both networks, threatening a libel suit if the allegations against his client went on the air. That same day, according to the Voice, *60 Minutes* Executive Producer Don Hewitt called ABC President Roone Arledge, and both executives agreed to scrap the programs.

Bergman said the threat of libel was not the overriding issue. However, he told the Bay Guardian, the fact that Laxalt had filed a $250 million suit against the McClatchy Newspapers for publishing similar stories did not escape his attention. "Mike Wallace has stated several times that the McClatchy suit was a shot across our bow," Bergman said.

C.K. McClatchy agrees. In a signed column published in September 1984, the owner of the McClatchy papers, which include the Sacramento, Fresno and Modesto Bees, stated that Laxalt had filed the suit solely to deter the rest of the media from pursuing the story.

Suppression of Information

The Laxalt story may be unusual in this year's collection of "Censored" stories, although if libel suits continue at their current rate, the projects judges will have their hands full of similar tales in the years to come. Meanwhile, Jensen is sticking to his original definition of "censorship," drafted when he began his project nearly a decade ago. It makes clear both the limitations of such a term, and the crucial implications any form of self-censorship has on a democratic society.

"If the public does not receive all the information it needs to make informed decisions," the statement reads, "some form of news blackout or censorship has taken place. In brief then, for the purpose of this project, censorship is defined as the suppression of information, whether purposeful or not, by any method — including bias, omission, or under-reporting — which prevents the public from knowing fully what is happening in its society." 3 ■

The Project Censored media panel

The Project Censored panelists were: **Dr. Donna Allen**, editor and publisher of *Media Report to Women*; **Ben Bagdikian**, journalist and dean, Graduate School of Journalism, UC Berkeley; **Alfred Balk**, editorial director, *World Press Review*; **Noam Chomsky**, professor, linguistics and philosophy, MIT; **Ron Dorfman**, editor, *The Quill*; **George Gerbner**, dean, Annenberg School of Communications, University of Pennsylvania; **Nicholas Johnson**, chair, National Citizens Communications Lobby; **Charles L. Klotzer**, publisher, *The St. Louis Journalism Review*; **Curtis MacDougall**, professor emeritus of journalism, Northwestern University; **Mary McGregor**, nationally syndicated columnist, The Washington Post; **Jessica Mitford**, writer and lecturer; **Jack L. Nelson**, professor, social science educuation, Rutgers University; and **Sheila Rabb Weidenfeld**, president, D.C. Productions Ltd., Washington, D.C. ■

The Top Ten – the judges' report

1. **The Soviet Military Buildup Myth.** Reliable reports reveal that the Soviets started slowing their military expansion program about eight years ago; meanwhile, CIA estimates of Soviet military spending were found to be highly inflated. *Sources:* Aviation Week & Space Technology, *2/13/84, "Soviet Defense Spending," by William H. Gregory;* Defense Monitor, *Vol. XIII, #4, 1984, "Taking Stock: The U.S. Military Buildup."*

2. **Reagan's Attacks on Civil Liberties.** Under the rubric of fighting terrorism, President Ronald Reagan proposed four anti-terrorist bills which would pose a serious threat to civil liberties and significantly curtail the people's right to dissent. *Source: The Guardian, 7/25/84, "If These Laws Pass, Watch Out," and 8/22/84, "FBI 'Terrorizes' the Solidarity Movement," by Eleanor Stein and Michael Ratner.*

3. **Nicaragua's Fair Elections.** Contrary to predictions, the November 4, 1984 Nicaraguan national elections were not rigged by the ruling Sandinistas, nor the rubber-stamp of Soviet Communism. *Source:* Christianity and Crisis, *12/24/84, "What Really Happened on November 4?" by Andrew Reding.*

4. **CIA and the Death Squads.** Even while the administration condemns the Salvadoran death squads, the CIA continues to illegally train, support, and provide intelligence to forces directly involved in El Salvador's death squad activity. *Source:* The Progressive, *May 1984, "An Exclusive Report on the U.S. Role in El Salvador's Official Terror: Behind the Death Squads," by Allan Nairn.*

5. **Worst Radiation Spill.** The worst radiation spill in North America happened in a Juarez, Mexico junkyard in December 1983, and is reported to be slowly killing more than 200 Mexican citizens exposed to radioactive pellets containing Cobalt-60. *Sources:* Science, *Vol. 223, 3/16/84, "Juarez: An Unprecedented Radiation Accident," by Eliot Marshall; The Guardian, 6/20/84, "Worst Radiation Spill in North America Still Spreading," by Robby Newton and Ellen Kahaner.*

6. **Red Herring of 'Left-wing' Terrorism.** Left-wing terrorism is not running rampant in Europe as suggested by the Reagan administration. The single bombing of the Naples to Milan Express on December 23, 1984 by Europe's right-wing network killed more people than all the reported victims of the Red Brigades and other alleged left-wing terrorists in 1984. *Source:* Covert Action Information Bulletin, *#22, Fall 1984, "The Fascist Network," by Edward S. Herman.*

7. **The Tragedy of Transkei.** Transkei, the "independent" black state created as part of South Africa's apartheid policy, is a virtual wasteland, incapable of sustaining its starving, malnourished and growing population. *Source: Christian Science Monitor, 4/3/84, "S. African Blacks Struggle for Survival," and, 4/30/84, "S. African Relief Groups Find Better Ways to Combat Hunger," by Paul Van Slambrouck.*

8. **Reagan's Censorship Law.** Contrary to press reports, in 1984 the Reagan administration established the largest censoring apparatus ever known in the United States. Millions of federal employees are now subject to censorship for the rest of their lives. *Sources:* Bill of Rights Journal, *Dec. '84, "They've Got a Secret," and Mediafile, Nov. '84, "CIA, Congress Draw FOIA Curtain," both by Angus Mackenzie.*

9. **Three Stories That Might Have Changed the 1984 Election.** Potentially explosive political stories about Paul Laxalt, Edwin Meese and Charles Wick were available to America's press long before the 1984 election but not widely reported. *Sources: (1)* Mother Jones, *Aug/Sep '84, "Senator Paul Laxalt, The Man Who Runs the Reagan Campaign," by Robert I. Friedman; Village Voice, 3/12/85, "Networks Knuckle Under to Laxalt: The Story That Never Was Aired," by Robert I. Friedman and Dan E. Moldea; (2) San Francisco Bay Guardian, 2/20/85, "Meese Acknowledges Counter-Insurgency Role," by Paul Rauber; Village Voice, 2/26/85, "From the Man Who Brought You SWAT: Return of the Night of the Animals," by James Ridgeway; (3)* Mother Jones, *Nov. '84, "What the Senate Didn't Know About Charles Z. Wick," by Seth Rosenfeld and Mark Shapiro.*

10. **U.S. & U.K. Break Nuclear Treaty.** U.S. and U.K. broke the International Nuclear Non-Proliferation treaty which prohibits the use of civilian nuclear byproducts in the manufacture of nuclear weapons. *Source:* The Open University, *David Lowry, Researcher, Energy Research Group, Milton Keynes, England.* ■

The 15 runners-up

Of the 250 nominated stories considered by the Project Censored panel, the Bay Guardian's article "Meese acknowledges counter-insurgency role," by Paul Rauber, was chosen among "The Ten Best Censored Stories of 1984" (see sidebar, page 9) and "A Bay Guardian Investigative Report: Bay Area Draft Boards Staffed and Ready for War," by Tim Redmond, Charles Heimler and Julie Marquis, was one of the runners-up.

Here is the complete list of the runners-up:

11. The New, Improved Federal Trade Commission Slogan: "Caveat Emptor!" — *FTC Review (1977-84): A Report Prepared by a Member of the Federal Trade Commission* (9/84).

12. Yasser Arafat's Unpublicized Peace Initiative — *Personal letter from Warren Hogue, foreign editor, The New York Times, to Nabeel Abraham, Bloomfield, MI* (5/29/84); *"I&P: Israel & Palestine Political Report* (5/84); *The Guardian* (11/14/84).

13. The Food and Drug Administration's Nutrasweet Cover-up — *Common Cause* (7/84).

14. The Defense Industry: America's Billion Dollar Rip-off — *The New York Times* (10/16/84).

15. Vietnam Aftermath: The Untold Story of Women and Agent Orange — *Common Cause* (11/84).

16. From Covert to Overt U.S. Military Aid to the Rebels in Afghanistan — *Chicago Tribune* (6/3/84); *Hartford Advocate* (8/15/84); *and The New York Times (letters)* (11/26/84).

17. Congress and Commodity Traders Line Each Other's Pockets — *Common Cause* (1/85).

18. The Little-Known Continuing Tragedy of the IUD — *Working Mother* (7/84).

19. Chlamydia, The Most Widespread Venereal Disease, Leads to Sterility — *Albuquerque Singles* (9/84); *The New York Times* (6/5/84 and 10/8/84).

20. Cigarette Advertising and The New York Times: An Ethical Issue That's Unfit to Print — *New York State Journal of Medicine* (12/83 and 4/84).

21. Are the CIA Death Squads Coming Home to the U.S.? — *Jack Anderson, Santa Rosa Press Democrat* (10/12/84); *Covert Action Information Bulletin* (Spring '84); *partial transcript of "David Atlee Phillips, Plaintiff, v. Donald Freed, et al., Defendants, and Lawrence Hill & Co. Publishers, Inc., et al., Defendants," U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia* (11/26/84).

22. The Unheralded Return of the Draft: 1984 Style — *San Francisco Bay Guardian* (7/18/84); *The Progressive* (3/84).

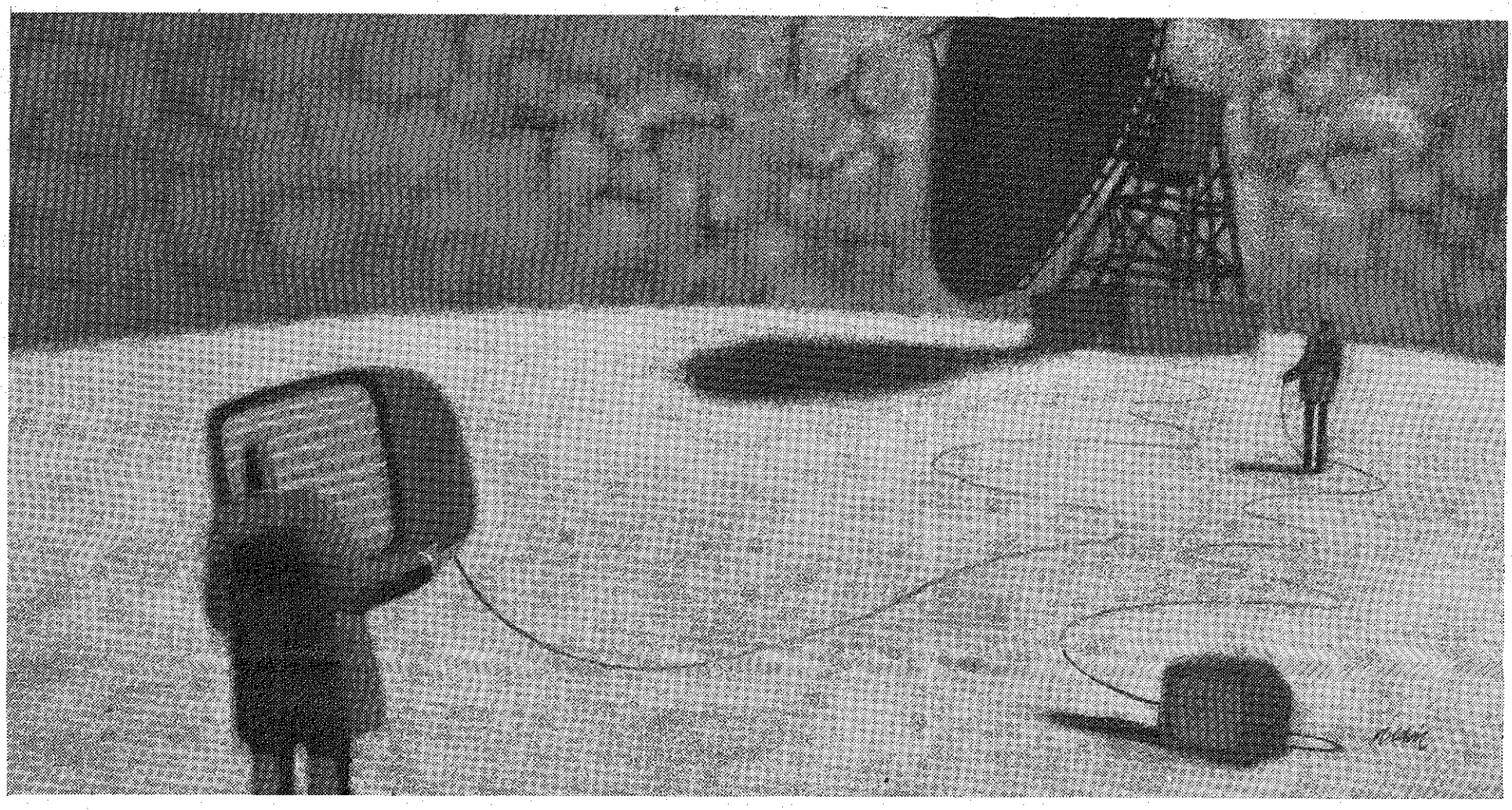
23. Vaccine Liability Suits Create Monopoly and Affect Quality and Supply — *Science News* (9/15/84); *Washington Post* (9/12/84); *The New York Times* (10/15/84).

24. The Unexplored Story Behind the Hinckley Assassination Attempt — *The Aftermath of March 30* (Wood/Fire/Ashes Press, 1984).

25. Illegal Agreement Between U.S. and Japan to Circumvent International Ban on Killing Sperm Whales — *Time* (12/3/84); *The New York Times* (11/12/84 and 11/15/84). ■

VIDEOCULTURE 5

TV's future: Will content catch up to technology?



Series by Rushworth M. Kidder / Illustrations by Rob Colvin

AT a 2,000-year-old site in Baghdad a few years ago, archaeologists turned up a most unusual pot. Inside its iron shell was a copper rod, supported by pitch. The copper was corroded, as though by acid.

They had discovered, it seems, an electric battery.

The ancients held in their hands all the potential for light, heat, and communication. Yet what, apparently, did they use their battery for?

Electroplating their jewelry — nothing more.

As America continues to navigate into the video age, will it use television — a discovery as rich with potential as that Iraqi battery — for the moral equivalent of electroplating its jewelry?

Or is television poised to bring tremendous benefits, constantly improving the quality and scope of Western culture?

Most observers agree that developments now in the laboratories will produce, during the next decade, major changes in the technical quality of television (see adjacent article).

At the same time, however, there is widespread concern that the new "hardware" may be used to deliver a kind of "software" that is little different from today's programming.

"The real crunch," says Henry Rivera, one of five commissioners of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), is that "we have a dearth of software."

"The winners," he speculates, "will be the people with the software."

What will tomorrow's programming look like — and what *should* it look like? Answers vary, depending on whether you look at commercial television or public television.

Commercial television

The nature of network programming, most observers agree, is closely bound up with the financial structure of the industry. For years, commercial television was a fairly stable oligopoly. But that is rapidly changing.

"There are so many new things developing," says Channels magazine editor Les Brown, "that I can't but have the feeling that the old television system is sitting on the San Andreas fault, and at some moment the ground will open, just as happened in network radio."

Mr. Brown, who has been writing about television for more than 30 years, ticks off the ground-splitting forces: federal deregulation; the discovery that people will pay for television (as they do on cable systems); and the convergence of the "four technologies" of television, telephones, satellites, and computers.

"It's a very powerful medium, and it's one that can do all kinds of things to help enrich the culture," he says. "But broadcasters are less and less responsible.

"All they care about is money," he adds. Television stations, he says, "make 60 cents on the dollar, [so] that's the business they want to be in."

From his spacious, plant-filled Washington office, FCC chairman Mark Fowler takes a different view. A Reagan appointee and free-market zealot, he has engineered a wholesale deregulation of the broadcast media — which, say his critics, has heightened the irresponsibility of the broadcasters and allowed them to exploit the nation's public airwaves for their own commercial ends.

Fowler, instead, sees his role as one of untying the hands of the broadcasters — which, he feels, is necessary if programming is to improve.

"Programming is so expensive to produce," he says, "that sometimes it takes the very big players to be able to really provide good programming."

Now, because of deregulation, "we're seeing a terrific revolution," he says. "We're seeing literally billions of new dollars of capital flowing into the television industry in all sectors — programming, distribution, promotion."

The result, he feels, has been a breaking up of the "cozy buddy system" of network monopoly.

Has programming improved as a result?

"I don't think television has reached its finest hour," Hollywood-based television producer Lee Rich says cautiously.

Others are more outspoken.

"I watched television last night with an eye to what I was watching," raged Columbia University's Fred W. Friendly in a recent interview, "and it's unbelievable. There are more cars being blown up, more alleged sex, more of an amusement park [atmosphere] than 10 years ago — and 10 years ago was bad."

Rich Du Brow, television editor at the Los Angeles Herald Examiner, makes the same point. "You'd be amazed," he says, "at how many stars — and I mean major, major stars — [have] told me that it was just terrible what had happened to prime time, that it had just become so empty-headed and impossible to watch."

Now, however, Mr. Du Brow thinks he has spotted a change. This season, he says, "the audience suddenly delivered a message to the networks." Citing three shows that have succeeded far beyond expectations — "The Bill Cosby Show," "Highway to Heaven,"

Last of five parts. Parts 1-4 appeared June 10-13, consecutively.

'There are so many new things developing that I can't but have the feeling that the old television system is sitting on the San Andreas fault, and at some moment the ground will open, just as happened in network radio.'

— Les Brown, editor of Channels magazine

and "Murder, She Wrote" — he says the viewers have "said basically that they wanted more upbeat, positive views of the human race."

"The public is looking for more quality and more honesty in their programming," says Mr. Rich. In the future, he says, "I think you're going to see a lot more family shows, and a lot more family-oriented shows."

Most observers agree, however, that commercial television will continue to control the lion's share of the money. Having weathered a serious scare several years ago — when networks were looked upon as dinosaurs, about to be rendered extinct by the growth of cable systems and independent stations — they now appear highly promising. Why else, observers ask, would Atlanta businessman Ted Turner want to own CBS?

Public television

"I don't think it would have ever occurred to anybody that a big, tall lady with a funny voice would change the cuisine in America. Or that [anyone] would want to watch cooking in prime time."

Suzanne Weil, director of programming at the Washington-based Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), is talking, of course, about Julia Child, whose cooking shows continue to be popular PBS fare.

Her point: Success in television programming can indeed come in unpredictable and innovative ways.

PBS, many observers say, is the bright spot in the nation's programming — and is increasingly popular among viewers. Unlike commercial television, however, it is constantly pressured by financial constraints.

Unlike government-sponsored television in most other countries, PBS is supported largely by nonfederal sources — and it subsists on slender means. In 1983, public television funding in the United States totaled $3.09 per person — compared with more than $25 per capita in Canada and about $18.50 in the United Kingdom (1982 figures). Plans are afoot, however, to expand revenues by increasing advertising on public television.

Despite financial considerations, however, PBS strives to pursue innovative programming.

"My guess is that if we're going to be smart, we're going to really change the way prime time looks in the future," says Ms. Weil, "and direct it more into . . . magazine formats."

The reason: the spiraling popularity of the videocassette recorder (VCR), sales of which are forecast to reach 11.5 million units this year. Ms. Weil argues that because of the wide use of VCRs for "time-shifting" (recording programs for later viewing), and because broadcast and cable programs are going to be increasingly in competition with rental cassettes, programming schedules should now be designed in new ways.

In the future, she says, some of PBS's major pieces — operas, ballets, dance, and so forth — could be broadcast at other-than-prime-time hours — on the assumption that people who want to watch them will simply record them.

"People are going to want to be current and want to be hooked into the rest of the world," she says. So the prime-time hours, she feels, should be used for "news and sports and commentary [and] things that have to do with thought — because those are the things that people are not going to rent."

But is PBS programming, as some critics charge, too "elitist"?

"We got a letter [recently] from a retired fireman in Montana," says PBS president Bruce Christensen. "He said, 'I live on beans, Social Security, and public television — not necessarily in that order.' "

PBS programming, says Mr. Christensen, is "the sort of thing you find people are hungry for. It isn't just [for] the elite in the country. Our programming may be elite, but the people who watch it certainly aren't."

THE future holds a number of other developments, the experts say.

● **Videocassettes.** The VCR, says Les Brown, is "the hope for democracy" — since democracy flourishes "when the consumer can get into the distribution system and actually make television."

His argument goes back to economics. A commercial television program, he says, needs to attract an audience of 30 million people to have a real success. Only the networks have that kind of reach.

But now, with video rental and sales shops popping up daily around the nation, videocassettes can be sold like books, directly to the consumer. This way, he says, "You need only to sell 50,000 to 100,000 cassettes to have a hit."

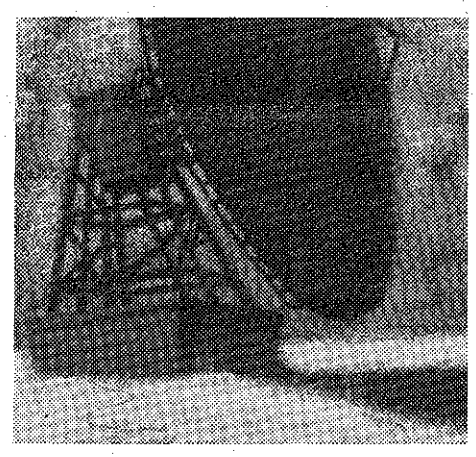
The result: Cassettes, not needing to attract a mass audience, can be highly specialized — and can be produced inexpensively by anyone who wishes.

"Rather than a fourth network," says Brown, "I would [like to] see homemade television."

● **Changing uses of print.** "The dividing line between electronic and print delivery is getting to be blurred all the time," says George Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School of Communications. "When the crossover is reached in terms of cost, much of what we con-

Please see **VIDEO** next page

Hector and HDTV: tomorrow's television technology



HELLO, Hector, what's been on TV today?" you say as you walk into the room.

"Good evening, John," says Hector. "I've got several things you might like: a re-run of 'M*A*S*H' — the one where Hawkeye goes crazy — and a Pink Panther movie. There's also the Philadelphia Orchestra playing Berlioz and the PGA Seniors tournament from Reno — the one you missed last week. You also asked for everything that's been broadcast today about the Walker spy case, and I have that."

"Fine, let's see the Walker stuff," you say — and Hector, the Ultimate Channel Selector, turns on the television set.

Hector, of course, is not human. He's a box mounted on top of the TV. He's part of what MIT professor W. Russell Neuman calls "fifth-generation television," which he defines as "the integration of computers and integrated circuits into media technology." Nor is this a blue-sky speculation. Hector's cousins are now at work in MIT laboratory tests.

Combining voice-synthesis and voice-recognition technology with computer-driven videocassette recorders, Hector's job is actually simpler than it might seem. To locate news stories on the Walkers, for example, he simply reads the "closed captions" — the line of text for the hearing-impaired, broadcast along with the picture on many programs and visible on the screen when passed through a special decoder. When he finds the word "Walker," he records the segment.

Hector may be a few years in coming. But within the next decade, experts say, new developments now under way will vastly upgrade the technical quality of television. The more immediate advances will include:

● **Stereo television.** If you've ever gloried in the full-color spectacle of a televised concert — while suffering through the sound produced by your set's single three-inch speaker — you may wonder why stereophonic sound has been so long coming. The waiting is nearly over: Last August, a public television station in Chicago, WTTW, became the first to broadcast in stereo, and such cable networks as MTV, the Disney Channel, and the Nashville Network now have stereo sound. Many newer sets, equipped to receive stereo, need only have high-quality speakers plugged in. So far, however, there is little stereo programming available: Much of the sound now broadcast by stereo stations is synthesized electronically from monophonic tracks.

● **High-definition television.** Known as "HDTV," it rejiggers the standard technologies into vastly superior pictures. "I think it fair to say that HDTV is fully the equivalent of 35-mm film," says Renville McMann, vice-president for Advanced Television at the CBS Technology Center in Stamford, Conn.

By more than doubling the number of lines on the screen (from 525 to 1,125), and by elongating the picture's "aspect ratio" (width to height proportion) from the present 4-to-3 to 5.3-to-3, engineers can produce richly detailed pictures that promise to revolutionize the televising of sports and the performing arts. That technology can then be given a large display: Forty-inch picture tubes are being developed, and the CBS lab already has a 10-foot TV screen in operation. When coupled with triphonic sound, says Mr. McMann, HDTV will capture "a whole new audience, because we will be able to give the theater experience in the home."

When will it happen? If, as many observers hope, an international conference next October can agree on uniform standards, McMann sees HDTV beginning to arrive in homes equipped with direct broadcast satellite dishes in perhaps five years.

● **Digital technology.** Television now operates on an "analog" system, in which variations of voltage or frequency correspond to (are "analogous" to) variations in the sound and the light of the image. "Digital" technology, using computers first to break these variables into millions of tiny chunks of information (represented by either an "on" or an "off" signal) and then to recombine them, is much more precise and less subject to interference.

Complex and expensive, the technology will first be used only for production, and not in the home. So why will it matter? Richard Green, who oversees broadcast operations and engineering at PBS, says that "digital will first arrive in the postproduction suite," where videotapes are edited into final form. Tape editing is accomplished by making successive copies — which, using current technology, involves a slight loss of quality each time. Using digital technology, the 200th copy-of-a-copy will be as good as the first — which means that the editing can also improve.

Digital technology also would allow a television transmission, sent from a remote African phone booth to come in to a New York news studio with perfect clarity.

— R. M. K.

SPORTS

NBA season too long; Walker sets record; US out of World Cup

By Ross Atkin
Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

SPORTS NOTEBOOK

Before signing off the air at the conclusion of this season's final National Basketball Association telecast, CBS broadcaster Dick Stockton painted a very rosy picture of the league. Stockton wasn't just blowing smoke, either.

Interest in the NBA is on the rise, a fact born out by record attendance figures and excellent TV ratings. The climb is expected to continue, too, with Patrick Ewing, a potential "franchise" player, joining the New York Knicks next season.

In this writer's opinion, however, the NBA shouldn't become complacent. It still needs to improve its product in two ways: by adopting a shorter, more compact schedule and by cutting down on the amount of allowable physical contact.

The first suggestion might seem illogical given the league's growing popularity. But a saner schedule would actually make the NBA a more compelling product to spectators, and therefore to television and Madison Avenue. As a result, the league could conceivably make just as much money by creating greater demand.

As it is now, each of the 23 teams plays 82 games over nearly six months in order to eliminate just seven from the playoffs.

Pat Riley, coach of the champion Los Angeles Lakers, has suggested paring the schedule to 60 games to lessen the physical and mental strain on the players. "You can only take a great horse to the track so long," he reasons.

Fewer games would make each one a little more important. And with a shorter season, the playoffs could start right after the college campaign conludes, when basketball excitement is running high. The playoffs, which ended on April 9 in 1960, have evolved into a second mini-season stretching from mid-April to mid-June.

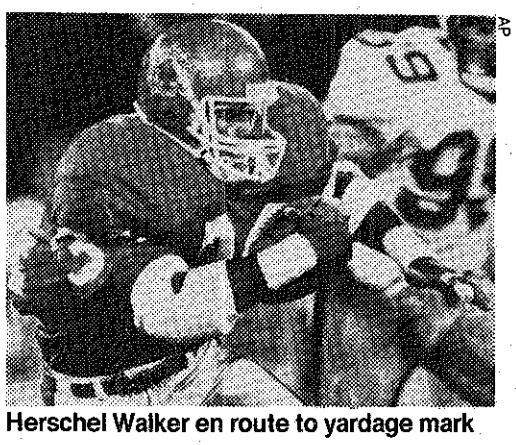
Here, too, it's reasonable to assume that a tighter playoff package would make for more riveting drama. The present format calls for best-of-five series in the first round, then best-of-seven thereafter. But writer Frank Deford once argued in Sports Illustrated that no NBA playoff series should be more than five games.

Seven games are all right in baseball, he contends, because each contest takes on a different strategic look with pitching and lineup changes, but not in basketball, with its set lineups. I'm inclined to agree, although for tradition's sake I'd stick with the best-of-seven in the finals.

If the owners won't budge on the number of games, maybe they'd at least consider compacting the season by eliminating some travel. This could be achieved by playing two road games in a city before moving on. The series concept has been used successfully by baseball, partly because pitching changes provide a fresh look to each game, but pro basketball appears popular enough now to experiment with the idea.

The time also has come to clean up the excessive pushing, leaning, and general physical play that was evident in this year's playoffs, especially in the final series between Boston and Los Angeles. Not surprisingly, at mid series a league official met with the two coaches to discuss the escalating roughness, which had resulted in temper flareups and near fisticuffs on several occasions.

The intensity level increases in the playoffs, which means so does the banging and shoving. When the referees swallow their whistles to "let the boys play," the game's inherent beauty and grace are subjugated to what amount to wrestling matches for prime real estate on the court. When two players "lock horns," someone has to initiate the contact. That player should be assessed a foul. Rather than condone these efforts to gain position, the league would improve its image and perhaps prevent outbreaks of violence later by clamping down on transgressions during the regular season.


AP
Herschel Walker en route to yardage mark

Touching other bases

● If the smiles in this season's Boston Celtics team picture look forced, there's a reason. Due to scheduling problems, the photograph wasn't snapped until Monday, the day after the Celtics lost to the Los Angeles Lakers in the NBA championship series.

● The United States, which hasn't qualified to play in the final round of the World Cup soccer tournament since 1950, has come up short again. In the latest chapter to this sad history, the US was eliminated in preliminary play for the '86 cup by Costa Rica. The 1-0 defeat was a bitter disappointment for the Americans, who had beaten Costa Rica 3-0 at last summer's Olympics.

Some of the Americans had struggled in adjusting to the outdoor game after spending recent months playing in the Major Indoor Soccer League, where the field is about one-third as long and there are frequent substitutions.

● Though the current New York Mets are one of baseball's better teams, they didn't look it in losing 26-7 to Philadelphia Tuesday night. Not even the bumbling Mets of 1962 were ever beaten by such a score. The Phillies jumped out to a 16-0 lead after two innings and never looked back in ringing up the highest run total in the team's 103-year history. Leadoff batter Von Hayes had two home runs in the first inning, a solo job followed by the first grand slam of his career.

● The United States Football League may be struggling to survive, but Herschel Walker is having a great year with the New Jersey Generals. Everything has come together for him since a disastrous opening game, in which he gained only six yards. He now has 2,129 yards, the most for one season in pro football history. With 162 against Jacksonville on Monday (his 10th consecutive 100-plus game), he broke the old record of 2,105 set during the latest National Football League season by Eric Dickerson of the Los Angeles Rams. What made the feat especially satisfying is that he surpassed the record in 16 games, the length of the NFL season, even though there are two more weeks left in the USFL campaign.

VIDEO CULTURE

VIDEO from preceding page

sider print today will be delivered electronically."

To some extent, that is already happening. Already, computers with access to data bases are bringing print into the home electronically. Experiments are already under way with newspaper delivery by means of a home-based printer. But neither teletext (a one-way system that sends "pages" of information along a portion of the television picture that is usually unseen) nor videotex (a two-way, interactive medium that permits home banking and shopping) has yet generated much public enthusiasm.

Will that change the way we use print? James W. Carey, dean of the School of Communication at the University of Illinois, thinks so. "Print is going to acquire an increasingly specialized role," he notes, as the visual and graphic aspects of television increasingly take on information-delivery roles.

For some, the print-video connection is a glorious prospect. William T. Reed, vice-president for Educational Services at PBS, says that in 10 or 20 years "people are going to have the option of having a continuous education — much of it taken at home."

"My children," he says, "will be able to sit at home and have access through a computer to the world's best libraries. Colleges may not go away, although their function will shift more toward what he calls "the rite of passage" and away from purely educational purposes.

But William F. Fore of the National Council of Churches sees in these developments some serious challenges to learning — especially to the book-based religion of Christianity. He worries that the television generation, lured away from print, may also be lured away from the Bible. Books, he says, bring "the linear, analytical process that has always resulted in theology, and dogma, and the things which tend to bring the corrective into any church group."

"Without that," he warns, "you run all the risks and dangers .... of being unfaithful to the true gospel."

● Media education. Also growing is the movement toward what Dr. Fore calls "television awareness training" — efforts at home and in school to teach children to become more intelligent viewers of television.

"People ought to be more mindful about the number of hours that children are spending in front of the television," says the FCC's Henry Rivera. Because "kids like it," he says, it is especially important to "instill an appropriate attitude about television."

According to Harvard University's Helen Featherstone, recent research has shown that parents can have an effect in several ways: by modifying their own viewing habits, by monitoring their children's viewing, by teaching children to make intelligent choices, by watching with their children, and by telling their local station managers what they do and do not like.

In the future, schools will have wider access to video recordings of increasingly sophisticated educational programs. Teachers can also make use of broadcast television: a Chicago-based nonprofit organization, Prime Time School Television, produces teacher guides for forthcoming programs.

WHERE is it all taking us?

If there is one thread common to the thinking of most observers interviewed for this series, it is this: that the nation must pay much more attention to television's impact on its social, cultural, and political institutions.

Some find that impact profoundly damaging — the kind of "unbearable disturbance of the general peace" that E. B. White, in 1938, foresaw as one possible outcome of television.

"If you look back," says Channels editor Les Brown, "every 10 years television has been different." In this decade, he says, "we're redefining the American dream. It used to be the suburban home with the picket fence. Now it's everything you can get — it's greed gone wild."

Like many others, he links the popular fascination with materialism to television's commercialism.

But some see in television what White called "a saving radiance in the sky" — a future of almost unlimited promise. "There's enormous potential there," says Professor Friendly. "There's the potential for Murrow to do a McCarthy," he adds, referring to Edward R. Murrow's 1954 CBS-TV exposé of the excesses of Joseph R. McCarthy's anticommunist witch hunting. "There's the potential for a 'Playhouse 90' [the most ambitious of the many live dramatic-anthology series aired in the '50s and early '60s]. There's the potential for the Watergate hearings. There's the potential for a Bach cantata coast to coast and in stereo."

Which view is more nearly right? What is the impact of television?

"Most of us," says ABC anchor man Peter Jennings candidly, "are quite confused about it. I work in TV," he adds, "but I try not to let my kids watch it."

Whichever view one takes — and many observers take both — the fact remains that, as Professor Gerbner says, "this is the prehistory of television.

"Television programming," he continues, "is going to have to be one of the key issues debated in Congress, one of the key issues debated in our schools and school boards.

"We simply have to recognize," he concludes, "that we are not going to be a self-governing community without giving serious public attention to the electronic sector."

In the case of Pakistan, the scheme was uncovered in time to prevent shipment of the krytrons outside the country in violation of U.S. export controls. In the case of Israel, however, the scheme apparently began in 1981 and remained undetected until last January, with the result that 810 krytrons are now in the hands of the Israeli defense ministry. U.S. officials have publicly accepted Israeli claims that the krytrons were intended for use in tests of nonnuclear weapons, such as lasers and antitank projectiles. Privately, they are skeptical that such a large number could be needed for such tests. Efforts are under way to reclaim roughly 400 of the devices, all that the Israelis say they can presently lay their hands on.

Leonard Spector, a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and a specialist on nonproliferation, said that despite the discovery of this scheme early this year, the Reagan Administration has since "agreed to establish a free trade zone with Israel, to provide it advanced technology for the Lavi fighter, and to allow it to participate in the R&D phase of the Strategic Defense Initiative." According to Gerard Smith, an ambassador at large for nonproliferation under President Carter, these actions expose the United States to charges that it has followed a double standard by failing to seek punitive sanctions similar to those applied to other proliferators. "Here's a case where we've had lots of early warning. We have acquiesced in this program and . . . you may be sure we'll hear" about it in Geneva.

Archelaus Turrentine, deputy assistant director of the bureau of nuclear weapons control at the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, responded that although "the United States is obviously very concerned about the Israeli nuclear program and nuclear capability . . . private, quiet diplomacy is frequently more effective than public posturing." He added that a variety of nuclear issues and concerns had been discussed with the Israelis "at senior levels."

Along with others at the symposium, Turrentine agreed that the United States will face "an extensive and tough debate" in Geneva over compliance with a provision of the treaty that commits the superpowers to substantial limitation of their nuclear arsenals. Frustrated by the lack of progress in this area, the delegation from Sweden is apparently planning to offer an amendment to the treaty that sets a specific timetable for weapons reductions. The delegation from Japan is expected to push for a reduction in the existing limit on nuclear test yields. The Reagan Administration is working furiously behind the scenes to dissuade both groups.

Turrentine says that the Administration's goals at the conference will be modest: "To seek a reaffirmation of the treaty and to preserve as positive an attitude toward it as possible." Smith, however, believes that the U.S. delegation will be entirely preoccupied with mere "damage limitation."

—R. JEFFREY SMITH

TV Scientists

More Good Than Bad

Scientists are warmer and more attractive, but less sexy, than other professionals, and they are rational beings. They tend to be a bit older and "stranger" compared to other professionals and they carry with them a more foreboding image "touched with a sense of evil, trouble, and peril." At least that is the portrait of fictional scientists conveyed by television, according to a University of Pennsylvania study reported at the AAAS meeting.

The findings were reported at a panel discussion on the image of science and scientists on television and in film. The participants included Leonard Nimoy, who plays Mr. Spock in the "Star Trek" movie series.

On the whole, scientists come across with a positive image in prime time television, according to the study, which was headed by George Gerbner, dean of the university's School of Communications and was funded by the National Science Foundation. The study was based on a review of 2 years of prime time television and a national survey of more than 1600 people.

For example, for every villainous scientist in a major role, there are five virtuous ones. The image of physicians fares even better. "Television doctors are the most valued characters in prime time," the report stated. For every bad doctor, 19 are good. (For every bad law enforcer, 40 are portrayed as good.) Curiously, television scientists are killed more often compared to soldiers, private investigators, and the police.

In films, science and innovation are rarely a central theme, according to Syracuse University researchers. George Comstock and Ni Yang found that only about 4 pecent of the films made between 1938 and 1984 dealt with these two subjects based on a sampling of 6700 films. More often, film-makers made use of the products of innovation or fantasized about them in science fiction movies.

Nimoy, who both directs and acts in the Star Trek films, says that he strives for scientific credibility and, in fact, has personally interviewed scientists from Harvard and Massachusetts Institute of Technology and other campuses to get ideas. But, he says, entertainment is the primary goal.

An official from the National Broadcasting Company, J. Ronald Milavsky, told the audience not to worry about the image of scientists on television, which is a positive one, he said. Instead, scientists should be more concerned about informing the public about science. "There is a great scarcity of people to communicate it to the public," he said. "Scientists need to get involved in the production of news reports. There is considerable interest in science and technology."

Whether scientists are interested in their image or the depiction of science in the arts is unclear. Out of about 150 people who attended the panel discussion, only about 15 scientists were present by a show of hands.

—MARJORIE SUN

Biotechnology

Focus on Viruses

With the help of genetic engineering, scientists are now trying to exploit certain properties of viruses to produce a broad range of commercial products for agriculture and medicine. Farmers eventually may replace some chemical pesticides with genetically modified viruses that are toxic to pests, and pharmaceutical companies may use viruses as biological factories to produce drugs such as interferon, according to scientists who spoke at a session on biotechnology at the AAAS meeting. So far, most commericial development in biotechnology has focused on the use of bacteria rather than viruses.

A key to the development of products based on the manipulation of viruses is whether they can be safely released into the environment, an issue that some scientists at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are beginning to address.

Of the wide range of viruses that commonly exist in nature, one type of virus,

New TV rating tools may bolster programming

Advertisers will know if you walk out during commercials

By Rushworth M. Kidder
Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

Boston

IF we all watched 7 hours and 8 minutes of television a day, life could not go on as we know it."

From his sunny office in Boston's financial district, Steven A. Holt is talking about one of the most sobering statistics in American cultural life: the A. C. Nielsen Company's latest figure showing that television sets are on more than seven hours each day.

As president of Television Audience Assessment (TAA), a fledgling firm engaged in rating TV shows on the basis of their quality, he is also talking about the extent to which the widely used "Nielsen ratings" drive television programming.

And he is raising one of the central questions of the video age: whether a new rating system might generate higher-quality programs.

At least four companies are now looking at new audience-measurement systems:

- Nielsen itself is experimenting with a "people meter" — a hand-held device allowing household members to "sign in" electronically when they start and stop watching. Trial meters have been installed in 300 homes nationwide to learn more about the age and gender of the viewers — and about their channel-switching.
- Arbitron Ratings Company, in conjunction with Burke Marketing Services, has launched a people-meter firm called ScanAmerica. The service, now being tested in 200 homes in Denver, provides householders with both a people meter and an electronic wand. Viewers are asked to use the wand to scan the bar codes on every item they bring home from the grocery store — allowing central computers to draw connections between what the family buys and which commercials it has recently watched.
- AGB Television Research, a US subsidiary of the British firm AGB, is testing 400 people meters in Boston area — with the undisguised goal of eventually knocking Nielsen out of its lead position in the ratings business. AGB has been testing similar devices overseas for the last eight years.
- And Mr. Holt's Boston-based firm is using survey techniques to measure both the "appeal" and the "impact" of television programs.

Why this enthusiasm? Holt, an articulate administrator with a neatly trimmed beard and a winning smile, says that "there is a move toward people measurement and away from set measurement."

A decade ago, he says, when a family had only four or five channels to choose from, and when all the members sat down to watch a show together, it was enough to measure (as Nielsen does) the tuning of the set.

Now, however, with cable reaching more than 42 percent of American households, many viewers have 30 or more choices — and a remote-control device that makes it easy to "zap" commercials by switching to another show in midstream. All of these new rating systems have one thing in common: They are driven by the needs of the advertisers, who last year spent nearly $19 billion on television commercials.

"The advertising agencies now are extremely avid for infinitely more refined information about how to get to their target audience," says TV Guide correspondent Neil Hickey. Any improvement in the rating system, he adds, is "a tool for advertisers" that "refines the media-buyer's task."

So far, the Boston-based TAA is the only one engaged in "qualitative ratings" — an old idea that has so far proved elusive, in part because there has been no market for it. And that, says executive director John Demling of

the Electronic Media Rating Council, means that the people at TAA will have "a tough time ahead of them." The reason: Advertisers have yet to be convinced that there is any connection between the quality of the program and the numbers of people who watch their commercials.

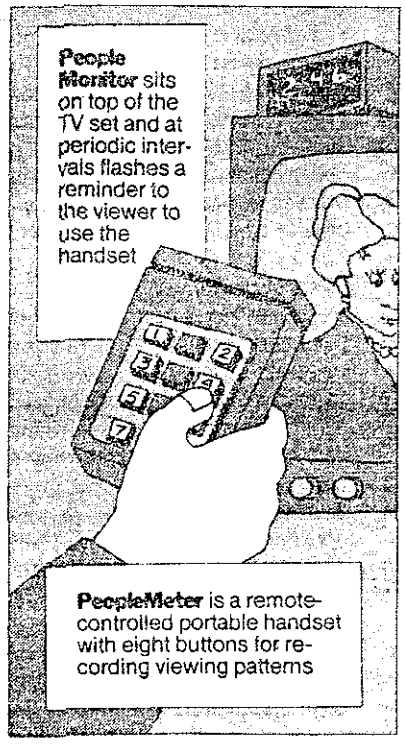
"The idea of quality ratings," says George Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania, "is a noble but impractical idea. The way [commercial TV] is set up, there is . . . no special reward for quality — so who cares?"

But Holt thinks he can prove that there *is* a reward. His firm, which began four years ago as a nonprofit company based in Cambridge, Mass., is shifting to for-profit status — confident that it can sell its services to advertisers and networks.

Using survey techniques familiar in social science research to question sample audiences, TAA researchers look for two things: the "appeal" of the programs watched by their respondents (based on a "personal program rating" across a scale of 0 to 10) and their "impact" (based on whether the programs touched the viewers' feelings or caused them to learn anything).

So far, based on nearly 70,000 scores collected in a prototype study funded by the John and Mary R. Markle Foundation and a number of cable companies in the spring of 1982, they have found that:

- Nearly half of all viewers are eating, washing dishes, reading, telephoning, or doing something else while "watching" television.
- Half the audience leaves the room at least once during a show. And less than two-thirds of the audience for an average hour-long program watches to the end.
- Some 15 percent of those watching "over-the-air" broadcast television — and nearly 40 percent of those subscribing to cable — report that they "always" or "often" change channels during the commercials.
- Viewers give full attention to only one-third of the programs they watch.



SUSAN B. TYNER — STAFF

But the key point — and the one which suggests that there may be a market for TAA's data — is the direct correlation between liking the program and watching the commercials. In TAA tests, 46 percent of the audience for "low impact" programs left the room during the commercials — while only 26 percent left during programs they considered to be "high impact."

Holt says the link between program quality and attentiveness to commercials has been hinted at over the years by researchers. "We wanted to substantiate that with hard facts," he says — "not as a group of do-gooders based at Harvard," he adds, but in an effort to "encourage the television advertising community to use more-sophisticated tools."

Can such tools improve the quality of television?

"That's our hope," says Elizabeth J. Roberts, chairman of TAA and founder of its original nonprofit operation. She prefers to talk about diversity — her "definition of quality," she says. She notes that there will always be a need for "background television" — the mass programming that viewers don't have to watch attentively. But she feels that, if advertisers recognize the importance of presenting their messages in the context of appealing, high-impact programming, that in itself will stimulate more diversity.

Dr. Roberts cites 7-Up, Hallmark, and Polaroid as advertisers that "have been making buys on that basis [of quality programming] for a long time." TAA research, she says, could give them the statistics to validate their choices.

But Mr. Demling of the Electronic Media Rating Council, who has a longtime interest in research on qualitative ratings, takes a more modest view: "If qualitative ratings were ever to succeed, TAA are the sort of people who could bring it off." But so far, he says, "the hopes of people who wanted television to be better . . . have not been fulfilled by changes in the measurement system."

Living

The Patriot Ledger

Taming the tyranny of television

By Catha McSweeney
The Patriot Ledger

Sharon Holmes of Hull lets her two young daughters have their own television set, but has installed a lock box to black out cable programs she and her husband deem unsuitable.

Irma Earle of Weymouth, whose six children range in age from 17 to 26, finds the violence and sex so objectionable she won't allow cable TV in her house, though her children offered to pay for it.

And Jane D'Alessandro of Stoughton, mother of Nickie, 9, and Matthew, 8, closely monitors what programs her children watch and steers them away from the sitcoms and others she considers "biased and bigoted, with too much violence and ill-placed humor."

These parents are trying to cope with a hard fact of life: By the time high school graduation rolls around, their kids will have spent far more time in front of the tube than in the classroom. And, especially in cable households, without parental intervention they are likely to have swallowed a pretty heavy dose of TV violence, sex and stupidity.

Experts agree that parents have good reason to worry.

Kids today watch television for an average of nearly 30 hours a week. This adds up to roughly 15,000 hours in front of the set by the end of high school, compared to 11,000 hours in school, wrote Evelyn Kaye in "The ACT Guide to Children's Television," published by Action for Children's Television, a watchdog group concerned about TV's impact on children.

"What we have now, for the first time in history, are children born into a house in which the television set is on for seven hours a day. It's like the wallpaper, and they absorb its message," said George Gerbner, widely regarded as the nation's foremost authority on the impact of TV on American society.

"Whoever tells the stories to the child controls his or her growing up. It used to be parents, school and church. Now it's mostly television," said Gerbner, professor of communications and dean of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania.

These stories, he said in a recent telephone interview, teach children what opportunities are open to whites and blacks, young and old, men and women. They tell who is most powerful, who can get away with what, and against whom.

Peggy Charren of Newton, founder and president of the 16-year-old child advocacy group, ACT, has worked for years "to insure diversity of programming, to have as good a children's video library as possible.

"There is a lot that is inappropriate for children," she said, "and it doesn't have to be particularly pornographic to be inappropriate."

Gerbner's studies support her contention that children are receiving inappropriate messages.

"The basic elements of the world of television are coherent and stable," Gerbner said, "and violence — which occurs at the rate of six times an hour on prime time and 25 times an hour on children's weekend daytime programs — is a staple and stable part of that world. It's indicative that children get the same violence as adults, but more so."

White males get into the most violent situations, he found, but are the least likely to be victims. Non-whites, minorities and women are most vulnerable to television violence.

"The most pervasive effect of this is a generation of fear and insecurity. We call it 'the mean world syndrome,' " said Gerbner.

Though D'Alessandro, 33, doesn't think watching violence on TV will make children violent, she believes "it plants the seeds for later years, and, in a way, hardens them to violence in real life."

Charren agrees that there are more acts of violence on children's TV than in adult programming but argues, "you have to make some judgments."

" 'Road Runner' (a children's cartoon show) is one act of violence after another, but you have to make judgments about that violence as opposed to how to mug old ladies and bomb cars," she said.

"If they're into violent programs they tend to watch them every day, seven days a week, and that's what they learn. All television teaches, not just educational TV."

Miriam Desharnais of Randolph, whose children "constantly watch cartoons," is not as concerned about them as Gerbner.

"I grew up with them, and I don't go out and beat people up," said Desharnais, mother of Frances, 6, Christina, 5, and Elizabeth, 2. "It's more how parents act than what they see on television that shapes childen's lives," she added.

Christina Abbott of Westwood, who limits 6-year-old Christopher's viewing to Channel 2 and children's cable channels (Nickelodeon and Disney), allows him to watch the less violent Saturday shows, like "Smurf" and "Transformers," along with classic cartoons on the Disney channel.

Within limits, she added, "It's important for children to have television. They are part of the television generation."

They and other parents do not, however, disagree with educators who stress the need for a stronger emphasis on reading.

In Hingham parents supported a four-month program last spring to offset television dependency. Whitman plans a similar program next fall.

"We took a four-month period and had the children (in kindergarten through grade 6) choose one day a week with no television. On that day they pledged to read," said Mary Matthews, Hingham reading specialist and chairman of the sponsoring Educators' Reading Committee.

"Our goal was to make them aware that they could go through a day without television," she said.

The children not only read, but did puzzles, played outside with friends and did things with their families.

"I can't say the program will have a long-term effect, but if we get 10 children to say it's equally as much fun to read as to watch TV, then we've had success," Matthews said.

The Massachusetts Teachers Association, like other state and national education organizations, is also concerned about the TV generation.

"The evidence is very strong that a heavy television diet tends to affect childen's perceptions of how problems are solved," said Steve Wollmer, MTA director of communications. "But life's problems can't be solved in 30-minute segments."

His personal concern, he added, is the effect of television on literacy.

"No educator will argue that children who are heavy watchers, and most are, spend the time they should with reading materials," Wollmer said.

As a result, educators are finding students at all levels are less adept with verbal and writing skills, he said. "They are not showing the same levels of skills they did 25 years ago."

Some parents are addressing that issue too.

Abbott, of Westwood, said she has read to Christopher since he was an infant. Now, at 6, he reads to himself, at a third-grade level.

And the D'Alessandro family sets aside a 45-minute nightly "winding down time" for reading, while in the Holmes family "we often take television off limits and take the children to the library," she said.

It is the parents who must take the initiative, said Charren. "The programmer has the responsibility of providing alternatives, but the parents have a responsibility to get between the set and the child.

"We talk about 'T.L.C.' at ACT. The T is for talking about television with your child. L is for looking at it whenever you can, though it's difficult when parents work, and especially difficult for single mothers for whom watching TV with their kids at the end of the work day has to have a very low priority. And C is for chose to turn TV off more often."

Judy Griffin of Hanover, mother of Shane, 8, and Robert, 11, is one of those who has accepted Charren's challenge.

"We control what they watch," she said. "In the evening, we watch together, and we take time to talk about what we're seeing."

Getting control of their TV habits

In its brochure, "What Parents Can Do," the National PTA (Parent-Teacher Association) notes that children who are heavy television viewers (4 to 5 versus 2 or fewer hours a day) put less effort into school work, play less well with friends and have fewer hobbies and activities.

It suggests that parents try to rectify this by:

- Keeping a time chart of children's activities, including TV, homework, and play with friends, and discussing with the children what to eliminate and what to put in its place.
- Select a week's programs, and set a viewing limit in hours and points, rating programs so that those you don't want your children to see will cost more points.
- Rule out TV at certain times, like before breakfast and on school nights.
- Remember that you set an example for your child. If you watch a lot of TV, chances are your child will, too.
- Watch at least one episode to determine how violent a program is, and discuss the violence with the child, why it happened, how painful it is, ask the child how conflict can be resolved without violence, and point out that violence is faked for television.
- Encourage children to watch programs with characters that cooperate and help and care for each other.
- Explain to your child the values you hold about sex, alcohol and drugs.

Associated Press

U.S. Hostage Ralk Traugott gestures during a press conference in Beirut on Saturday as reporters and photographers crowd in

LIVE FROM BEIRUT: HOW TV PACKAGED TERRORISM

Don't talk to me about the need for a fourth TV network in this country. We've all been watching one for the past 2½ weeks.

SBS. The Shiite Broadcasting System.

Maybe you thought you were watching ABC, CBS or NBC. Well, you were wrong. If TV coverage of the just concluded hijack-hostage situation in Lebanon demonstrated anything, it's television's wimpy willingness to allow itself to be manipulated by outlaws, a failure of will that, in the end, permitted murderers and their allies to use American television to shape, color — and ultimately *distort* — the events that TV is supposed to chronicle in an impartial fashion.

David Friedman

P.R. companies such as Hill & Knowlton would charge *millions* for the kind of image-upgrading campaign the Shiites waged — and *won* — on American TV without paying a cent. They didn't have to, you see. They had guns and hostages.

Strangely enough, it was the American networks that were tempted to open their treasure troves. Steve Friedman, executive producer of "Today," feels he has nothing to apologize for after paying first-class trans-Atlantic airfare and providing luxury hotel accomodations in Frankfurt for hostage families in exchange for their pledging to give first allegiance to "Today." Executives at CBS seem to feel similarly, while those at ABC pretend to turn up their noses at such "checkbook journalism." (Not that ABC's behavior has been totally above reproach. CBS and NBC have accused ABC of airing what was supposed to be a "pool" interview with three hostages as an ABC exclusive. Scoop or scam? The argument continues.)

But no matter who spent what and why, it's impossible to deny that — at least in some ways — Orwell's 1984 has arrived a year late. Falsehood is truth. Villains become victims. Murderers friends of the oppressed. And terror an act of humanity.

What else is one to make of a situation in which a reporter for CNN thinks it appropriate to go on the air and compliment members of the Shiite militia for seeming "perfectly at ease in front of the cameras?" What else can one conclude when ABC cameras show hostage Allyn Conwell driving away from the site of an interview in a Mercedes? I'm not saying that such reports are totally without justification; only that they fail to convey the larger picture. The ultimate victim of such "coverage" is *reality*. Terrorism in the current TV age seems downright polite, civil and comfortable. As Tom Shales pointed out in the Washington Post, the lack of perspective on the part of U.S. television has allowed terrorism to look like a "mere alternate lifestyle."

But it isn't. I can't help wondering why the CNN correspondent, instead of praising the Shiites' TV presence, didn't think it more appropriate to remind his viewers that the same

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FRIEDMAN

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group was responsible for the bombing of the U.S. and French embassies in Kuwait last year? And, if such historical perspective is too much to ask for, what about the brutal murder of passenger Robert Stethem, who, according to former hostage Jimmy Palmer Sr., was tortured — perhaps with lighted cigarettes — before his dead body was dumped off the airplane like yesterday's garbage?

This kind of perspective was strangely lacking from most of the coverage beamed to the U.S. Instead, *the Shiite Broadcasting System* (along with its three instant subsidiaries, ABC, CBS and NBC) gave us its own perspective through its own instant "expert," hostage Allyn Conwell. Suddenly this glib stranger began to lecture the U.S. public on international politics, telling ABC's Charles Glass that Israel's Shiite "hostages — and I call them that for a valid reason" — were being held "contrary to the Geneva Accord." Even more preposterous, the Shiite Broadcasting Service bestowed Conwell with the rank of statesman. "So yes," Conwell told ABC, "I say, Israel, please release these people, not because there are 39 hostages captured in Lebanon, but simply because it's *the right thing to do.*"

This from a man without any diplomatic experience or even a college degree — a U.S. citizen who last year moved to the Arab nation of Oman, where he became field manager for a U.S. firm manufacturing oil-exploration machinery.

Should any other doubts about Conwell's "impartiality" remain, one need only compare his strange reluctance to thank President Reagan or the U.S. government for their role in arranging the hostages' release with his downright eagerness to praise *Syrian* President Hafez Assad. Those *still unclear about all this would do* well to recall Sunday's press conference, where the mood — orchestrated by Conwell — was so jolly that a viewer who didn't know better might have assumed that an American hadn't been brutally murdered a few days earlier.

One who didn't forget, though, and is to be commended for his memory, is Bert Quint of CBS. Said Quint of the dead American, after the press conference: "It seems he is forgotten in all this. At least, he was forgotten here."

Similarly forgotten in all this was the truth about terrorism. And much of the blame for that belongs to television.

Frequent Viewers of Television Said to Think Science Risky

People who watch a great deal of television are apt to think of science as a threatening enterprise, according to a study by researchers at the University of Pennsylvania.

George Gerbner, dean of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School of Communications, and other researchers there surveyed 1,600 TV viewers across the country to determine their viewing habits as well as their attitudes toward science and scientists.

Heavy viewers tended to think of scientists as people who do dangerous work, enjoy little family life, and have peculiar personalities, the researchers found. Such viewers also tended to believe that science creates more problems than it solves, they said.

"Heavy viewer" is a relative term that can differ from one study to another, Mr. Gerbner said. Nationwide, heavy viewers constitute the one-third of the television audience that watches TV for four or more hours a day.

In an analysis of the content of prime-time television programs, Mr. Gerbner and his colleagues found that scientists were portrayed less favorably than other professionals.

While there was an average of five "good" scientists for every "bad" one, they noted, there were, for example, about 40 "good" law-enforcement officials for every "bad" one. In addition, scientists on TV had the highest fatality rate of any occupational group on the airwaves, with 10 per cent of them killed before the closing credits.

The study of television viewers' attitudes toward science was part of the Annenberg School's Cultural Indicators Project, a continuing investigation of TV viewing's effects on the audience's perceptions of society.

Chronicle of Higher Education 7/3/85 p. 6

Another View on Hostage Reports

By **DAVID FRIEDMAN**
Daily News Television Critic

TELEVISION

Bill Cosby isn't the only subject about which many TV viewers disagree with me. There's the much graver issue of whether or not terrorists succeeded in manipulating American TV coverage of the just completed hijack-hostage situation in Lebanon to the detriment of all concerned, save the terrorists. I think the answer is yes. George Gerbner, Dean of Penn's Annenberg School of Communications, thinks not.

Which isn't to say, if I understand him correctly, that Gerbner does not concede that the Shiite militiamen who forcibly — and forcefully — grabbed the world's attention 2½ weeks ago failed to get their message across. That, of course, they clearly did. What Gerbner asserts, however, is that *on balance* the public is well-served whenever a news-gathering institution such as television confronts an uneducated public with a point of view it's unfamiliar with — even if that news-gathering institution is *forced* to do so by a calamitous event engineered by gun-wielding terrorists.

David Friedman

"There is some merit," says Gerbner, "to the position that media coverage of the Middle East is not balanced." Actually, he says, American media coverage of *all* international events displays a clear-cut bias, that of supporting the narrowly defined short-term strategic and economic interests of the United States. (Which, of course, will come as a surprise to Jesse Helms and his ilk, who sometimes seem to confuse CBS with PRAVDA.)

What Americans gained, then, from TV coverage of the recent in· dent in Beirut, according to Gerbn· was an awakening to a new historic perspective nearly all of them h· been unaware of — namely, the lo· history of violence in the area, t· Israeli bombing of Shiite villages a· the detention of Lebanese civilia· within Israel. For contrast, Gerbn· suggests that we recall Americ· coverage of the hostage crisis · Iran. "What was portrayed as a co· plete surprise in the media," sa· Gerbner, "was in actuality the culm nation of events that had been buil· ing for many years."

While media coverage is "impro ing," says Gerbner, "it is far fro· admirable." Chief among his con plaints is what he perceives to be th media's constant goading of officia· to take dramatic action in respons to such incidents as the one that ju· concluded in Beirut. "The heav viewer of television has seen s much violence," says Gerbne· "about six acts per prime-time hou· that such a viewer has come to se·

See **GERBNER** next page

GERBNER

Continued from previous page

the world as a very mean and dangerous place in which only strong and dramatic action is satisfying." The constant "what are you going to do about this?" kind of questions not only appeals to the fears and insecurities of viewers, says Gerbner, it also appeals to the fears and insecurities of elected officials, who may feel compelled to take risky actions just to ensure their own continued popularity.

If there's one thing Gerbner and I agree on, it's that television can never again be neutral in such incidents. Its power is simply too pervasive. "There's no such thing as a silent observer who is not a participant in such events," says Gerbner. "Whoever presents an event shapes it in the public's mind and, if the event is prolonged, participates in its outcome."

If Americans didn't know that 2½ weeks ago, they surely know it now.

Television and Film: Apocalypse for the Masses

By Tom Shales
Washington Post Staff Writer

The bomb was ours before we were the bomb's, but not by much. Within two years of the use of the atomic bomb on Japan, MGM had a ponderous and solemn government-approved account of the Manhattan Project in movie theaters. It was called "The Beginning or the End," and Ludwig Stossel played Albert Einstein. The bomb had made its rather official debut in the dominant pop-culture medium of the day.

Actually the nuclear age came to movies even earlier. Alfred Hitchcock liked to brag, in the last years of his brilliantly creative life, that he (and screenwriter Ben Hecht) had given the federales fits by making uranium 235 the Maguffin in his romantic thriller "Notorious," released in 1946. Movie people weren't supposed to have known then about things like uranium, Hitchcock claimed, though popular speculation was rife. In the film, uranium was the stuff Cary Grant and Ingrid Bergman found in the wine bottles in Claude Rains' basement.

These films typify two principal approaches to The Bomb taken by movies and TV ever since; either it is the looming *idee fixe* in a dire cautionary tale, or it is just the most oversized of all mechanical plot devices. But always the big bad wolf. Cinematic treatment of the bomb ranges from the recent "Testament," in which the sacrificially suffering Jane Alexander shepherds her children through nuclear diarrhea, to the merrily mordant 1959 British comedy "The Mouse That Roared," in which a football-shaped "Q-Bomb," capable of global annihilation, is kicked and chased all over the mythical duchy of Grand Fenwick by various incarnations of Peter Sellers.

Whether being grimly contemplated by a cinematic sobersides, or shamelessly brandished in the timeless spirit of movie exploitation, the bomb and nuclear threats have sustained a fairly steady presence in films throughout the past 40 years.

The largest gathering in history to consider seriously the subject of nuclear holocaust was convened by the ABC television network on Nov. 20, 1983, for its history-making telecast "The Day After," a haunting movie about the aftermath of a nuclear attack on the United States. Weeks of advance hysteria

See FILM, F2, Col. 1

FILM, From F1

about the film, during which it was denounced by every crackpot commie-phobe group in America, helped it achieve a 46 Nielsen rating and 62 percent share of available viewers. That means it had the largest audience, 100 million people, ever to see a movie at one time.

It's good that the movie that holds that record is not about a shark or a bunch of robots or a southern plantation, but about the most crucial and commanding subject imaginable to living humans.

Of all the words spoken about the film and its effects on viewers following the broadcast, some of the wisest were those of Dr. George Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania. "The Day After" was not important as a work of art—a similarly titled film, Jon Else's documentary 1981 "The Day After Trinity," about the men who built the bomb, was a far superior treatment of this topic—but ABC's movie was enormously important as a national confrontation with the unthinkable.

"The nuclear issue has been covered by the news media and has been the subject of books and magazine articles for 30 years," Gerbner said on the morning after. "But when something is put on television, it gains additional power . . . Millions of people who have tried to evade or avoid thinking about, or being exposed to, images of nuclear war, had no choice once they tuned in this program."

The closing image of "The Day After" was of the great actor Jason Robards, as a Kansas doctor, sitting and weeping in the ruins of what was once his home. That picture had the kind of stringent simplicity that television can transmit with lacerating precision. As a visual reference point, it took its place in the general consciousness beside the newsreel films of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that resurface every few years in one context or another. Or perhaps there is only one context for scenes like these.

Such sights have not yet lost the power to move and shock. Yet what about the specter of the bomb itself? ABC News used so many films of nuclear explosions in its three-hour special report "The Fire Unleashed" that it began to look commonplace. But Stanley Kubrick probably did the definitive denaturing of the mushroom cloud 22 years earlier with his mischievous finale to "Dr. Strangelove, or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb," an unparalleled satire *noir*. Shots of nuclear explosions in rapid profusion were accompanied by Vera Lynn singing one of her World War II pick-me-ups, "We'll Meet Again."

Kubrick's comedy may rank as one of the best serious films ever done on the subject of planet meltdown. Using the bomb as the focus of the blackest humor was an audacious stunt; the film seems to have lost none of its cynical power in the intervening years. It is a seminal apocalyptic work. There are others, none perhaps more unlikely and yet likely than "Godzilla, King of the Monsters" (1956) a film produced by the first and so far only country to experience nuclear devastation, Japan.

Known as Gojira in his native land, Godzilla is one of a long line of radiation mutations that trampled their ways across the movie screens of the '50s. With diligent Barnummy enterprise, movie producers used nuclear testing as a bogeyman that unearthed giant ants, giant grasshoppers, even a giant turtle. An atomic blast in the Arctic dislodged "The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms" in 1953, a special-effects dinosaur (by Ray Harryhausen, the Michelangelo of this genre) who tried to eat New York and was induced to swallow a fatal radioactive isotope while making a first-rate inferno of Coney Island.

But Godzilla stood above his colleagues in monsterdom, even though he was all too clearly not an ingeniously animated model but simply a man in a rubber suit stomping across a paper landscape. Worse, the film was radically altered for American audiences by the importing producer, who inserted shots of Raymond Burr, as reporter "Steve Martin," in the already-completed film (the original, three-hour, subtitled and Burr-less "Godzilla" was shown last year in New York, but no Washington theater has booked it).

For all these impediments, the film still wields, even in interrupted television showings, a seductive cumulative clout, much of it traceable to an awareness of its country of origin. Godzilla is given life by the bomb and having thus been born, he extracts bomblike, and godlike, vengeance. The volume of destruction depicted on the screen is overwhelming.

To add to whatever ironies there were, the Godzilla monster subsequently became a folk hero in Japanese culture, a tall and scaly Davy Crockett, and succeeding Godzilla movies ("Godzilla vs. the Smog Monster") depicted the creature not as a pestilence but as an easily summoned do-gooder. A new remake, featuring a life-size, computer-operated "Godzilla," is now being readied. Like the bomb itself, he will not go away.

Until "The Day After," the single most visible film treatment of life in the nuclear shadow was probably Stanley Kramer's 1959 "On the Beach," an all-star apocalypse set in Australia, where inhabitants wait for the arrival of a radioactive cloud drifting their way after a devastating exchange between the superpowers up north. Gregory Peck and Ava Gardner clinched, Anthony Perkins stammered, but something more likely to be remembered about the film was a Kramer casting gimmick: this movie was so serious that Fred Astaire was in it *but did not dance*. He played a race car driver who commits suicide rather than face nuclear puking.

Another thing people remember from the film is its Ernest Gold score, specifically the interpolation of the Australian folksong "Waltzing Matilda." Those of us of a certain generation will, thanks to Messrs. Kramer and Gold, never hear "Waltzing Matilda" again without thinking of the end of the world.

Stanley Kramer wasn't the only one to sound warning bells in movie houses during the '50s. The ubiquitous Arch Oboler named his 1951 movie "Five" after the number of people who survive its portrayal of a nuclear attack. Irwin Allen, before he began upending ocean liners and torching skyscrapers, disgorged the

The New York Times

Commuters reading books and magazines at a station in Wilmington, Del.

Philadelphia Makes Do Without Newspapers

By WILLIAM K. STEVENS
Special to The New York Times

PHILADELPHIA, Sept. 13 — Last Sunday morning, on the second day of a strike that has shut down Philadelphia's two major newspapers for nearly a week now, a crowd in search of out-of-town papers at the Bryn Mawr News Agency was so unruly that the doors had to be locked.

"Animals," Jim Abel, the owner of the newsstand in that normally sedate Main Line suburb, called them later.

Since that first, almost panicky response to the sudden interruption of an entrenched daily ritual, things have calmed down. "Certainly, life hasn't stopped" in greater Philadelphia, the Channel 10 anchor said at the start of Wednesday night's television news program. The program has been expanded from 30 to 60 minutes to help make up for the disappearance of The Philadelphia Inquirer and The Daily News as a result of the strike by nine unions that began Sept. 7 over contract issues involving wages and job security. Negotiations between the unions and the Philadelphia Newspapers Inc., which publishes the newpapers, broke off today, and no new talks were scheduled.

List of What's Missing

If life has not stopped, as the anchor pointed out later in his broadcast, something is clearly missing.

Dick Burroughs, one of Mr. Abel's customers, misses it all: the sports, the business news, the comics, "and of course the general news."

Bill Bremer, manager of an auto repair shop in the suburb of Paoli, feels deprived of the Sunday television schedules.

Thousands of sports fans are hungry for late information on baseball pennant races, and some also miss the detailed information that tells them how they did on the college football pools. "It's terrible," said one bettor, an administrator at a major university. "I had to watch cable TV for three hours on Sunday."

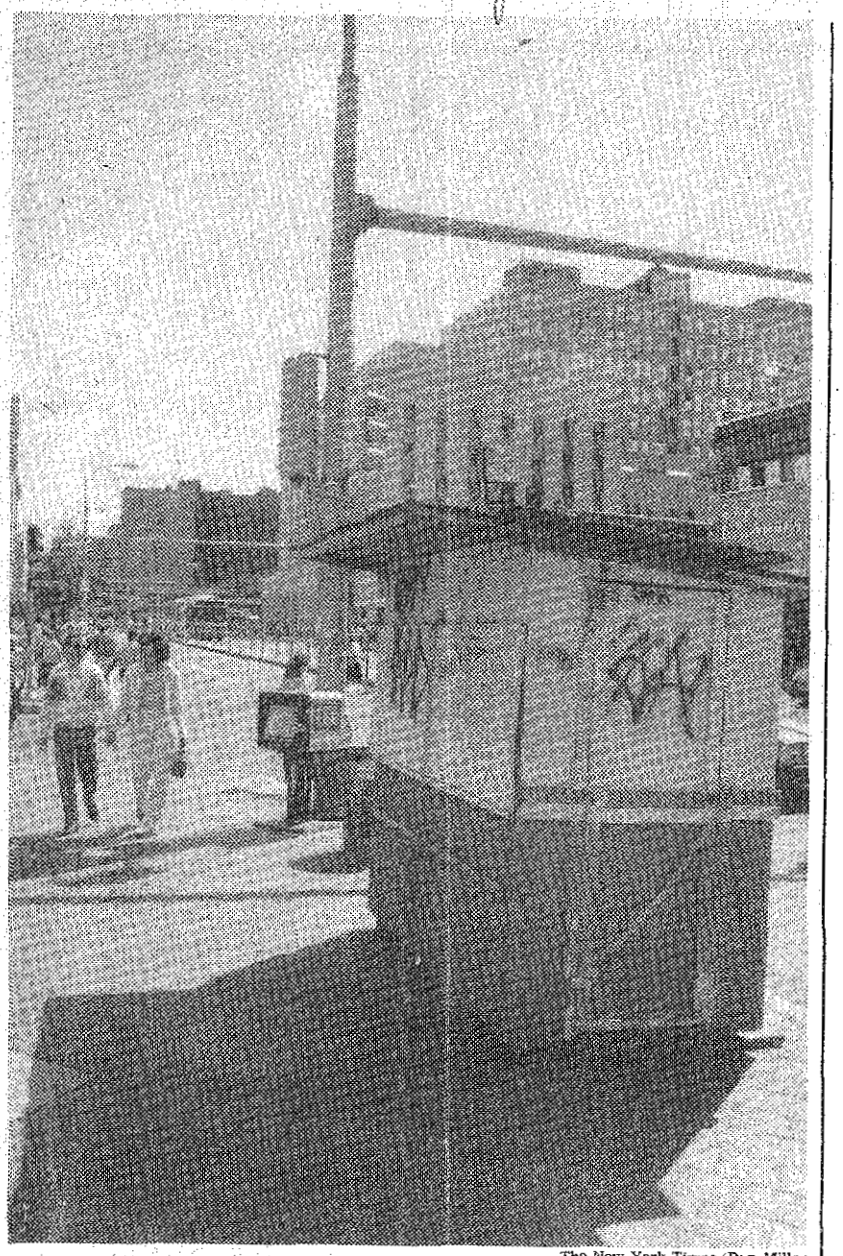
Moviegoers miss the movie advertisements; diners, the style pages. And people from many walks of life miss the self-help and entertainment features. Thousands of shoppers hunger for the Wednesday coupons, printed as newspaper advertisements, that bring supermarket discounts.

Monroe Weeks, who runs a sidewalk newsstand at 12th and Market Streets in downtown Philadelphia, says his business is off 75 percent. "A lot of people aren't reading at all," he said.

Job-seekers and apartment-hunters are without the classified advertisements, and merchants are deprived of the main conduit of information between them and consumers. This set of concerns has prompted Mayor W. Wilson Goode to declare that "We're not just talking about reading a newspaper, we're talking about real economic impact."

"There are a million and one small bits of information that people miss in their daily lives" said Dr. George Gerbner, the dean of the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School of Communications. But what people miss most, he said, "can be summed up in the word 'ritual.'" Aside from providing information about "locally accessible events," he said, reading the newspaper "serves as a ritual occurrence for most people, in which their sense of the world is constantly, periodically and regularly reinforced. It confirms people's view of how the world works."

Dr. Gerbner based his assessments largely on a handful of academic studies on the impact of newspapers on readers.



The New York Times/Dan Miller

A closed newsstand on Market Street in downtown Philadelphia. A strike since Sept. 7, by nine unions over contract issues involving wages and job security has shut down the city's two major newspapers.

What people apparently do not miss in a strike, he said, is a newspaper's presentation of "the news" as news has traditionally been defined. When defined as happenings such as crimes, disasters, assassinations and diplomatic power plays, he said, "news is a very stable, highly predictable commodity — the times and the names and places change, but the events themselves never change."

Mr. Bremer agrees. Despite the newspaper strike, he said, "you can pick up most of the news by just listening around."

Readers do respond to the more sophisticated attempts of some newspapers to get beneath the surface of such events, Dr. Gerbner said. He placed The Inquirer, which has made serious efforts in this direction in recent years, in this category.

The loss of this dimension of The Inquirer's report is largely offset by the availability here of papers like The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times and The Washington Post, he said. Sales of those and other out-of-city papers have gone up sharply here since the strike began, and some news dealers say they could sell more copies if they could get them. Spokesmen for The New York Times and The Washington Post said those papers had declined to increase the number of copies shipped to the Philadelphia area. "It's our policy not to change our draw in a strike situation," said Leonard R. Harris, a Times company spokesman. "We feel we should not cash in on any other city's problems."

The void has been at least partly filled by the television news programs, at least one of which includes a reading of the comics, as Mayor Fiorello La Guardia of New York City once did in a newspaper strike there.

Local television stations have also added new news programs and expanded existing ones. Channel 3, for example, the NBC affiliate, has added half-hour local newscasts at 8 A.M. and 8 P.M., and has expanded its 11 P.M. broadcast to 45 minutes. It has also added television listings, horoscopes and stock tables to its programs. Other channels have altered their programming similarly. Channel 6, for instance, this evening carried detailed reports on weekend entertainment and leisure activities here and in Atlantic City.

The Cable News Network also appears to have added viewers here as a result of the strike. "My mother watches CNN all day long," Mr. Bremer said. "She says it's more interesting than the newspapers."

Newspaper Cancels Sunday Issue

PHILADELPHIA, Sept. 13 (AP) — Publication of the Sunday issue of The Philadelphia Inquirer was canceled today after newspaper executives concluded that they could not settle a strike by nine unions in time, a company spokesman, William Broom, said.

"We could have gotten out a bare bones edition, but it would have borne no resemblance to a normal Sunday paper," Mr. Broom said. "We really passed a deadline to do that days ago."

Mr. Broom said Philadelphia Newspapers Inc., publisher of The Inquirer and The Philadelphia Daily News, would resume bargaining with the mailers' and the teamsters' unions.

After the two unions settle their disputes, the Council of Newspaper Unions, representing all nine striking unions, will take up three joint issues, Mr. Broom said. Only then will talks turn to wages and benefits, he said.

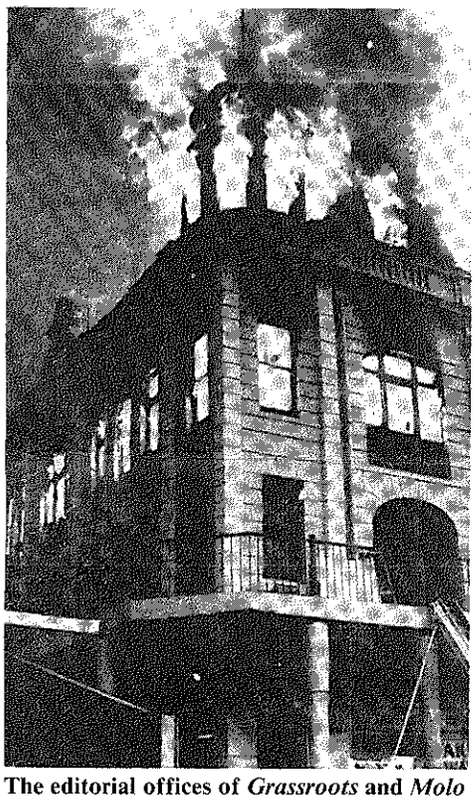
The issues to be settled before wages and benefits are addressed involve job security for the mailers, who assemble the newspapers; a company ban on nepotism and sympathy strikes, and rules covering reprimands.

ACTION

World Association for Christian Communication Newsletter

Number 102 **October/November 1985**

Fire destroys "Grassroots" office in Cape Town — arson suspected



The editorial offices of *Grassroots* and *Molo Songololo* were destroyed after fire swept through the Cape Town building in October.

Fire gutted the editorial offices of the community newsletter *Grassroots* and the children's magazine *Molo Songololo* in the heart of Cape Town on October 11. The cause of the fire is believed to have been arson. All the files, office furniture and equipment were destroyed within an hour. Only the empty shell of the building was left.

Number 10 Corporation Chambers also housed the office of the publication *Unity*, "the voice of the clothing workers", and the Cape Area's Housing Action Committee, as well as the Cape headquarters of the Media Workers' Association of South Africa and the Retail and Allied Workers' Union.

Molo Songololo was considered a good example of an "alternative" children's magazine. It did not allow children to become subjects of consumer propaganda, but instead inspired them with solidarity and friendship.

Grassroots, founded by a few Cape Town journalists in 1980, became the link between sixty democratic organisations in the Cape peninsula. It had a circulation of between 15 and 25 thousand, and over the years became the model for several similar publications in other cities of South Africa.

Grassroots was instrumental in strengthening the community organisations within the area. It was supported by scores of trade unions, the domestic workers' association, youth and students' organisations, and by numerous residents' associations in the Cape. Its language was non-racial. Its heroes were not individuals but the communities themselves.

Since the founding of the United Democratic Front, *Grassroots* had been one of the organs propagating the UDF's aims. But it also served the ordinary man and woman by including an educational service in its pages. Legal and health counselling not only took place in the publication but was provided by those in the editorial offices themselves.

The fire has set back *Grassroots, Molo Songololo* and other organisations for months to come. In addition, some of the editorial workers had been arrested prior to the fire. Yet, the organisation associated with the publications is determined to carry on with its work. Emergency appeals have been launched in a number of countries. A phoenix is soon expected to rise from the ashes.

Report condemns TV violence

"Violence in the media does lead to aggressive behaviour by children, teenagers and adults who watch the programmes." That was the conclusion drawn by the National Council of Churches of Christ, USA, in their report on "Violence and sexual violence in the media," released in September.

The report, compiled from a two year study sponsored by the NCCC, based in New York, calls for families and churches to be aware of what is happening to their media. Sexual and physical violence are increasing in television programmes, because, the report says, "The new media — cable, television and home video — put pressure on the old media to keep viewers. As a result, broadcast television also presents a heavy diet of violence and negative sexual images."

One positive form of action against this increasing trend, could be to establish media education boards drawn from local communities, to ensure that some educational needs of children are met by television programming, the report suggests.

Dr William Fore, head of communications at the NCCC and president of WACC, wrote recently in *The Christian Century,* expressing his belief that the link between violence on television and in society is now irrefutable. He says, "Now the verdict is as clear as the evidence that links smoking to cancer; violence in media is causing violence in the society."

He feels that television has played some part in the almost 100% increase in murders in the US over the past 30 years, and in the rise in assaults, rape and child abuse. He traces the history of studies on television violence from 1969 to the present day. All have stressed the same link, and yet to what avail? Violent programmes continue to be broadcast.

Dr Fore quotes one of his colleagues at the

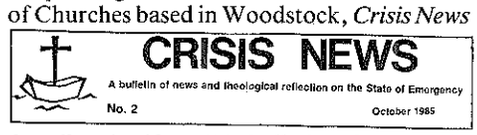
turn to page 2

News sheets flourish

The recent and continuing unrest in South Africa has led to the production of several independent news sheets. Workers' organisations, church groups and journalists are all providing information on the catalogue of events taking place daily in their country.

The Clothing Workers' Union (CLOWU), which had been housed in the *Grassroots* building, reported the recent fire in their *UNITY* news sheets. They comment, in the article, on the lack of freedom for unions to organize, adding, "This fire can only be seen as an act of terror against our organisation."

Speaking for the Western Province Council of Churches based in Woodstock, *Crisis News*



describes itself as "A bulletin of news and theological reflection on the State of Emergency." The bulletin focuses on local happenings, and documents cases of intimidation and violence against individuals by the security forces.

And journalists, frustrated by the restrictions imposed upon the national press, have begun their own "fact sheet". Entitled *Bulletin,* the sheet is published every five weeks by the Journalists' Solidarity Committee in Athlone. *Bulletin* reports on arrests, protest marches and school closures within South Africa, as well as international reactions to the situation. The journalists say they are attempting to cover "the news behind the news."

TV violence

from page 1

NCCC, Dean Gerbner, who points out the sinister effect that television can have on people, by causing them to feel insecure: "Fearful people are most dependent, more easily manipulated and controlled ... They may accept and welcome repression if it promises to relieve their insecurities."

Dr Fore asserts that "Violence on televison — as well as on cable in movies and on video cassettes is lowering our quality of life."

The NCCC report blames monopoly control of production and distribution, the drive for profit and a failure by the Federal Communication Commission to monitor television programmes nationwide, for the continued showing of violent and sexually violent programmes on television.

A summary of the report's recommendations may be obtained from: Media & Values, 1962 South Shenandoah, Los Angeles, Calif. 90034, USA.

North American broadcasters meet

"Making all things new", is the theme of the 16th annual conference of the North American Broadcast Section of WACC (NABS-WACC) to be held from 2 to 6 December, in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, USA.

According to Edward Willingham, the conference's business manager, "This year's conference focuses on the independent spirit of men and women who are "doing new things both inside and outside the churches."

Seminars and presentations on various aspects of broadcasting will form the basis of the conference. Mr Charles Keller, vice president and general manager of Capital Cities Television Productions, Philadelphia, will lead discussions on "National broadcast perspective"; The Rev Dr Thomas Boomershine of the United Theological Seminary, Dayton, will speak on the "Theological perspective"; Linda Seger an independent film producer from Los Angeles will give a presentation on the "Film perspective". And Dr Hans Florin, general secretary of WACC will speak on the international concerns of the Association. Advertising and local broadcasting will also feature in the programme.

One of the highlights of the conference will be a feature film premiere. Participants will also have the chance to see programmes produced by some of the NABS-WACC members at the conference. Last year's conference attracted 179 participants from a wide range of denominations.

NABS-WACC, 1300 Mutual Building, Detroit, Michigan 48226, USA.

Courses • conferences

Social communication in Canada

A Canadian university is holding two consecutive courses on different aspects of social communication.

The first course is being held this term at St Paul's University in Ottawa. It provides an introduction to the basics of communcation, with a video workshop on the language of television.

The second term (January to April), will include Christian communication and there will be workshops on visual language and the place of audiovisual facilities in pastoral work. (OCS-N)

Write to: Secretariat pour les communications sociales, Universite Saint-Paul, 223 rue Main, Ottawa, Ontario KIS 1C4, Canada. (OCS-N)

Newsletter production

A variety of one and two day courses in design and layout of newsletters and journals make up a yearly programme organised by Popular Communication of Great Britain.

Course participants are taught the principles of such skills as designing forms, layout, halftone screening and newsletter design. They are then able to practice their chosen skill under supervision during the course.

The courses, several of which have been tested and developed by course leaders in more than one country, are designed to "demystify graphic skills and jargon."

The aim of each course is to help participants communicate their organisation's message more effectively, while also saving time and costs.

Popular Communication believes that "almost anyone has the potential to handle the world of visual communication with confidence."

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Peace conference

"Together for Peace" is the theme of a conference to be held from 20 to 24 January 1986 in Geneva, Switzerland.

The conference is being organised by and for non-governmental organisations, in recognition of 1986 as the United Nations International Year of Peace.

Five workshops related to peace issues will take place during the conference, which aims to improve cooperation between NGO's and to revitalise their commitment to peace. One of the areas under discussion will be "Preparation of societies for life in peace: the role of education, science, culture, religion and mass media."

The conference's organising committee includes, among others, the WCC's Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, the International Union of Students and the World Young Women's Christian Association.

Write for a registration form to: WFUNA, Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland.

¿Hay que censurar las noticias de la televisión?

La defensa de la seguridad nacional y la protección de rehenes durante una crisis, son dos razones dadas recientemente por una selección de ciudadanos norteamericanos, para justificar la censura de las informaciones en la televisión.

Según un sondeo de la Universidad de Fairfield, Estados Unidos, sobre los hábitos de los que miran la televisión, la mayoría de los 120 profesionales entrevistados, creen que el gobierno debe tener el derecho de limitar el reportaje en la televisión en algunas situaciones: ya sea en cuestiones de juicio legal, o evitar el pánico masivo, o respetar la privacidad del individuo.

El sondeo tuvo lugar en julio pasado, durante la crisis en el Líbano, cuando un grupo de terroristas secuestró a pasajeros norteamericanos desde un avión. Es posible que este suceso influyó las respuestas.

Sin embargo, las familias de los rehenes se acordaron que el reportaje extensivo de la crisis fue un factor positivo en la liberación de los rehenes. Los jefes de los departamentos de informaciones en la televisión tuvieron que defenderse en un tribunal en Washington contra la crítica de los políticos. Jody Powell, periodista y presentador en la televisión, negó que el reportaje causó una prolongación de la crisis. Rechazó la idea de limitar tal reportaje, diciendo que "El elegir ciertas noticias para producir un resultado previsto no es otra cosa sino propaganda, y no tiene un papel en una democracia."

La cuestión de dar voz a los terroristas es una que se levanta cada vez más en estos días. Ray Corrado, criminalista de la Universidad Simon Fraser en Canada, explicó a una reunión de la prensa que los periodistas juegan un papel importante en conseguir soluciones sin violencia. En su opinión, los terroristas no temen morirse y "se interesen más en la publicidad que en obtener un objeto particular."

En otro rincón en el mundo, en Gran Bretaña, los intereses de seguridad nacional prohibieron la transmisión de un programa de la BBC sobre Irlanda del Norte. El programa dejó hablar a dos políticos de ese país — el uno protestante, el otro católico — quienes ven la violencia como instrumento necesario para ganar su lucha. Los directores de la BBC cumplieron con el deseo del gobierno y proscribieron la emisión. Pero su decisión incitó una huelga de 24 horas por los periodistas ingleses que consideraron que su compromiso fue una traición de la independencia de la BBC.

Más recientemente, el 2 de noviembre, el gobierno de Africa del Sur prohibió todo reportaje y el uso de cámaras en lugares de desasosiego en su pais. Según el presidente, Sr P W Botha, podría dar aliento a los que emplean la violencia para lograr sus fines.

Escribiendo en Media Development (No. 2/1985), Valerio Fuenzalida, del Centro de Indagación y Expresión Cultural y Artística, Santiago, dice que en 1970 el gobierno chileno creó varios mecanismos para ejercer el control social sobre la televisión, pero hoy día "en el consejo nacional de la televisión en Chile, de los 8 miembros actuales, 6 representan el gobierno." Entre los años 1972 hasta 1982, el televisión chilena "se ha transformado en un medio de persuasión y de distracción ideológica." Sr Fuenzalida subraya la conexión entre la democracia y la libertad de la televisión, y nota que "diversos grupos sociales han comenzado a discutir nuevamente el tema de la comunicación televisiva en una futura democracia."

Dado que el poder informativo de la televisión es irrefutable, la definición de los límites de las noticias que vemos no es fácil.

David Winter, que trabaja en el departamento de emisiones religiosas de la BBC, cree que lo importante es educar a la gente para que sea más consciente del poder de la televisión. Pero tiene dudas sobre el uso de la censura, pues "La minoría que las busca no siempre cuida los intereses de la población."

Sheila O'Connell

Rock attacks apartheid

Bruce Springsteen, "The Boss" of American rock and roll, is one of the stars behind a song attacking South Africa's apartheid system. Released in the United States in October, the song entitled "Sun City", is enjoying great success in the American charts.

More than 50 stars of rock, rap, reggae, pop and jazz joined together to record the song, named after the Sun City Entertainment and gambling resort in Bophuthatswana, a black "homeland" in South Africa.

Why was the song written? Mr Springsteen, famous for his raucous voice and simple, but powerful songs of life in small-town America, explained that "I don't think you can just sit back and watch what is going on down there without feeling that you have to say something about it."

Mr Steven van Zandt, Mr Springsteen's former lead guitarist wrote the song after two trips to South Africa in 1984. The voices of Bob Dylan, Ringo Starr and Jimmy Cliff also feature in "Sun City".

"Sun City" is an angry song which urges artists and athletes to boycott the Sun City complex. Referring to the Reagan Administration's policy of constructive engagement with South Africa, Mr Springsteen sings, "We're stabbing our brothers and sisters in the back."

Mr Springsteen believes the record is also relevant to the question of racial discrimination in the US. "By bringing attention to what's going on in South Africa," he said, "it will also make us look at our own backyards and the terrible problems we have with racism here in this country."

Bruce Springsteen: singing against apartheid.

Gold award for freedom

Efforts made to strengthen the freedom of the Catholic press are to be given special recognition by the International Catholic Union of the Press (UCIP).

The UCIP Gold Medal and prize of 3,000 Swiss Francs will be awarded for the first time in 1986. It will go to the person, group of people or institution who have made the most outstanding contribution to the freedom of the Catholic press. (OCS-N).

Begun by a group of working-class women in Jamaica in the mid-70s, the Sistren Theatre Collective from Kingston, Jamaica, uses drama to analyse and help solve local community issues. Sistren, who incorporate local settings and music into all their productions, took part in the Caribbean Consultation in Barbados last September. They have now produced their first film, "Sweet Sugar Rage", which portrays the harsh conditions facing female workers on a Jamaican sugar estate. Sistren Theatre Collective, 100 Hope Road, Kingston 6, Jamaica.

Caribbean demoralised by TV

Television is creating a new breed of addicts in the Caribbean who are being "demoralised daily by the seduction of the tube." Alan Kirton, general secretary of the Caribbean Conference of Churches (CCC), issued this warning at the Caribbean consultation held in St. Philip, Barbados in September, when Christian communicators, mostly from the Caribbean, debated the continuing effect of new communication technologies on Caribbean life and culture, and drew up plans for constructive local action.

The consultation followed up issues raised in a survey conducted in the Caribbean last year (see ACTION No. 97). Entitled "Communicating for Human Development: Claiming Common Ground", the three day event was sponsored by WACC, the CCC and Intermedia (the international communications branch of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA).

Concerned about the seemingly indiscriminate showing of television programmes from North America, Mr Kirton told participants that those involved in television should be more discerning about programming. Christians should let their voice be heard in this respect, he said, and he rejected the validity of many imported "religious programmes". He added that "Christians in the region, and particularly Christian communicators, are challenged to say "no" to much of the bilge that is polluting our airwaves and claiming legitimacy and our attention, simply because Jesus is supposedly being peddled."

Marlene Cuthbert, senior lecturer at the University of the West Indies and associate professor in the Department of Communication Studies at the University of Windsor, Ontario, Canada, spoke on "Communications, Technology, Culture and Development: Caribbean realities". She emphasized that new technology should be used in the right way in the Caribbean if the region wants to alleviate its dependence on North America. "New technology typically does nothing to give a voice to the voiceless, hence our priorities need to be clear", she said.

The 39 participants agreed that wider dissemination of locally produced video programmes was necessary. Facilities do exist to produce and exchange such videos, but they need to be backed up by more effective networking, according to the consultation. To this end it was decided that a CCC planning network would write a proposal for an intra-regional cultural video project, with the assistance of the Banyan collective of Trinidad, the Caribbean Institute of Mass Communication (CARIMAC) and the Caribbean Community Secretariat (CARICOM). The project will cover all 16 countries represented by the CCC and CARICOM. Plans are also afoot to promote two-way communication with the US by placing Caribbean videos there.

To avoid the dangers of domination by foreign media, which extol a lifestyle alien to a Caribbean audience, participants believed that efforts should be made to encourage local arts and traditions.

They also called for greater involvement by churches and academic institutions in media awareness training, and more public education on both the beneficial and harmful aspects of new technology.

WACC was represented at the consultation by Neville Jayaweera and Dr Sarah Breimer of the Department of Research and Planning.

New Kenyan journal

The first issue of *Wajibu* a new African journal, which will appeal to people "who seek an alternative to the Western, often materialistic

way of life", appeared in Kenya last August.

The theme of the opening issue of *Wajibu* is "The Family in Africa". An article entitled "One happy family — is it possible?" advises members of the family to respect and accept one another, and not to try to realize their own frustrated ambitions through an unwilling victim. "Don't try to make a tomato into an orange", we are told.

Other articles, by a selection of different writers, include "The traditional African family". "The church and polygamy" and "Marriage: problem and mystery".

Wajibu, which means duty or concern, is managed by an editorial board of 8 men and women, who say they have begun publication of the journal out of "a sense of concern for, and duty towards the society in which we find ourselves". They hope that *Wajibu* will act as a forum for discussion on social and religious issues.

Wajibu is published quarterly by Dr Gerald J Wanjohi, P O Box 32440, Nairobi, Kenya. (price per copy: K.shs. 10.00/one year's subscription: K.shs. 40.00).

World ecumenism

A new Spanish language ecumenical journal called *Presencia Ecumenica* has been launched by Acción Ecuménica in Venezuela.

According to the journal's editor, Rev Jochen Streiter, the aim of *Presencia Ecumenica* is to act as a forum for discussion and information sharing on ecumenism.

The first issue, which appeared in September, contains articles on the Pope's visit to Venezuela, the Evangelical Church in Venezuela, the work of the Church in community and the effects of the Duval dictatorship on human rights in Haiti. A poem by the president of the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI), calls for peace in Nicaragua.

Book reviews and international ecumenical documents will be a regular feature of the journal, and readers are invited by the editor to send in any comments on the journal, good or bad, together with suggestions for improvements in future issues.

Accion Ecumenica, Apartado 30091, Caracas 1030 A, Venezuela.

Christian-Muslim Encounter in the Middle East is the theme of the most recent issue of *MECC Perspectives.* It contains 12 articles including one from a Muslim contributor. It is being distributed on behalf of MECC by the World Council of Churches.

Media in India

"It is a pity that the news values of a television system which is ... run by the Government, ... to serve the purpose of development in the direction of socialism, should show so little orientation towards the common people in its news and current affairs programmes." This expression of disappointment in the progress of television in India, is voiced in a journal entitled *"Media News in Perspective".*

Published by Cadre of Media Resources and Action, *Media News in Perspective* focuses on the role of television, video and radio in India's social, political and cultural development.

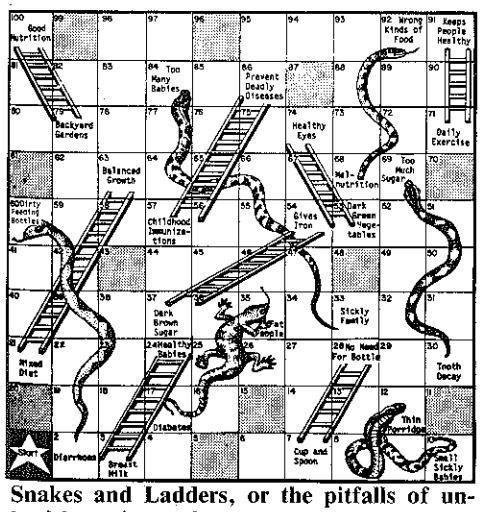
The journal includes press cuttings from Indian newspapers, showing both press and public reaction to new films, the commercialisation of television and the quality of imported videos.

Media News in Perspective highlights the dangers and potential benefits of the new electronic media. State-controlled television has the choice of "elite-oriented" and "mass-oriented" educational and economic policies. The journal quotes a report commissioned by Doordarshan television which severely criticises the current direction of Indian television, in particular its reliance on foreign programmes. The article says, "The poor can ill-afford to emulate the lifestyles of the rich countries. The software planning for development must adopt a dual strategy of borrowing only useful values and things but resisting harmful values and things from the affluent world."

For further information write to: CAMERA, 19 Hajarimal Somani Marg, Bombay-400 001, India.

Education for health

The links between good food and good health and how to communicate this information, forms the basis of Unesco's *Nutrition education series,* which is part of the organisation's resource pack for nutrition teaching and



Snakes and Ladders, or the pitfalls of unhealthy eating: a classroom game designed for 9 to 11 year olds.

learning.

The series gives examples of lesson plans and teaching aids appropriate for health education. Issue 8 provides helpful advice on how to plan a lesson to teach children the dangers of night blindness, how it originates and how to avoid it. The plan encourages the active participation of children in learning exercises.

The value of "Easy-to-make teaching aids", such as flash cards, "vegetable lotto" and puppets is stressed in issue 10. These can all be employed to make nutrition teaching more lively and therefore more memorable. The issue contains practical designs and ideas on how to produce such materials. Examples of health education posters currently in use in Malawi, Bahrain and the Sudan are also shown.

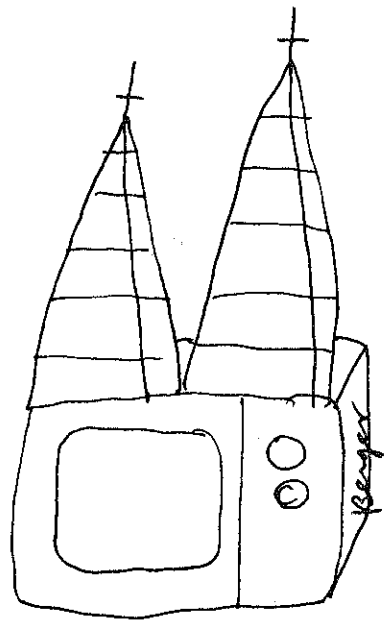
The *Nutrition education series* is being prepared and field-tested by a worldwide team of nutrition and health educators.

Unesco, 7 Place de Fontenoy, 75700, Paris, France

Mediated ministry

"How religious is religious television programming?" This is one of the questions raised in the Winter 1985 issue of the *Journal of Communication* which explores the theme of "Mediated Ministry".

Television evangelist Billy Graham says he



"can preach to more people in one night on television that perhaps Paul did in his whole lifetime." But what is the true value of religious television and what do people who watch it, think of it? According to Gary D Gaddy and David Pritchard, "Particularly among Protestants, watching religious television programmes may substitute for going to church.

Robert Abelman and Kimberly Neuendorf report on the general treatment of God and religion in the context of solutions to social and health problems. In their analysis of sample television programmes, they discovered that God is often proposed, above money and man, as an answer to physical handicap, divorce and racial conflicts.

Another article examines the relationship between religion and social class and shows how class origins can be significant in shaping people's views on redemption, the afterlife and prayer.

The Journal of Communication, which is published quarterly by the University of Pennsylvania, USA, also features a regular review section on books of interest in the field of communications.

Yearly subscription costs US$22 from: Journal of Communication, P O Box 13358, Philadelphia, PA 19101-3358, USA.

Sing for soya

In a bid to increase soyabean production in Indonesia, a payment equivalent to £700 has been offered for a song extolling the joys of planting soyabeans.

The director-general of Food Crops said he hoped the song would encourage farmers to plant more beans and thus cut back imports.

Pediatricians Back Mandatory Hour of Educational TV

By NANCY PAPPAS
Courant Medical Writer

NEW HAVEN — Condemning commercial children's television as a national disgrace that "treats children as nothing more than an open pocketbook," a 28,000-member national pediatricians' group endorsed federal legislation Thursday that would force networks to offer an hour of educational programming a day.

"The federal regulatory agencies in the 1980s have clearly shown they do not care about protecting the special needs of children and adolescents," said Dr. William Dietz of Tufts University School of Medicine, Boston. He is chairman of the American Academy of Pediatrics' task force on television and children.

Dr. Benjamin Spock, author of "Baby and Child Care," agreed.

"The present situation is indecent," Spock said. "Television is providing programs that we know for a psychological fact induce brutality and insensitivity in children."

The group's announcement was part of a daylong conference on children and television at the Yale School of Medicine that featured leading researchers and activists in the field.

"The situation has never been very good, but it's never been as bad as it is today," said George Gerbner, dean of the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School of Communications. Gerbner has spent the last 18 years studying the effect of television on viewers' social and political attitudes.

> "The Federal Communications Commission under Reagan has changed from a television watchdog to an industry mascot."
>
> **Peggy Charren**
> Founder of Action for Children's Television

He and other speakers blamed the deregulatory policies pursued by the Reagan administration for what they consider the deterioration of children's programming.

"The Federal Communications Commission under Reagan has changed from a television watchdog to an industry mascot," said Peggy Charren of Cambridge, Mass., president and founder of Action for Children's Television, which has worked since 1968 for improvement of children's programming.

Speakers said there are the following barriers to high-quality television for children:

- Program-length commercials. These are half-hour cartoon programs featuring licensed toy characters, such as GI Joe, Masters of the Universe and the Care Bears. The Federal Communications Commission banned such programming in 1974, but reversed itself under Reagan, Charren said.

"Now, there are 40 shows, at least, that come out of the toy companies ... They are 25-minute commercials, interrupted by shorter commercials," she said.

"There's a new cartoon program on the air called 'The Gummy Bears,' " Charren said. "I guarantee you Gummy Bears are going to be a

See Pediatricians, Page C6

Pediatricians Support Children's TV Mandate

Continued from Page C1

much more popular candy by the end of the year than they are now."

Legislation endorsed by the group would require the commission to conduct an inquiry into program-length commercials.

• Pay-cable TV and home video recorders. Those who can afford the better-quality children's programming available through these sources, Charren said, "are going to take care of their own children, and forget about plain old television. We're going to have a segregated class system of entertainment."

• The decline of public television. This year, Gerbner said, is the first in recent memory in which public television, because of funding cuts, is not offering a single, new, domestically produced program. This is a special loss to children, he said, because public television programs like "Sesame Street" and "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" have been the only bright spots in the field.

Although the question of whether exposure to television violence induces children to become more violent has been the focus of most debate over children's programming, it is not the real problem, Gerbner said.

"The major lesson of violence," Gerbner said, "is how to be a good victim ... what we call the 'mean world' syndrome."

Through repeated exposure to violent programs, "we absorb a sense of vulnerability, a sense of a world in which we must depend for protection on stronger authorities in the social hierarchy."

Thus, for every 10 white males able to assert power and authority in prime-time television, there are 12 white male victims, Gerbner said. For every 10 white females with power, there are 16 victims. For non-white characters, the ratio is 10 with power to 25 victims.

"As for elderly black females, they end up a corpse, almost with no exceptions," Gerbner said.

The overall message of television, absorbed from an early age by youngsters who watch an average of four hours a day, is that "if you're white, male and in the prime of life, you can do almost anything to anybody and get away with it," Gerbner said.

"One is ashamed to talk about American children's television when traveling abroad, because people can't believe a civilized, enlightened society would tolerate it," he said.

Hartford Courant

October 4, 1985

Group at Yale calls for national legislation

Conference finds kids' program

By CAROLYN WYMAN
Staff Reporter

The state of children's television in America today is a "disgrace of world-class proportions," according to a group of doctors and TV experts who spoke at Yale University Thursday.

"The United States is the only civilized country in the world which does not even have a half hour of prime-time programming devoted to children," said George Gerbner, a television reseacher from the University of Pennsylvania.

In response to this crisis, Dr. Benjamin Spock, Peggy Charren of Action for Children's Television, and members of the American Academy of Pediatrics Task Force on Television and Children joined with Gerbner yesterday to express their support for national legislation that would require all television stations to broadcast educational programs for children at least one hour a day.

"The Children's TV Educational Act of 1985 would not take any of the children's programming that some of us find objectionable off the air. That would be censorship, and we don't want that," said Charren. "But it would provide alternatives to what we see now."

What children see on television now is less than pleasing to most of the speakers at "Television and Children: Fact vs. Fiction," a daylong conference sponsored by Yale's Office of Graduate and Continuing Education.

In the first talk of the day, Yale pediatrics professor Dr. Victor C. Strasburger linked the rising rates of teen-age pregnancy and alcohol abuse to television's "obsession" with drugs and sex.

"In one study of soap operas, a sexual act is performed or mentioned once every nine minutes. In 'General Hospital,' which is the highest-rated soap among teens, there are 16 sex acts or references to sex acts per hour," Strasburger said. In addition, Strasburger called alcohol "the most frequently consumed beverage on television." Ninety-two percent of situation comedies show characters drinking alcoholic beverages and yet, the negative consequences of alcohol consumption are shown less than 20 percent of the time.

According to Strasburger, anyone who views a lot of television gets "a warped view of the world," one that is preoccupied with drugs and sex and dominated by people who are "predominantly white, middle class and violent."

The latter point was explored at some length by George Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania and also a conference speaker. According to Gerbner, the proportion of men to women in prime-time TV is three to one; in children's programming, six to one; and in news and public affairs programming, 10 to one. In addition, he said, children are depicted on television in about a third of their actual numbers.

So television misrepresents the number of people in different segments of our society. Even worse, Gerbner said, is the way television misrepresents the structure of power in our society. "If you're a white male, you can do anything. But if you're black or a woman or elderly you're underrepresented and over victimized," he said.

In Gerbner's view, the major effect of television violence is not to cause people to become more violent; but "to cause increased feelings of insecurity, dependence and powerlessness among those who are already in the most vulnerable position ... And who is in a more vulnerable position than children?" he asked.

Like the other speakers, Gerbner believes better children's television can be obtained through political action in general and support of the Children's TV Educational Act in particular. But conference participants also had these other suggestions:

- "Take control of your television sets," Strasburger said. Limit your child's viewing to the better programs, and talk to them about inaccuracies you see on television.
- Take the television industry to court. The Fairness Doctrine requires television stations to air opposing viewpoints on controversial topics. If the excessive amount of sex on television could be considered controversial, then, argues pediatric task force chair William Dietz, television stations might be forced to air public service advertising promoting birth control on the basis of the Fairness Doctrine.
- Write, call and talk to executives at local television stations. "These people may be the most responsive to local concerns," Dietz said.
- Write, call and talk to advertising executives.
- Write, call and talk to network executives.

In a workshop titled "Working With the Networks: How We Can Change Children's Television," Dietz said, "The networks look at television as basically an entertainment medium. So it's difficult to get them to see television's educational potential."

Nevertheless, Strasburger had kind words for "Happy Days," "Family Ties" and most especially, for NBC's "The Cosby Show."

"For years the networks have been telling us they're just giving people what they want. Then along comes 'Cosby,' a show without sex or drugs or violence — or even much action — and it's number one," Strasburger said.

Deitz says the networks have responded to a number of the pediatricians' concerns — including one that television characters "buckle-up" when they get into their cars.

Charren is happy with a McDonald's commercial in which the clerk tells a child, "Gee, your glasses are beautiful."

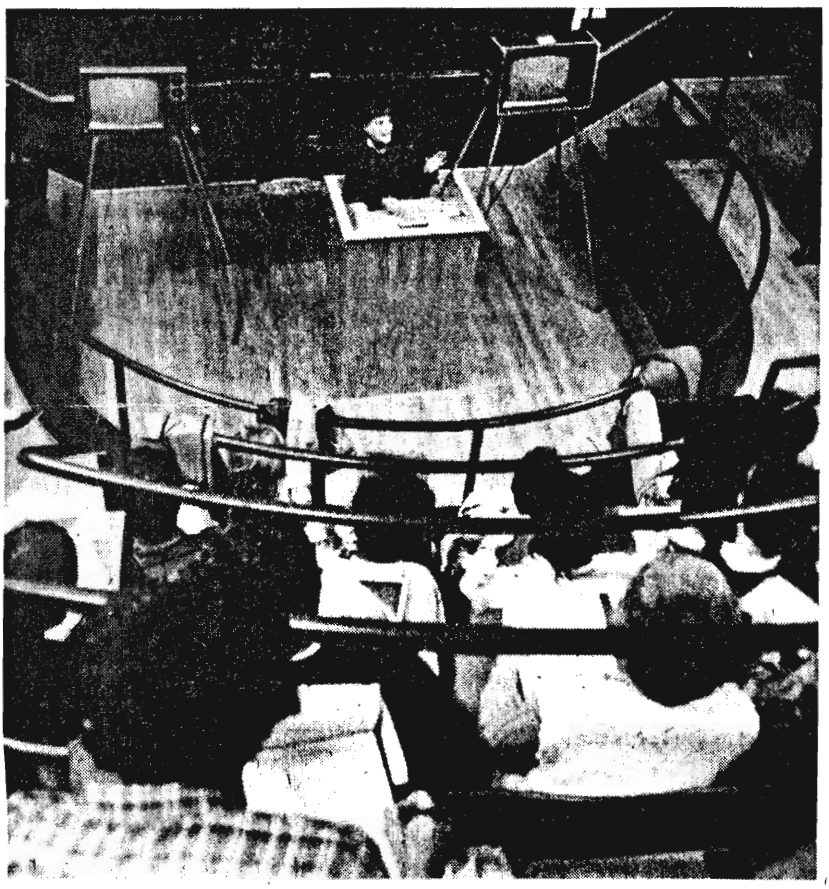
"Sure they're selling hamburgers but I think it's nifty that they're making kids who wear glasses feel good at the same time," Charren said.

JOURNAL COURIER, New Haven, Conn.
October 4, 1985

ming a 'disgrace'

Staff Photos by MICHAEL F. O'BRIEN

From left, Gerbner, Strasburger, Dietz, Charren and Spock attend a conference on children's television.



Charren of Action for Children's Television gives a TV workshop.

Journal-Courier, New Haven, Conn.

October 4, 1985

Spock prescribes changing methods of child rearing

By JOAN BARBUTO
Staff Reporter

Claiming that American society is "sick and going to get sicker" Dr. Benjamin Spock Thursday said that there are tremendous pressures on children today, and because of them parents must change their methods of child rearing.

Speaking at a conference on children and television at the Yale School of Medicine, Spock cited the following sources of tension in families today: loss of comfort from religion and the extended family; employment of both parents; the doubling of divorce in the last 15 years; problems involving stepchildren, an excessively competitive and violent society and the fear of nuclear annihliation.

He said teen-age suicide has quadrupled in the last 20 years because teen-agers "need to believe in some-

▷Continued on page 10

Staff Photo by MICHAEL F. O'BRIEN

Spock at Yale podium: Society is sick.

▷ Dr. Spock prescribes

Continued from page 1

thing as they move into adulthood. When there's nothing to believe in, there is nothing to protect them against the self-doubt and depression of this period."

As practices in bringing up children, he advocated:

- Elimination of physical punishment. A supervisor displeased with an employee doesn't strike him, he observed, and he said children should be treated with the same respect.
- Elimination of violence on television. He said much of it is "really poisonous" and parents should monitor it carefully and not let children watch more than an hour a day.
- Education on how to be parents. Questioned after his talk, Spock said such training should be offered not only in high schools, but in all universities as well.
- Downplaying of competitiveness. He criticized Little Leagues and similar organized sports for children, claiming that fathers who run them may cause emotional damage to children by harsh criticism and pressure.
- Elimination of grades in school. School has become "a series of hurdles" for many children, the pediatrician claimed. The point of school should be "not to set up hurdles, but to help each individual child become more mature, responsible and creative."

Journal-Courier

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 4, 1985

FAMILY&LEISURE

Strasburger, a Yale pediatrics professor, approves of "Family Ties."

"Cosby" is a show without sex or drugs or violence and it's number one, said Strasburger.

NEW HAVEN REGISTER
OCTOBER 4, 1985

Law requiring more educational TV for kids sought

The American Academy of Pediatrics and experts at a Yale Medical School conference on children and television Thursday called for passage of legislation to require that television stations use seven hours of educational programming per week for children.

Identical bills, known as the Children's TV Education Act, have been offered in the U.S. House and Senate to require such programming. The bills have the support not only of the AAP but also of the national Parent Teacher Association and the National Education Association.

The bills would require that five hours of educational programming be broadcast in the period Monday through Friday.

"These programs will offer children an alternative to the sitcoms and program-length commercials that are currently the only TV fare for children," said Dr. William Dietz, chairman of the AAP Task Force on Children and Television.

"Federal law says that the airwaves are a public resource and must be used 'in the public interest' to serve viewers and listeners," said Dietz.

"In their rush to deregulate, the regulatory agencies clearly have shown they do not care about protecting the special needs of children and adolescents, who represent a large proportion of the viewing public. The frequency of program-length commercials and the shortage of other alternatives indicate that broadcasters are more interested in children's pocketbooks than in their development," he said.

The proposed law also would require the Federal Communications Commission to inquire into program-length commercials. "It is outrageous that the networks air commercials that last a half hour and subsequently claim that these commercials represent legitimate entertainment for children," said Dietz.

NEW HAVEN REGISTER
FRIDAY,
OCTOBER 4, 1985

Dr. Spock: Society is 'sick'

By Joan Barbuto
Staff Reporter

Noted pediatrician Benjamin Spock said Thursday that Americans must revise their ideas of how children should be raised because of the tremendous pressures on youngsters today.

"I think our society is sick and is going to get sicker," warned Spock, the keynote speaker at a conference at the Yale School of Medicine on "Television and Children: Fact Vs. Fiction."

To build better values and more emotional stability in children, Spock advocated:

☐ Elimination of physical punishment. Instead of bringing up gentlemen, he said, "We're bringing up gentle thugs by whacking them all the time." Yet he reported that in a Minnesota study, 85 percent of parents believed "you can't bring up kids right without hitting them from time to time."

A supervisor displeased with an employee doesn't strike him, he observed, and he said children should be treated with the same respect.

☐ Elimination of violence on television. He said much of it is "really poisonous" and parents should monitor it carefully and not let children watch more than an hour a day.

"We know watching brutality brutalizes to some degree," he said. Yet studies have shown that the average child has watched 18,000 murders on television by the time he graduates from high school. "We're creating murderousness, it seems to me."

Spock urged that parents write television stations and advertisers and protest programs damaging to children.

☐ Parenthood education. Questioned after his talk, Spock said it should be taught not only in high schools, but in all universities.

☐ Downplaying competitiveness. He criticized Little Leagues and similar organized sports for children, claiming that fathers who run them may cause emotional damage to children by harsh criticism and pressure.

☐ Elimination of grades in school. School has become "a series of hurdles" for many children, the pediatrician claimed, but the point of school "is not to set up hurdles, but to help each individual child become more mature, responsible and creative."

☐ More emphasis on responsibility and service in raising children. "We can bring them up with the idea that there are lots of problems in the world, and it's going to be their privilege to help solve them," he said, "in contrast to the idea that they are in the world to find their own fulfillment."

He said the lack of political participation by citizens must also be changed. They must not only write often to their representatives, but take part in demonstrations to change things they don't like in society.

Some of the causes of tension in American families today that Spock cited include:

☐ The loss of the comfort and guidance of religion, extended families, and even "community" because families move so often.

☐ The fact that both parents work in half the families with preschoolers, and the lack of good day care.

☐ Divorce has doubled in the last 15 years and it always affects children.

☐ Assembly-line jobs that leave parents dissatisifed and bored.

☐ Problems involving stepparents and stepchildren.

☐ An excessively competitive, violent and materialistic society, with no redeeming spiritual values to offset this.

☐ The fear of nuclear annihilation.

Spock noted that teen-age suicide has quadrupled in the last 20 years. He thinks it is because teen-agers "need to believe in something as they move into adulthood. When there's nothing to believe in, there is nothing to protect them against the self-doubt and depression of this period."

Dr. Victor Strasburger of the American Academy of Pediatrics, another speaker, said that television is encouraging alcoholism,

→

violence and promiscuity among young people.

To illustrate his point, he showed an MTV video titled "Girls on Film" featuring nearly nude women fighting in mud, massaging and wrestling with men, showering and performing sexually suggestive acts.

He recommends a lockout switch for MTV that parents could control or a dissociation of the line carrying it from the cable television package.

The drinking of alcohol occurs frequently on television, said Strasburger, associate clinical professor of pediatrics at Yale and director of adolescent medicine at Bridgeport Hospital.

There is a reference to sex ev-

Julia Herbst, 10 weeks old, attends a workshop with her mother, a pediatric nurse.

ery nine minutes on daytime soap operas, and references to sex outside of marriage are three times more common than to sex within marriage, according to Strasburger.

"We're giving them the idea sex is fun, that everyone should go out and have sex with an unmarried partner," he said. Yet he noted that when the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecology wanted to broadcast an ad about contraceptives, all three networks turned them down.

In his opinion, "one or two condom ads on Sunday night football would do more to lower teen-age pregnancy rates than five years of federal funding."

Peggy Charren, president and founder of Action for Children's Television, said children watch an average of four hours of television a day, yet there is not a single live daily or weekly program for children on the three major networks. Instead, children's television now consists of cartoons and "sales-pitch" programs that are really 25-minute commercials for toys.

"Television has assumed the functional equivalence of a new religion," claimed George Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania.

It presents a mythological world that "has become the norm to which we relate."

It is a world that represents the "the structure of power in our society, and violence is a demonstration of power."

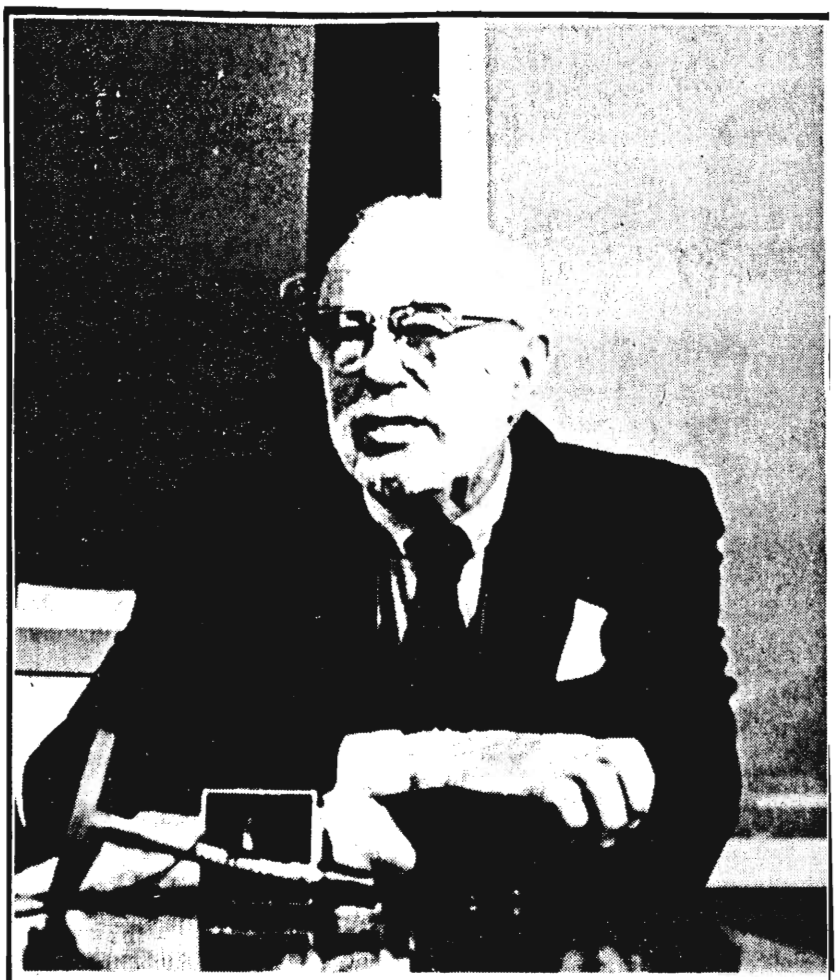
Gerbner thinks few people will commit violence because of the violence on television, but he says it is giving people the idea they live in a dangerous world and making them feel dependent, passive and vulnerable.

Connecticu

Dr. Benjamin Spock is cornered by reporters and parents.

Staff photos by Michael F. O'Brien

YALE DAILY NEWS
OCTOBER 4, 1985



YDN-Peter Wu

The baby doctor speaks

Dr. Benjamin Spock, world renowned for his primer for parents, *Infant and Child Care*, was one of several speakers Thursday at a Medical School Symposium on children's television. In the past Spock has spoken out strongly against the draft and the arms race. In the 1960s his protests landed him in prison.

NYTimes 10/9/85

New TV Technologies Alter Viewing Habits

By SALLY BEDELL SMITH

Communications experts say that the number of television viewing options now available and the ability to control how and when programs are watched have led to significant changes in the way the medium affects viewers.

Not all experts are in agreement, but a large majority of those studying television, have noted the following changes:

¶An increase in the number of hours television is watched. Figures of the A.C. Nielsen Company show that in the first eight months of 1985, American households with access only to conventional television watched 45 hours 22 minutes a week, while those with cable and subscription services watched almost 58 hours a week.

¶A greater restlessness in selecting programs. Instead of watching one program to completion, many viewers with the new television technologies — which now reach, through satellite dishes or cable, more than half of the nation's 85.9 million television households — tend to move quickly between channels, absorbing only fragments of several programs. The result, most experts say, is that such viewers tend to develop a shortened attention span in their television viewing.

¶An increasing appetite for the visually exciting. More and more viewers are responding favorably to television programming that emphasizes the visual and diminishes plot and characterization, and so more and more such programming is being provided.

VCR Users in Different Pattern

An exception, some experts say, is the video-cassette recorder, now available in one quarter of American homes. Because VCR users are self-programmers — they select in advance what they want to see and can stop and review at will — VCR viewers do not appear to fall into the same viewing pattern.

Increasingly, researchers are focusing on the implications of frequent channel hopping, which has been enhanced in recent years by remote-control channel changers. A preliminary report on one study — of 800 fifth- and 10th-grade children, in homes with and without cable, undertaken last year by the Communication Technology Laboratory at Michigan State University — showed that "youngsters with cable are far more likely to watch more than one television show at the same time."

"They flip across channels to watch part of at least two shows on a fairly regular basis," according to the report. It also suggested that channel changing may take place more often "as program segments become less interesting, in between music video

George Gerbner

"It is a world," he said, "without much coherence or sense." As a consequence of this disconnected information, he said in a recent interview: "Americans know of a lot of things but about almost nothing. Someone is considered well-informed who simply knows that a plane was hijacked or there was an earthquake in Mexico City."

After the American hostages were released from captivity in Iran five years ago, Mr. Postman undertook a study to determine the extent of knowledge about Iran. One hundred people were asked simple questions about Iran's language, religion and government. "Because Iran was carried almost continuously on the news for a year, we expected people would not only know about Iran but would be overloaded," said Mr. Postman. "But we found that most people couldn't answer our questions. Almost always those who actually knew something had gotten it from print sources."

Jib Fowles, professor of human sciences at the University of Houston in Clear Lake City, Tex., and the author of "Television Viewers vs. Media Snobs," frequently disagrees with the conclusions of fellow communications experts.

He sees the same fragmentation, he said, but he attaches a different value to it. Readers, he said, have long watched news in disjointed fashion by scanning and selecting. With television, he said: "There may be advantages to what appears to be a lack of coherency. We are given pieces and asked to make out of them what we can."

Continuity Gaps Widening

Other researchers have concluded that these new patterns mean a diminished tolerance for coherent narratives. "People's ability to follow

part of at least two shows on a fairly regular basis," according to the report. It also suggested that channel changing may take place more often "as program segments become less interesting, in between music video segments, and at other logical breaks in programming content."

Carrie Heeter, director of the laboratory, said the study indicates that "we are developing a generation of more active viewers in the sense that they don't watch programs anymore; they watch pieces of programs."

"You can now put together your own program of fragments," she said.

Television programmers have been responding to these trends by producing programs, such as the rock videos on MTV, which create impressions through rapid montage of sound and image.

Music videos, though perhaps the most advanced development, are not the only example of the new programming. NBC's series, "Miami Vice" has been notable more for its look and sound than for a coherent story line. The program, which last week was watched in 18 million homes, has led the way in prime-time entertainment in using rock music, vivid imagery and quick cuts between scenes to build drama.

In television news, too, emphasis is beginning to be placed on visual excitement. Tom Yelling, a senior producer of CBS's "West 57th," a new magazine program, said: "We share things with the viewer. It doesn't spell everything out." The program uses dramatic editing and camera angles and video montage against rock music to excite the eye. It is, according to Mr. Yelling "video fluent."

Improved Quality of Images

An increasing impatience in the television audience, in the view of some experts, parallels an improved quality of images in television. "People now have available to them many compelling and highly attractive visual forms," said George Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School of Communciations at the University of Pennsylvania, who has been studying the social effects of television for the last 18 years. "There is more competition for visibility and attention on television today, and people are less tolerant of boring things than they used to be."

"The people working in television have become more ready to think of it in its own terms rather than as a visualized newspaper," said George Comstock, S.I. Newhouse professor of public communications at Syracuse University. "That leads to an accelerated type of trivialization and an emphasis on film and good footage."

Neil Postman, a communications professor at New York University, said in "Amusing Ourselves to Death," a book to be published next month: "Under the influence of the printing press, discourse was different — coherent, serious and rational. Now under television it has become shriveled and absurd."

The problem, he writes, is "not that television presents us with entertaining subject matter but that all subject matter is presented as entertaining."

While Mr. Postman cites a few instances where television offers depth and extended explanations, he contends that it is largely "a peek-a-boo world, where now this event, now that, pops into view for a moment, then vanishes again."

Continuity Gaps Widening

Other researchers have concluded that these new patterns mean a diminished tolerance for coherent narratives. "People's abiltiy to follow linear arguments has declined," said Joshua Meyrowitz, associate professor of communications at the University of New Hampshire. "People are less patient."

Mr. Fowles insists that this concern is unfounded. "It is a theory that relates more to the young," he said. "We see it in MTV, which is restless content. There are also more images crowded into what we see, in commercials, for example. We know how to absorb that imagery very quickly." But, he added, "When the audience gets older it can take things in longer spans."

Many experts see in the video cassette recorder the potential to change the profile of the television viewer in other ways. As programs for video cassettes adapt to the special technical capabilities of the machines, for example, they could reshape how people watch television.

One way might be to graft some of the values of literacy onto the experience of television viewing. "With the ability to go backward and forward and do freeze frame on a VCR, there could be more visually and narratively complex dramas on cassette," said Mr. Meyrowitz. "You would have to watch them several times to get the full meaning."

Another possiblity would be cassettes in which the viewer could decide at a given point what direction to take, with several middles and endings to choose from, much like certain video games.

New Socioeconomic Divisions

Others believe that the use of video cassettes could create new distinctions between socioeconomic groups. National television available over the last four decades, in the view of Mr. Gerbner, "has meant that for the first time people living in the ghetto have been getting much of the same television fare as people in a penthouse."

Now the selective viewer, the person with high education and income, "will be able to get via cassette many things that used to be available in print and by going to live performances," he added, "while the heavy viewer can now watch more of his favorite programs. The result will be a restriction in the range of choices."

But communications experts are divided on whether the VCR will erode reading more than it will encroach on other television viewing. Mr. Fowles contends that it will not. "It will more likely affect other kinds of diversions," he said. "Every number I can get my hands on shows that people are reading more now than ever in our history. The audience for television is growing, but reading is a skill which is in no way in jeopardy."

Other critics contend that the new technologies of television could move the culture further from the rigors of print. "The whole experience with a videotape is like reading," said Mr. Comstock. "You select, pay for and settle down."

However, most experts believe that specialized interests and serious literature are likely to be least affected. "There are certain things that print can do best," said Mr. Comstock. "Televisionization often makes what is on the printed page seem empty-headed."

HEALTH

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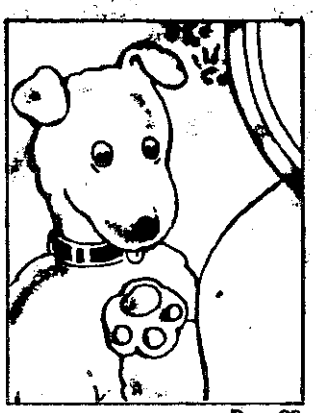

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Sudden infant death syndrome strikes more than 6,000 American babies a year. Last December, when her daughter Larkin was not yet 4 months old, Jennifer Wilkinson put her to bed on what had been a perfect Christmas. "I did not know it was the last time I would hold my baby alive," she writes.

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Washington Post 10-16-85

Pediatricians Criticize Television in U.S.

Mandatory Educational Programming for Children Urged

By Susan Okie
Washington Post Staff Writer

Too much of the wrong kind of television can make children aggressive or overweight, interfere with school performance, encourage them to try alcohol, drugs or sex, and persuade them that the world is more violent, more white and more middle-class than it is.

Those are the conclusions reached by a task force of the American Academy of Pediatrics, which issued a "call to action" on children's television at a conference at Yale University School of Medicine earlier this month.

"No other country in the world has done as poorly for its children as the United States," said Dr. Benjamin Spock, who headed a lineup of experts condemning the lack of quality children's fare on commercial stations.

"At present there are no [commercial] programs for children," he said. "The things that pass for them are really half-hour-long commercials on the life of a doll they are trying to sell."

The pediatric academy announced its support of a bill, currently being considered by committees of both houses of Congress, that would require commercial stations to provide seven hours a week of educational programming for children 12 or younger.

Pediatricians have expanded their concerns about program content to include not only violence, but also television's portrayal of alcohol, drugs, sexuality, the elderly and ethnic groups.

Yet despite more than 3,000 studies of the impact of television on children's behavior, experts disagree over what effects have or have not been proven.

"The big thing we know is that children learn from TV," said Dr. Victor Strasburger, associate clinical professor of pediatrics at Yale. "The real question is what they learn from it."

Studies concluding that children who watch more television are more violent, for example, can be criticized because they do not explain whether television viewing leads to an aggressive personality, or vice versa.

But Strasburger, Spock and other pediatricians say such arguments should not stand in the way of change, because there already is abundant evidence that the world presented to children on prime-time television is not one that adults would wish them to imitate.

"The average American child before reaching adulthood has watched 18,000 murders on TV," said Spock. "It doesn't mean that a sensitive, well-brought-up child is going to turn into a thug, but everybody is desensitized to a degree."

Strasburger said one of his best childhood friends was injured when he jumped out of a second-story window trying to fly like Superman, but that such examples of direct imitation are rare. Instead, he believes more subtle links exist between television and health problems such as accidents, suicide and teen-age pregnancy.

"After 1 year of age, violence is the leading cause of death in American children and teenagers: accidents, homicide and suicide," he said. "None of those are medical. They don't involve drugs that we can give. That makes it very frustrating for pediatricians to deal with."

Strasburger and four other doctors served on a task force to evaluate television's impact on children's health and to advise pediatricians and parents how to respond. Among their conclusions:

- Repeated exposure to television violence promotes "a proclivity to violence and a passive response to its practice." George Gerbner, dean of the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School of Communications said TV violence teaches children and adults that "the world is a very dangerous place in which . . . they are dependent and need protection."
- TV viewing "increases consumption of high-caloric . . . snacks" and can lead to obesity. Although TV characters are almost universally thin, task force chairman Dr. William Dietz found a strong correlation between hours spent watching television in children and obesity in teen-agers.
- Learning from television "is passive . . . and detracts from time spent reading or using active learning skills." Strasburger said that when he sees a child who is failing in school, "My first response is . . . get the TV out of his room."
- TV's portrayal of alcohol and drugs is "unrealistic . . . and indirectly encourages their use." "On TV alcohol is the number one beverage" drunk by series characters, Strasburger said. "In real life, water is." The average child watches about a thousand beer and wine ads a year, he said.
- Sex roles and sexuality as portrayed on TV are "unrealistic and misleading," and "the risk of pregnancy is rarely considered." Strasburger pointed out that sex on soap operas takes place three times more often between unmarried lovers than between husband and wife. Contraception never seems to be a concern.
- Television promotes ethnic and racial stereotypes and an unrealistic view of society. Male characters outnumber females three to one, Gerbner said, and children, the elderly and minorities are all underrepresented. "The child learns a social hierarchy . . . to be put in his or her place," he said.

In an average week's viewing, he added, a child sees 41 policemen, 23 criminals, 12 doctors, 15 businessmen, six lawyers and three judges.

Pediatricians should educate themselves about the health consequences of television viewing, counsel families on the issue, and work with community groups, networks, producers and writers to improve programming, the task force advised.

Positive trends in television, Strasburger said, include the realistic family presented on NBC's "Cosby Show" and the three networks' efforts to purge scripts of cigarettes. "In the 1980s only 2 percent of series stars and 16 percent of series characters smoked," he said. "That's great."

Philip Harding, vice president of social and policy research at CBS Broadcasting Group, took issue with the task force's conclusions, saying they are drawn from one-sided research and "create the impression there has been a consensus. There is not a consensus on the effects of television.

"If you're going to talk about the social effects

"The average American child before reaching adulthood has watched 18,000 murders on TV . . . Everybody is desensitized to a degree."

— Dr. Benjamin Spock

of the media . . . you try to be impartial. You don't concentrate just on negative judgments. Other people just as competent, just as honest, just as well-intentioned have come up with totally different results."

Harding also disagreed with Gerbner's contention that children's cartoon shows contain 20 violent acts per hour. "He has always held that pouring milk on an elephant is an aggressive act," he said, "and he counts that as violence."

Pediatricians and consumer groups don't want to censor television, but to improve its quality and educational value, according to Peggy Charren, president of Action for Children's Television.

"If you had, on 'Knight Rider,' say, everybody buckling their seatbelts, and you did it on all the other programs . . . gradually all of us would buckle our seatbelts," she said.

Gerbner called television a "symbolic environment" that deserves its own environmental movement. "Whoever tells most of the stories to the children of a culture influences, in a very fundamental way, the way people grow up," he said. "For the first time in human history, it's no longer parents, the school or the church, but television that tells most of the stories." ■

Steps Parents Can Take

Parents concerned about the effects of television on their children can take the following steps, according to Dr. Victor Strasburger:

- "Take back control of that little box." Regulate the number of hours your child watches TV (a maximum of one to two hours a day is his suggestion) and the kinds of programs, depending on each child's age.
- Watch with your child, and talk about programs. "Discuss, particularly, violent programs or sexy programs," he said. "It's a great icebreaker. Programs we would ordinarily consider objectionable, if a parent is watching, lose their objectionability."
- Suggest alternatives. "Given the choice," said Strasburger, "most children would rather be playing."
- Be a role model: read, play games, look for other recreations besides television yourself. "If Dad is a blob sitting in front of TV every night," he said, "the kids will grow up the same way."
- If you subscribe to cable, ask your company for a lock-out box so you can limit your child's access to channels you object to. Peggy Charren of Action for Children's Television said companies are required by law to provide boxes for a reasonable, one-time charge.
- For more information, write to Action for Children's Television, 46 Austin St., Newtonville, Mass. 02160.

— **Susan Okie**

Penn dean lauds study linking media violence and aggression

By Helen Parmley
Dallas Morning News

FORT WORTH, Texas — The dean of the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School of Communications has put his imprimatur on a report by the National Council of Churches (NCC) on violence in the media, calling it a historic document.

The report, drawn up after extensive hearings and research, concludes that violence in the media leads to aggressive behavior by children and adults who watch the programs.

"It is the launching of a new environmental movement," said Annenberg dean George Gerbner, "one that is concerned with the cultural and spiritual environment of our society."

The two-year study on the social effects of the broadcast industry's use of sex and violence was presented earlier this week to NCC's governing board, which is meeting here. The study was conducted by NCC's communications commission, which examined the problems of exploitative sex and gratuitous violence in film, television and cable TV.

The report recommends such solutions as a more stringent ratings system, mandatory lock-boxes on televisions attached to cable systems, stronger controls and public hearings by the Federal Communications Commission, and educational programs and monitoring systems by local congregations as a means to apply pressure to local media outlets.

"This is the best available brief summary on research of violence in the mass media," said Gerbner. "It is the first time a highly represented group has made such a recommendation. It cannot be ignored."

Said James M. Wall, editor of the ecumenical news magazine The Christian Century and chairman of the investigating committee: "The report is to assist churches and to inform those in the industry that the right of freedom of expression requires a responsibility to protect the young."

Wall said the council is strongly opposed to censorship.

"The NCC has long defended garbage in entertainment in order to avoid curbing artistically valuable presentations," he said. "Better to permit the bad than to curb the good."

But the 48-page report will be the basis of a policy statement and resolutions that will be introduced at the May and November meetings of the governing board.

"Unless we take these steps, we anticipate severe censorship measures" from other quarters, Wall said. "The media uses the First Amendment to exploit the public, and this is a nationwide effort to prevent that misuse."

The study said it was hard to pinpoint who in the entertainment industry could reduce the amount of sex and violence in programming.

"The committee discovered that people working in the media industries are part of a vast and complex system which parcels out responsibility . . . so that in the end, no one is ultimately responsible," the study said.

The committee blamed the level of sex and violence on the control of program production and distribution by a few companies, a drive for profits, and inadequate oversight by the Federal Communications Commission.

Annenberg given $2.1 million for research on health

By TRICIA OBESTER

The Annenberg School has received a $2.1 million grant to study the impact of the mass media on health practices in developing nations.

The United States Agency for International Development awarded the grant as part of a major initiative to counter public health problems throughout the Third World.

The school will be responsible for evaluating health information programs coordinated by the Academy for Educational Development, a Washington-based non-profit organization. The AED will work with the governments of more than 15 countries during the next five years to implement educational projects with the particular goal of child survival.

The Annenberg School, in conjunction with the governments of each country involved, will analyze the success of the projects.

Annenberg School Dean George Gerbner said yesterday that the award will provide valuable learning experiences for students.

"It's a good size grant for our size school, but it means a lot of work," Gerbner said. "It is a unique opportunity for our students to get training in a very challenging area — communications in developing nations."

"It is a terrific opportunity to make a contribution both to people who need it and to our own trade," he added.

Robert Hornik, an associate professor of communications who specializes in communications in developing countries, will head the project.

Hornik, who has been working on the AED project for more than a year, said yesterday that while mass media has been used in Third World countries for educational purposes for nearly 25 years, this project represents the largest single effort using communications for health education.

"It's both theoretically interesting and has an important applied usefulness — it's attacking a problem that's worthwhile," he said.

Hornik, who returned to the University in August after spending time working with the project in Swaziland, said that a number of graduate and post-doctoral students will be involved in the project and field work. He expects to spend from four to six months in each country, and will be travelling to Indonesia in January.

The health information program began in the Gambia and Honduras

(Continued on page 4)

School gets $2.1 million

(Continued from page 1)

with projects encouraging the use of oral rehydration therapy to combat dehydration caused by diarrhea.

Ongoing programs include one in Swaziland, focused on diarrheal disease control and immunization, and another in Ecuador, addressing immunization, breastfeeding and monitoring of children's growth, and oral rehydration therapy.

Audience practices and beliefs are identified at each location and objectives are chosen depending on local needs and the possibility for change.

The programs, implemented in conjunction with health service organizations, utilize several channels of communication — radio, television, printed material and presentations by local professional and volunteer staff. Audience response is monitored continuously through the presentations.

As part of its evaluation process, the school will study which messages are learned and accepted by the audience, whether practices are altered and whether the program actually improves the health of the population.

The economic, social and personal characteristics of communities and individuals will be considered in an effort to study their effect on an individual's response to the information programs.

The study will also examine the cost of disseminating information and the extent to which systematic communications programs are institutionalized in these nations.

"We at Annenberg School hope [the project] will continue and grow," Gerbner said. "It's a unique opportunity to give students training only this kind of project and field work can provide."

Press Controls: Their Impact For South Africa

No longer can the media carry graphic scenes of protest, but bloodshed goes on in a troubled country.

The government of South Africa is succeeding in keeping violence in that nation from the world's TV screens, but it has failed to calm the unrest itself.

The number of deaths in demonstrations was higher in November than in the month before a ban was imposed on TV, radio and photographic coverage of black unrest in "emergency areas."

Yet the restrictions, in effect since November 2, have forced a reduction in TV coverage and, some say, cooled public interest in South Africa. "Not having it on TV every night lowers the level of attention and makes it easier for the South African government to pursue its policies," says political scientist Austin Ranney of the American Enterprise Institute in Washington.

Now, TV correspondents in South Africa are forced to scramble for pictures and often fail to obtain what they seek. Ed Turner, executive vice president of the Cable News Network, estimates that the number of on-the-scene reports he gets from an outside news service has dropped from eight to four a week.

After the fact. Without pictures of events, networks sometimes are forced to report on the aftermath of a confrontation between police and protesters rather than on the event itself. ABC took that tack when 13 people were killed in the black township of Mamelodi on November 21. A videotaped report that included shots of correspondent Jim Hickey sitting at his desk in Johannesburg was shown the following day.

"We said to ourselves that we have to put this piece on the air regardless of how handicapped we are," explains Robert Murphy, ABC's vice president for news, who says covering South Africa is like "trying to do a two-handed task with one hand tied behind your back."

Often, the networks fall back on having their anchorperson read the story. CBS, NBC and CNN did this in covering Mamelodi, though CNN later added on-the-scene reports about the aftermath.

Some correspondents are doing more feature stories and interviews with public officials. "We have tried to fill in as best we can," says Timothy Russert, vice president of NBC News.

Elsewhere in the world, the impact is similar. West German TV has replaced riot scenes with shots of correspondents holding microphones. RAI, the Italian TV company, increasingly uses films from its files as a backdrop to reports.

"Nobody is going to put journalists' lives at risk simply to defy the law," observes Courtenay Tordoff of the British Broadcasting Corporation.

Violators of the stringent press curbs face jail sentences of up to 10 years, fines of up to $8,000—or both.

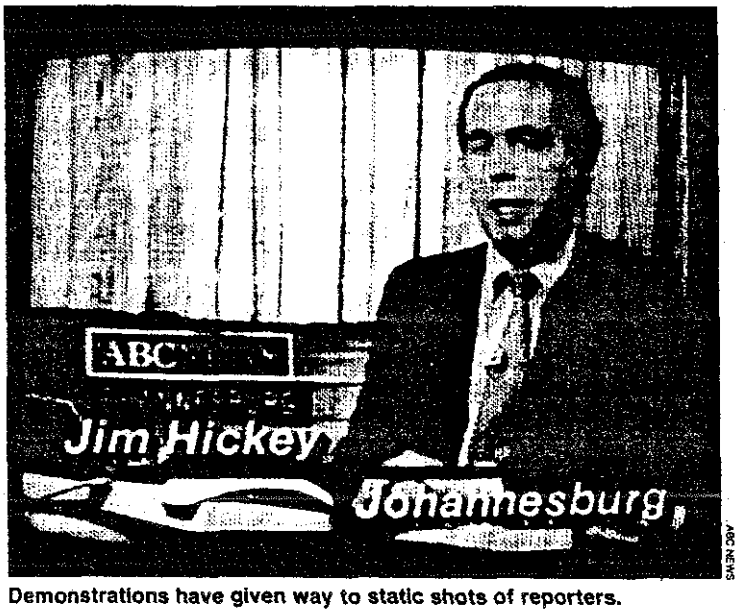
Analysts say that by forcing less coverage and severely limiting what is depicted, the restrictions are deflecting attention from South Africa. This is especially true among people who get most or all of their news from TV. George Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania, says that "the message of sympathy for the victims, which visual coverage produces, will not reach those who are informed mostly pictorially." But Gerbner doubts the government's strategy can succeed in the long run. "It's more like a rear-guard action," he says.

While the controls are directed primarily at TV, which can have strong emotional impact on viewers, reporters for newspapers and magazines also are affected. They now have to obtain permission from local police before entering emergency areas—and even some nonemergency townships—and access is often denied. "We'll still write the story, but it won't be as good," says John Darnton, deputy foreign editor of the *New York Times*.

A provocation? The government insists the curbs are needed to reduce bloodshed. "The presence of camera crews incited further violence, which led to further confrontation," contends Delarey van Tonder, press officer at the South African Embassy in Washington.

Yet reports from South Africa indicate the deaths have increased. The November toll of 99 was the second highest for any month this year. Still, van Tonder says that "unrest is showing a decline." The number of blacks killed by other blacks is up, he says, but the number killed by the police is down.

While South African officials contend that the restrictions have produced less-harsh reporting, network executives say they are pursuing coverage as aggressively as they can. Earlier this month, CBS showed demonstrators—who had been gassed by police—gathered in a church. The network also reported on a CBS camera crew's being arrested while trying to film in an area not covered by emergency restrictions. The crew was later released.



Demonstrations have given way to static shots of reporters.

Indignation over the curbs is increasing in the U.S. press. On December 10, the Committee to Protect Journalists presented South African officials in Washington and New York with hundreds of signatures protesting the bans.

How long the clampdown will stay in place is anyone's guess. South Africa's van Tonder says that "as soon as the situation gets close to normality, the state of emergency could be lifted."

Optimists can cite the recent ending of emergency restrictions in some areas and the dropping of treason charges against 12 opponents of the government on December 9 as hopeful signs.

But others are less sanguine. They see a confrontation looming between press and government. "Since the ban started, there hasn't been an incident large enough for a test case," says Lane Venardos, executive producer of the "CBS Evening News." "But that's bound to happen sooner or later." □

By ALVIN P. SANOFF with the magazine's foreign bureaus

KIDS AND MTV · THE NEW HARDWARE

Newsweek

The Video Generation

Dec. 30, 1985

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The Age of Video

The taped medium is the message. Video has become our teacher, seller and storyteller

Let's call him Video Man. Of course he's just as likely to be a she, but that's how anthropologists have traditionally christened an evolutionary jump—and, who knows, this one could prove as momentous as any in the ages B.V. (Before Video).

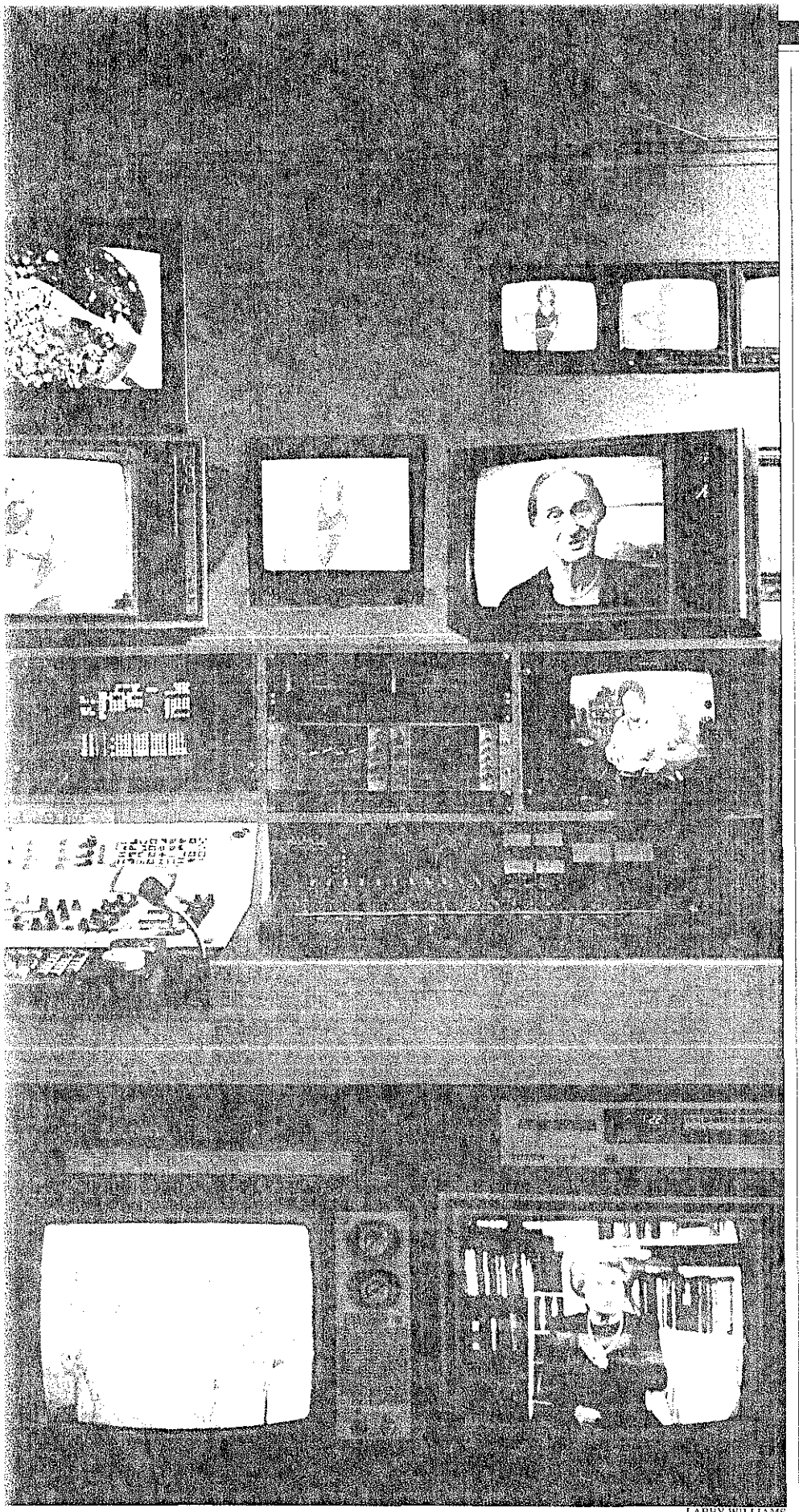
Tonight finds Video Man in the favorite corner of his habitat (the recliner he ordered from a video catalog) as he looks back—literally—on the past decade of his life. The electronic artifacts whir through his time machine. The video of his 80-yard run for South Seawash and of his valedictory address at State. The video from Telegenic Imaging that taught him how to tape the job pitch that got him into MegaGlom (was his voice that *shaky?). The video of his wedding (for an extra fee, the videographer spliced in the theme music from "Chariots of Fire" and the fireworks scene from "To Catch a Thief"). The video of the birth of his child (did his grip on the camcorder really flutter* that *badly?). A dozen more cassettes bring him to the video recently received from his lawyer, which demonstrates how a client can make a video of his will. A perfectly fitting notion, he quickly decides, albeit one with a melancholy hitch: he won't be around to videotape his loved ones watching him bequeath them his videotapes. That, he ruefully concludes, will be the first video event of his adult life over which he will not have the remotest control.*

Say this for our man: as a planetary trend setter, he made it big astonishingly fast. Social scientists estimate that it took nearly 500,000 years for Homo sapiens to move from oral communication to writing, another 5,000 years to get from writing to the printing press and some 500 years to progress, if that is indeed the word, from print to television. Video Man first flitted into view during the '60s, when a few avant-gardists began experimenting with tape as a medium for far-out small-screen art. Then, a scant 10 years ago, the introduction of the videocassette recorder launched him into our mass consciousness. In the beginning the VCR was regarded as little more than a plug-in toy. But as the machines seized our enthusiasm—they now hold sway in nearly 30 percent of all U.S. households

JOHN T. BARR—GAMMA-LIAISON

Home, sweet video: *Glickman (right) makes a pitch*

Finding new ways to relay information: *The screen's*



all-seeing eyes record experience and expand our universe

LARRY WILLIAMS

with television—so did the realization that the new technology could be applied in ways far beyond time-shifting Bill Cosby or renting "Beverly Hills Cop." The explosion in how-to cassettes offers the most obvious evidence. Besides attending shiatsu classes and sharpening their golf and tennis strokes, today's VCR owners can learn how to do massage and apply makeup, care for their plants and train their pets, relieve back pain and cope with stress, whip up coquille Saint-Jacques and pick up the opposite sex.

To fully appreciate the technology's revolutionary impact, however, you've got to get out of the house. These days video permeates virtually every corner of our culture, inexorably and irrevocably transforming the mechanisms by which millions of us define who and what we are. Just look around. It's in classrooms, courtrooms, board rooms and operating rooms. It's on the floor of Congress and above the supermarket checkout line. It looms large on stadium scoreboards and hangs from the ceiling in fashion emporiums. It has swallowed the music industry and, in the process, gotten the generations at it again, this time over the sex-and-violence content of MTV rock videos aimed at the young (page 54).

Nasty missive: This Christmas finds it under the tree and inside the mailbox. For the true videophile, the preferred gift is a camcorder, a miniaturized, lightweight camera that makes producing home movies for VCR's almost as easy as shooting snapshots (page 56). The camcorder has already spawned the video Christmas card—homemade tapes of family members imparting holiday greetings. Or perhaps sentiments not so sentimental. According to the operator of a video-card service in New York, one female Scrooge recently used his gear to dispatch a Dear John missive to her live-in boyfriend.

'Tis the season, too, in which vidcult infiltrated Broadway as well as the theater of international relations. In Lily Tomlin's one-woman show a character jokes about the taping of her mother's second marriage and another wryly recalls a lover who video-recorded their breakup. At the Geneva summit Soviet official Georgi Arbatov sarcastically alluded to one of President Reagan's preparatory approaches. "Mr. Gorbachev," he sniped, "doesn't need 10-minute video clips to fill his attention span." (Not that the Kremlin is entirely innocent of the technology's political potential: this summer it released a videotape purporting to show dissident Andrei Sakharov in amazingly fine fettle despite his lengthy hunger strike.) Oh, yes, there's this update from the world of sports. William (The Refrigerator) Perry, it seems, is learning how to cope with the onslaught of video interviews generated by his video athletics by taking a

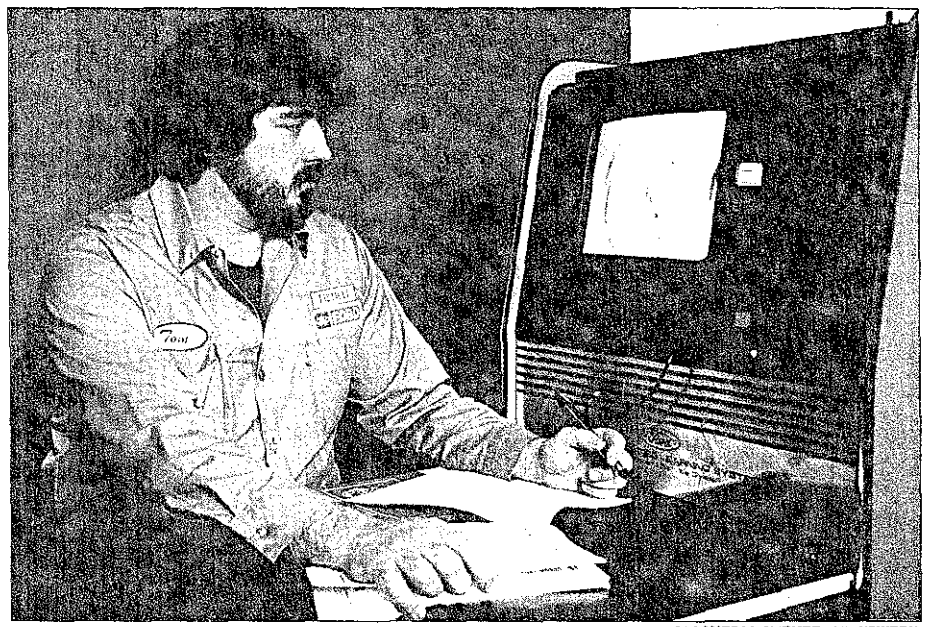
speaking course in which he watches and listens to himself on video playbacks. (The inevitable next step: the Fridge tapes a camcorder commercial showing him taping his teammates as they tape their ankles.)

As the video generation fast-forwards toward what conceivably could become an all-videoized culture, social analysts are only starting to address the fundamental conundrum: is all or even any of this *really good for us?* Whether they lean toward the Utopian or apocalyptic, most agree that we're witnessing what futurist Alvin Toffler calls the "demassification" of the media, a shift from broad distribution of a few images to all of us (e.g., via the networks) to narrow distribution of many images to select groups (via video). If such diversification has a downside, it is the erosion of that commonality of experience—that communal vision, if you will—that binds a heterogeneous society.

Academics, meanwhile, fret that today's undergrad, nurtured by video at home, school and play, has grown addicted to action at the expense of thought. Reports Michele Lamont, an assistant professor at the University of Texas-Austin: "Students are becoming more and more visual. In sociology classes, when they're asked to read something even a little bit complex, they get no pleasure out of it." Others fear that the formidable expense of plugging into the new video environment will further widen the educational breach between socioeconomic classes. "The poor," predicts University of Pennsylvania communications Prof. George Gerbner, "are going to be left out of it."

Hopeful futurists: Alvin Toffler, for one, opts for the bullish perspective. "We're reinventing the printing press," he declares. "[Video] makes for a greater variety of symbols and it encourages individualism. That doesn't mean a left-wing cult in Oregon will have a million viewers, but it will have a niche. The political impact of video appears to be limitless." John Naisbitt, the author of "Megatrends," sounds even more upbeat. "I don't see any [drawbacks to video]," he proclaims. "It's part of the unfolding of human experience. The chief benefits are access to information a lot of people wouldn't otherwise get. What we're doing is creating more and more options—more and more *ways* of doing things." At the same time, Naisbitt cautions that any prognostication risks being instantly outdated: "The technology is really exploding, with every step in fluency. I don't think any of us have any idea where it's all going to end up."

Perhaps not, but a close-in focus on where the video age is actually *at* can illuminate at least the outlines of its ever-widening horizons. The Screening of America in three acts:



JACQUES M. CHENET—NEWSWEEK

Hands-off training: *A Ford mechanic practices servicing with an electronic 'light pen'*

Master Teacher

Initially, video arrived at the business office as part of elaborate multimedia presentations designed to train and motivate employees. "First you entertain them, then they'll learn," explains Herb Bass, cofounder of San Francisco's largest multimedia production firm. "It's like teaching the ABC's with Big Bird and the gang on 'Sesame Street' instead of repeating after the teacher." With Bird & Co. seeming a bit passé of late, the most revolutionary breakthrough promises to be the adaptation of computer and video technology to "interactive" training programs. Ford Motor Co., for instance, is testing an interactive system that will impart the latest information on car repair to its 40,000 far-flung auto mechanics. On the left side of a split screen, the system flashes an underhood shot of, say, a carburetor; on the right side, it presents an array of tools needed to service it. Using an electronic "light pen," the mechanic transfers the tools over to the other screen, connects them and begins making adjustments. (Look Ma, no grease.) All the while an audio track carries the appropriate sound of the engine running smoother or rougher. "This is like a flight simulator that gives hands-on training," says Tom Kubeshesky, a Ford planning supervisor. "It's amazing the way our technicians took to it. They love it."

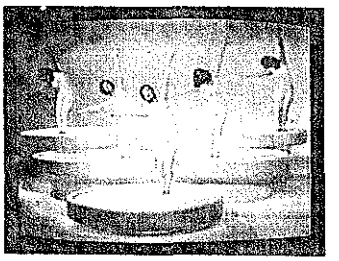
More esoteric interactive experiments are under way in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's "Athena Project." One of the most intriguing is designed to teach foreign tongues. For example, an aspiring linguist might learn French by watching a video in which a Parisian couple visits a real-estate brokerage in search of a suitable apartment. Playing the role of the broker, the student translates the couple's specifications and then, using detailed computerized listings and an electronic map of Paris, "interacts" with the couple by typing in recommendations in French on his keyboard. "Interactive video isn't a passive medium," says Janet Murray, the language project's director. "It requires a response."

Ultimately, the MIT researchers hope to apply computer-assisted video to the production of "electronic reference books" for students, but let's be sure to keep a wary watch on this one. By automatically recording how much time students actually spend hitting the "books," the computer can keep track of how diligent they are about their homework—an innovation that might have delighted Mister Chips if he hadn't read Mister Orwell. MIT research fellow Rus Gant predicts the system will be able to tell a professor, "This student comes in an hour a day or that one works 48 hours at a stretch and then disappears for two weeks." Nevertheless, Gant is convinced that the educational payoff will compensate for any unease about electronic surveillance. Interactive teaching courses sponsored by corporations and the Pentagon, he reports, have indicated that "students learn two to three times faster than with books and retain nearly triple as much information."

The utilization of tape as an instructional tool has even wound its way into the medical profession. At St. Joseph Hospital

in Houston, surgeons perform complex new procedures under the scrutiny of video cameras, which broadcast them live on monitors in the doctors' lounge and preserve them for subsequent study by interns. Some medical schools also videotape students conducting their first interview with a patient in order to criticize and improve their bedside peformances.

By now the astute sports fan has realized that we're basically talking about *instant replay.* Well, so too have our behavior-modification experts, who have begun harnessing the technology in the service of mental health. John M. Schuster, one of the dozens of clinical psychologists in the Los Angeles area who videotape patients during office visits (they must first give their consent), regards the procedure as "an incredibly powerful tool" in marriage and family counseling. "When a wife complains that her husband is rough, rude and crude, and he swears he never does it, you are at an impasse unless you tape them," says Schuster. "When he sees himself pounding his fist on the arm of the chair, it serves as a tremendous breakthrough. And if you use it week after week they can see how they are improving, so it gives them the impetus to keep trying." Understood, doctor, yet isn't it conceivable that, because the patients know they are in a sense performing, their reactions may be unnatural? Not to worry, responds Schuster. "After a while," he maintains, "most people forget that the television is even there."



Shaping up: *Drill sergeant*

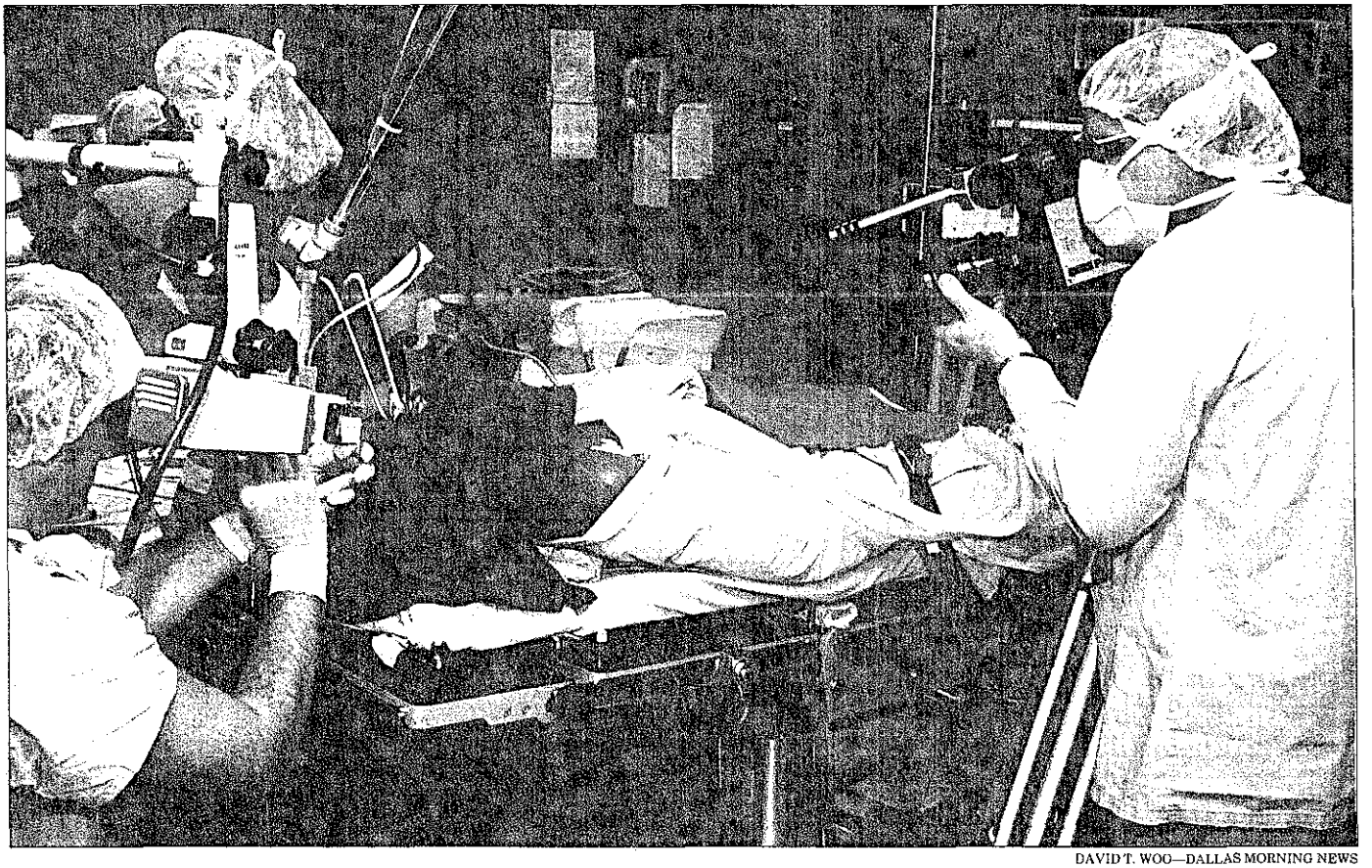
The thing is, as the young are discovering every day, that video is *there* just about everywhere. You don't have to be a psychotherapist to sense that there is a radical reconditioning process at work on how the generations regard one another. If seeing is indeed believing, then our progeny can now be confronted with an illuminating new perspective on what it means to become old. For children to witness, courtesy of a family video, their parents conducting their courtship or a mother in her first ballet recital adds a dimension to their perceptions of human growth far beyond the reach of any still camera. "There is no better way of preparing people to age," observes the University of Pennsylvania's Gerbner, "than to expose them to the phases of life before they get to them."

As video acquires more and more cachet, educational institutions are witnessing a rush to learn to *do* it rather than just learn from it. Would-be Spielbergs and Lucases, having discovered that a degree from a film school rarely pays the rent, are now turning to university video courses. "Film will always be around, but video is the medium of the future," explains David Johnson, a professor at the University of Southern California School of Cinema-TV.

Top Salesman

It's a tradition as American as concocting a plastic container that keeps the burger hot and the lettuce cold: the first to sniff out the potential of any techno-leap are usually those with a product to pitch. Or in the words of Jackson Bain, an executive at a Washington, D.C., public-relations agency: "The second guy who used the telegraph was trying to sell something."

Bain may be jesting, but there's little question that video has emerged as the



DAVID T. WOO—DALLAS MORNING NEWS

Shooting surgeons: *Taping for training purposes in an operating room at Houston's Baylor University Medical Center*

BOB SACHA

Clothes via the monitor: *In a Manhattan boutique, 'FTV' shows customers the goods—and puts them in a buying mood*

delivery system of choice for today's sales messages. Real-estate agents now put together "video brochures" for prospective home buyers. Perhaps the busiest and most inventive is Mike Glickman, whose real-estate operation in the vast San Fernando Valley does nearly $300 million in annual business. Whenever Glickman receives a new listing, he sends still shots of the residence to a video company that inserts them into a laser-disc system linked to a computer, producing an electronic brochure that house seekers can screen at his firm's headquarters. "Buyers love it because they don't have to spend days trudging from one inappropriate house to another," says Glickman. "And sellers love it because they don't have a lot of people who won't buy come through their homes criticizing their carpets."

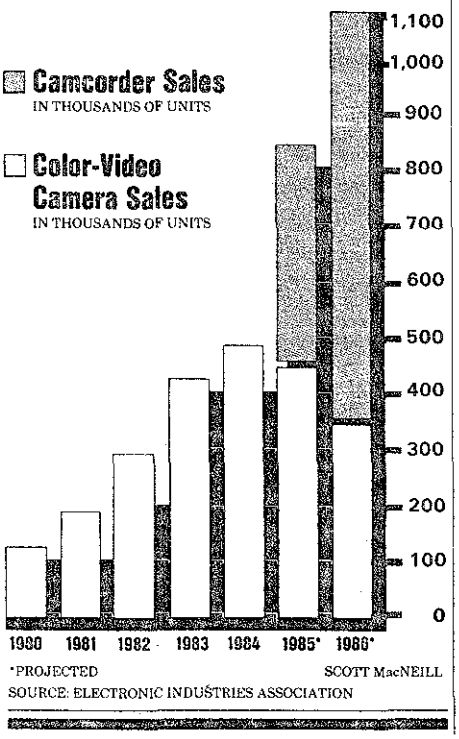
Showing duds: Since we can't resist looking at it, video seems ideal for selling what we put on. In the apparel industry, fashion videos are currently luring the ready-to-wear shopper along with the haute couture crowd. "FTV," as the new style was quickly christened, is designed to create more than just a buying mood. At Hecht's department store in Washington, D.C., visitors to the young-women's section are enveloped by 15 TV monitors playing rock videos. "We don't want to just sell clothes," explains Joe Consolo, a Hecht's vice president. "We also want to entertain the customer."

It may seem a considerable jump from marketing things to selling people, but not for the true techno-hustler. Searching for a mate? Just sign up at your local video dating service, where the lonely single can screen prospective dates by perusing their taped introductions. Jeffrey Ullman, founder of the California-based Great Expectations (electronic matchmaker for more than 1,000 marriages since 1976), proposes that "video is a fabulous way of hearing an accent that turns you on or off or seeing a spontaneity that gives real clues to possible chemistry." Looking for a job? Better get with it and drop by The Corporate Interviewing Network, Inc. For a fee of a few hundred, the network develops lists of interview questions submitted by employers and bounces them off preselected job candidates during videotaped sessions at one of the firm's 20 nationwide franchise offices. While both parties save time and travel costs, the system seems to be loaded in favor of the telegenic smoothie—but then, as they say, that's showbiz.

Bogus promo: By far the most sophisticated—not to say controversial—device employed by the technology's entrepreneurs is known as the EPK (electronic press kit). Large public-relations agencies have taken to producing slick, journalistic-style video promos for their clients and feeding them by satellite to local TV stations, where they sometimes end up on the evening newscast. Such firms maintain that EPK's (some of which consist only of lengthy background

Soaring Sales

Widely marketed in 1985, the small camcorder badly dented the old video-camera market and gave VCR users yet another choice.



*PROJECTED

SCOTT MacNEILL

SOURCE: ELECTRONIC INDUSTRIES ASSOCIATION

footage) provide a service by giving TV news directors stories they might otherwise be unable to cover. But the proliferation of what are, in essence, commercials disguised as news features has presented broadcast journalists with a troublesome ethical problem. When a reporter for a Los Angeles station ran a movie-studio-produced interview with actor Al Pacino, her superiors discovered that she had edited herself into the tape to make it appear that she, rather than a studio publicist, was asking Pacino the questions. The station subsequently refused to renew her contract.

All of which brings us to Wayne Fisher, a Houston personal-injury attorney who might be described as the Frank Capra of the legal profession. Fisher's specialty is the settlement brochure, which can include a taped presentation designed to persuade the other side to settle out of court. While Fisher is hardly the only claims lawyer to use video in such brochures, few invest as much care and ingenuity in their creation. With the help of $500,000 worth of state-of-the-art video gear and two full-time technicians, Fisher turns out productions that could stimulate the tear ducts of Ivan Drago.

'I miss Daddy': Consider one of Fisher's "day in the life" videos, which vividly illustrate how a client's injury or death has affected his life or those of his relations. The 40-minute tape opens with the key fact: a man, the narrator somberly informs us, perished in a plane crash in a swampy area of Florida. Dozens of pictures from his family albums—old snapshots of the victim fishing or presiding over holiday dinners—

IRA WYMAN

History lesson: *MIT disc*

weave in and out of on-camera reminiscences by his loved ones. His widow recalls their courtship. ("He wrote me poetry," she says. "He sent me a dozen roses every month the first year we were married.") Several of his colleagues at work laud his character ("He had a very special sensitive core that he was not frightened to let anyone see"). Then comes the heart of Fisher's case: the death's devastating impact on the victim's young daughter. As his wife testifies to his fatherly devotion, more snapshots fill the screen: the child playing on Christmas morning with the dollhouse he built her. Fighting back tears, the widow reports that her daughter tells her, " 'I miss my daddy . . . I miss his jokes'." Cut to a drawing recently made by the child at school. It shows a house capped by a black rainbow and a boxlike car. "It's almost like a hearse," observes her teacher.

Fisher estimates that he has used settlement brochures to win half a dozen multimillion-dollar awards. To some in the judiciary, however, the emotionally manipulative content of such presentations may constitute prejudicial evidence. As video emerges as a new legal tool, it has set off a complex debate over its applications. Today some prosecutors in sexual child-abuse cases spare the young victims from testifying in court by videotaping their descriptions of what happened for jurors to study. At the same time, child molesters have begun making tapes of their seductions and distributing them throughout the pedophilia underground. In other words, video, like any high-tech innovation, is, of itself, morally neutral. How we judge its usage as a new medium of persuasion hinges entirely on what the user is selling.

Personal Historian

Now for the fun stuff. As the camcorder, with its instant-playback gratifications, usurps the hegemony of the home movie camera, fashioning family video albums is burgeoning into something of a national pastime. Births, graduations, weddings, class plays, bar mitzvahs, that first haircut and that last will and testament—name it, and odds are there's an amateur documentarian lurking about to capture it all through his viewfinder.

If your discretionary income is up to it, you can now turn the whole affair over to a professional videographer. They get some strange assignments. Last summer Butch Fleischer, a videographer in Washington, D.C., was hired by the widow of an Army veteran to tape his military funeral at Arlington National Cemetery, complete with a seven-rifle salute. As the funeral procession moved through the grounds, recalls Fleischer, "I felt like '60 Minutes' following them with this camera on my shoulder." The notion of putting wills on videotape seems inspired more by the opportunity to endow families with a lasting visual memory of the deceased than by probate considerations. There's also the appeal of leaving behind a videotaped verbal message. A Southern California woman composed this whimsical poetic plea to her husband: "And please, when all my songs are sung / Don't fall for someone cute and young."

Taping marriage ceremonies is fast becoming the sine qua non for a classy nuptial (according to one estimate, 10 percent

HERMAN J. KOKOJAN—BLACK STAR

Directing the offense: *Houston lawyer Fisher videotapes the injured party's testimony*

of all U.S. weddings end up on cassettes). The videographer's bill can run as high as $3,000, depending on whether the newlyweds desire such special-effect insertions as narration, captions or Barry Manilow crooning Their Song. Yet to many couples in the video age, the chance to preserve those priceless moments—the bride's mother heading for the church with her daughter's honeymoon suitcase or that seven-second kiss at the altar—compensates for the extra expense as well as for whatever disruptions the camera crew may create. Sometimes the unexpected disaster provides the most cherished footage. Judy Onthank, vice president of a Connecticut videography firm, remembers taping a wedding at which the bride suddenly developed a nosebleed before her final vows. The entire scene, including the groom and the bridesmaids offering her Kleenex, remained in the final edited version—to the couple's everlasting delight. "It was a real human moment," chuckles Onthank.

Editing parlors: To observe the video generation practicing its most advanced skills, it is necessary to visit one of the seven national franchises of Video Workshops Inc. For an hourly fee of $12.50, the Florida-based company rents its lavishly equipped editing parlors to videophiles bent on making documentaries about their personal lives. Some merely have the company splice together family slides, snapshots and home movies into a chronological record. Others opt for Hollywood hype, imbuing their productions with excerpts from the firm's exhaustive library of sound effects, which range from uproarious laughter to machine-gun fire. Bring along your own portentous introduction lifted from, say, Dan Rather, toss in some Wagnerian crescendos by the London Philharmonic and, lo and behold, the mundane effluvia of one's existence suddenly become larger than life.

Cooking: *Julia Child's way*

The suspicion lingers (you might even say looms) that many of these people are into this stuff not because they truly desire to make a video, but because appearing *in* a video makes it seem as if they're actually *on television.* Does that really matter? Absolutely not. But let's advance the suspicion another click: is it possible that millions of video junkies are walking around under the delusion that all the world's a TV show? And now one more click: do any limits still apply to what constitutes fair game for the videographic voyeur? Neil Postman, a professor of communications at New York University and the perceptive author of "Amusing Ourselves to Death," worries about such things all the time. "There's an old saying that to a man with a hammer, everything looks like a nail," says Postman. "You could say that to a man with a television camera, everything looks like a theatrical production. When you have technology like this, the question always arises: 'Where do you want it to stop?' How about televising confessionals in the church? Or doctors telling patients they have terminal illnesses?"

Family hams: Postman and others also wonder whether the presence of a camcorder tends to subtly alter the normal behavior of those it's observing. A video picture may indeed be worth a thousand words, but suppose its subjects become so camera-struck that they abandon their spontaneity and begin playing a part? One middle-aged New Yorker, whose widely dispersed family recently videotaped their latest reunion, reports that "it made us all actors." Family problems were decorously skirted while, with posterity in mind, everyone kept their comments on an artificially genteel level. "It was a cleverly disguised method of crowd control," muses the New Yorker. Even so, he found the amount of detail captured in the video so beguilingly rich that he would probably tape his own children. "I think kids enjoy that sort of thing," he explains. "Who wouldn't want to see his own history?"

There you have it. Video, like television itself, has taken on an irresistible momentum. Indeed, what we seem to be witnessing is the invention of an instrument for which we will conceive now-unimaginable applications as it sweeps us along. As the technology continues to penetrate every niche of our culture, futurists envision it enhancing creativity, enriching leisure habits, bringing us more closely in touch with our traditions by allowing us to relive birthday celebrations and holiday gatherings, even spawning its own modes of social intercourse.

Video Man. He communicates in a language we can *see.*

HARRY F. WATERS *with* MARK D. UEHLING *in New York,* JANET HUCK *in Los Angeles,* BOB COHN *in Washington, and* DANIEL SHAPIRO *and* J. M. HARRISON *in Houston*

MARIO TURBE—H & H PHOTOGRAPHERS

Weddings, forever: *A record of priceless moments like these can cost as much as $3,000*

from Airwaves, the quarterly of the IBA
~~Xmas~~ Winter, 1984-85

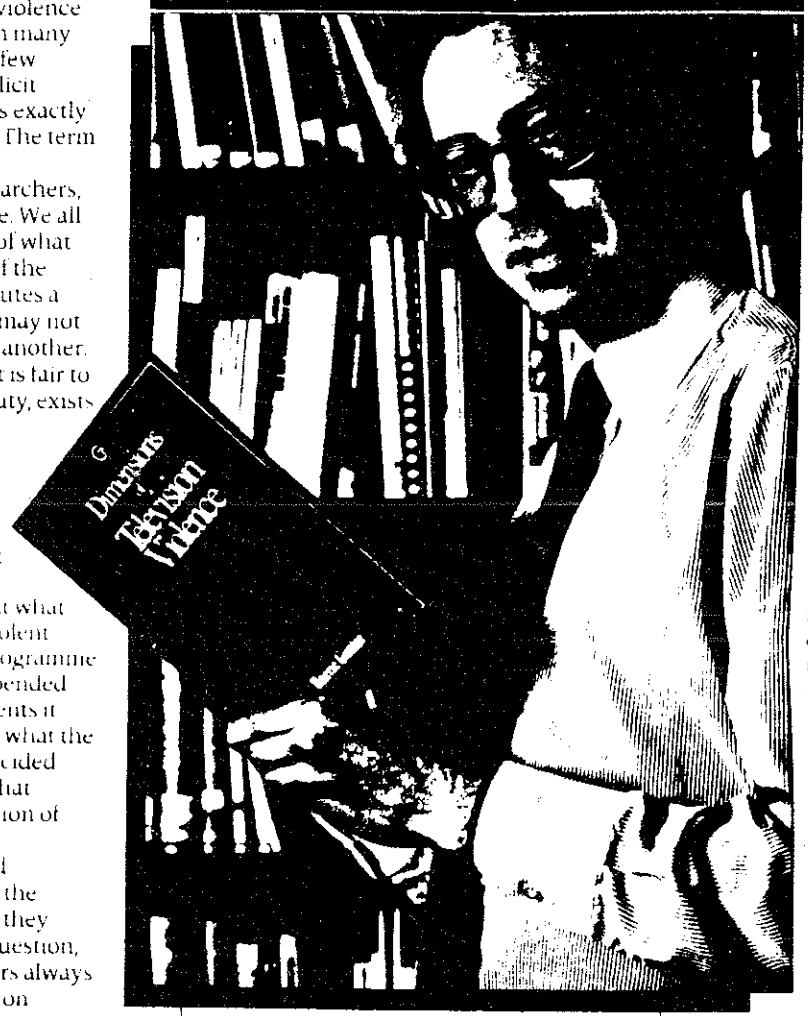
Television Violence – In the Eye of the Beholder

Scenes of violence on television have been the source of more controversy than any other aspect of television output. And concern about their possible harmful effects on viewers has often led to calls for stricter controls. In order to monitor and, if necessary, limit violent content, some means of classification or 'measurement' is required. Dr Barrie Gunter, IBA Senior Research Officer, discusses his findings in this field.

AT THE BEGINNING of 1980 I was appointed as Research Fellow by the IBA to undertake what was at the time described as a feasibility study to develop if possible a system to assess television programme content 'with particular reference to the portrayal of violence'. In this research project, which eventually covered a period of just under two years, I examined certain methods of classifying and weighting the seriousness of violence portrayed in fictional television drama programmes.

Whilst the depiction of violence has been condemned from many quarters, there have been few attempts to formulate explicit statements about what it is exactly that should be controlled. The term 'violence' receives almost indiscriminate use by researchers, journalists and public alike. We all have some notion or idea of what violence is, but the truth of the matter is that what constitutes a violent act for one person may not be perceived as violent by another. To a considerable extent, it is fair to say that violence, like beauty, exists in the eye of the beholder. It was with this assumption that my research really began.

Much of the previous work on the measurement of violence on television had not taken into account what viewers perceived to be violent. Typically, how violent a programme was classified as being depended upon the number of incidents it contained which matched what the researchers themselves decided was violent. All incidents that matched an a priori definition of violence were given equal weighting for intensity and seriousness irrespective of the dramatic context in which they occurred. The important question, however, is whether viewers always agree with the researchers on whether a programme is violent or not. And if not, do purely objective counts of violent incidents as such really have any meaning at all?



Barrie Gunter with the fruits of his research: Dimensions of Television Violence. *The book is published by Gower, price £16.95.*

Experimental Approach

In order to tackle the problem of investigating what viewers themselves judge to be violent, my research adopted an experimental approach that involved giving groups of people the chance to make their own decisions about the seriousness of violence contained in various fictional television portrayals. Violent scenes were taken from British-made crime-drama programmes, American-made series of the same genre, cartoon shows. Two panels of viewers took part in twelve experimental studies in which they were shown a number of these programme excerpts and invited to make a variety of personal judgements about each scene along a set of qualitative rating scales. Variations in viewers' perceptions of the scenes were examined in relation to the types of programmes the scenes came from, the types of characters who were involved in violence in each scenario (e.g. good guys or bad guys, men or women), the types of weapons or instruments of aggression that were used (guns, knives, bombs, or just fist-fights, etc.), the physical setting of the action, and the degree of observable harm violent incidents caused to victims in each scene. The results indicated that ordinary viewers may be influenced by many different attributes of television portrayals when asked to judge the seriousness of the violence shown in them.

The variations in viewers' judgements about television violence that I observed across different fictional portrayals are too numerous to discuss fully in this article. Nevertheless, a brief account of some of the more interesting findings can give some idea of the complexity of viewers' perceptions of violence in fictional contexts on television.

Perhaps the most substantial finding was that the closer the approximation of portrayals to everyday life, the more serious was violence seen to be. Thus, violence shown in the contemporary settings of British crime-drama programmes was judged to be significantly more violent than portrayals similar in other respects occurring in more fantastic settings such as cartoons or science fiction series, or in Westerns. Indeed, it was consistently found throughout that portrayals of 'violent' behaviour occurring in cartoons or science fiction programmes were considered by panel members generally to be essentially non-violent.

Portrayals in which the bad guys were

serious terms than those in which the good guys were aggressors in American crime-drama programmes, but the reverse was the case for portrayals taken from British crime-drama series. Of the different physical forms of violence, shootings were seen as most violent, but stabbings with their close-in ruthlessness were perceived as most frightening and disturbing, particularly in British productions.

Differences of Opinion

Whilst the nature of violent content and the settings in which it occurs are clearly important factors influencing viewers' opinions, viewers themselves do not always agree completely on what is or is not violent. Another important aspect of the research was to explore variations *among viewers* in their perceptions of television violence, and whether these differences of opinion were related in systematic ways to particular aspects of their psychological make-up.

Is there a link between the psychological characteristics viewers bring with them to the viewing situation and their perceptions of different kinds of fictional violence on television? The answer appears to be that there is. Using the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire to measure levels of neuroticism, extraversion and psychoticism in panel members, one result to emerge was that low scorers on the psychotisism scale (measuring how tough-minded they were) tended to see harmful violence as more frightening and disturbing than did those with higher scores on this dimension. In other experiments it was found that viewers' perceptions of their own masculinity and femininity were more closely related to their perceptions of certain kinds of television violence than was their actual sex. Both men and women who gave themselves high femininity and low masculinity ratings tended to be especially sensitive to scenes depicting a male character attacking a female victim.

Finally, using a well-known measure of human hostility to classify panel members, those individuals with higher self-reported propensities towards physical aggression tended to perceive violent TV fist-fights, especially in British crime-drama settings, as less violent and disturbing than did less physically aggressive viewers.

Sophisticated Interaction

This research cannot claim to have covered all the different aspects of programme content that are likely to mediate viewers' perceptions of fictional violence on television, nor indeed has it examined all the various kinds of violence that may appear on the screen. It does, however, demonstrate something of the sophistication of viewers' appraisals of television violence. At the level of audience perception, violence cannot be defined in simple terms. It is complex, multi-dimensional and is determined by a sophisticated interaction of programme attributes and personality characteristics of viewers.

The First Adult Education Programmes

IN SUMMER 1962, Ulster Television embarked on the first adult education television series in Britain. *Midnight Oil*, a 42-programme pioneering venture termed at the time 'The University of the Air', was produced in association with the Queen's University, Belfast, and transmitted across the province. Six months later, in response to Government demands that broadcasting hours should be expanded for the purpose of adult education, ABC Television and ATV launched a service called *Sunday Session*, transmitted over most of Britain. In March 1963, Scottish Television began broadcasts of nine monthly teaching series intended for general practitioners and hospital staff, with the assistance of the University of Glasgow Medical School. The Independent Television Authority noted gravely in its annual report that the programmes were much appreciated by the doctors and that 'the general audience registered no ill effects'.

J.W. Gray (left) and Prof. J.C. Beckett discuss 'The Present and the Past' in Midnight Oil, *Ulster Television's 42-part 'University of the Air' of 1962.*

15-year Formula

The hallmark of these pioneering ventures was the formality of their style, and their close adherence to a formula agreed in 1962 between the broadcasters (ITA and BBC) and the Government of the day:

> Educational television programmes for adults are programmes arranged in series and planned in consultation with appropriate educational bodies to help viewers towards a progressive mastery or understanding of some skill or body of knowledge.

This formula was to dominate adult education in British broadcasting for the next fifteen years. The great changes that have recently occurred in the adult education provision by Independent Broadcasting flow from a variety of causes. An important factor was that research findings in the 1970s demonstrated conclusively that the viewer who watched every programme in a series to gain 'progressive mastery' was rare indeed. Viewing behaviour, it was shown, was not like this, even for the serious-minded.

Perhaps even more significant was the related realisation that what (even in 1962) was called 'support material' for adult education programmes was in educational terms at least as important as the programmes themselves. At the same time the Authority's Education Department and advisers began, in the late 1970s, to encourage ITV and ILR companies to define 'adult education' much more broadly than the 1962 formula implied. Far from reducing the impact and range of adult education programming, this has led to the development of projects exploring issues of much greater social concern than ever before. The advent of Channel 4, with its commitment to commission 15% of its output to fulfil educational purposes, has of course given a great boost to this process. Whereas in 1962 there was no difficulty in recognising the adult education programmes, one would be hard put to it to be so sure now. For example, in 1984 LWT's award-winning *From the Shadow of the Gun: the Search for Peace in Northern Ireland* was an adult education series. So, too, was Central's *Automania*, and Channel 4's *Food for Thought* and the continuing *Years Ahead*. The IBA has also fostered the growth of a whole new range of local educational and social action programmes of which Independent Broadcasting can be justly proud. Far from 'registering ill effects', the response of the public to all these innovations and to the creation of support publications and activities linked to programmes has been keen and enthusiastic.

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DEPARTMENT OF RADIO-TELEVISION-FILM

April 8, 1985

To: FGG,FLG,CINS,CIMJM,AME
From: Stewart M. Hoover
Re: Attached

Colleagues: Enclosed please find a reprint from the current issue of the IBA journal. It seems that our friend Barry has finally teased out the essential issue in the field--what really matters is what the viewers themselves think, and if that contradicts what the "researchers" think, then we've really got a problem.

How it is that a definition of violence is any LESS socially-constructed for viewers than it is for researchers is not addressed.

The cover of the book looks good, though. I am sure all of this is an unfair characterization, knowing Barrie.

Communication

Gerbner Advances Ideas on Media Violence

In September, the Communication Commission released a substantive report urging strong measures to reduce the amount of violent and sexually violent material in film, television, cable and home video, while reaffirming its opposition to censorship. NCCC Governing Board members, at their meeting in November, heard praise for the report from Dr. George Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School of Communications, University of Pennsylvania, and a leading media researcher. Calling the report "an historic opportunity," Gerbner offered the following perspective on why violence in the media has been an "intractable" problem. His remarks have been condensed for Chronicles.

NCCC Photo/Bill Sloan

Representatives of NCCC Communication Commission chat with noted media researcher Dr. George Gerbner (at right). From left, is Dr. James Wall, chair of the commission's committee on media and violence, Dr. William F. Fore, NCCC assistant general secretary for communication, and committee member Dr. Beverly J. Chain.

I would like to begin with some fundamental considerations about the nature of human life. Human beings do not experience reality directly. Our reality is based on stories we tell about the world, the origin of life, modes of right conduct. These stories that we create, record and tell weave a seamless web we call culture. And for the longest time they were told in the form of mythologies, religions, rituals on a highly centralized face-to-face basis.

With print came the breaking up of the ritual. With print came the ability to disseminate the great stories of humankind beyond the boundaries of face-to-face communication. This meant a breaking up of the power of the rulers and chiefs whose oral interpretation monopolized story telling. It made possible the building of publics that are large aggregates of people who have a great deal in common but who never meet face to face. Most of our ideas about governance, religion and education depend on a print-based system of pluralistic society in which different ideas can be shared, even if they are competing or conflicting, and can exist more or less peacefully side by side.

Then came the telecommunications revolution with television its main stream, which has not supplanted but has reorganized all of the rest of the culture.

Television is essentially a ritual. Most viewers watch by the clock, not by the program. It fits into a style of life. It is a tightly composed new mythology whose true predecessor is tribal religion. It is a repetitive, ritualistic presentation to all of our children, to all of our parents, to all of our grandparents, for an average of seven hours a day. It is a world into which a child is inserted at birth, and where he or she absorbs the patterns of that world as the patterns of the wallpaper in the room—without knowing. And yet the patterns will always be familiar, and he or she will always be receptive to them.

But these patterns are no longer controlled by the parents, and no longer come from the school or the church, but from a small group of distant corporations. This presents an entirely new historical perspective on our age, in which our institutions have to find new roads.

We have been studying this world and its lessons on a continuous basis for 18 years and have an enormous amount of data, which amounts to the following:

In the world of television, women are outnumbered by men three to one. Young people comprise about one-third of their true proportion, people 65 and above about one-fifth. Minorities have less than their share of representation, but more than their share of victimization. This is a world in which representation is not only a question of numbers, but reflects an inequality of opportunity in life with which our children have grown up from the very outset.

And what maintains the credibility and the force of this world and this still largely iniquitous, unjust distribution of power and social order? It is, to a large extent, violence and sexual violence on television. It is a matter of demonstrating, as you have seen in vivid, gruesome and disgusting forms, where power lies. The lessons we have gotten, survey after survey, are that those who are more heavily exposed to these images than comparable groups of so-called light viewers are a bit more insecure, a bit more dependent on authority, a bit more receptive to intolerant, strong, simplistic solutions to complex problems, and even to repression if it comes in the name of enhancing their security.

In this world of television, violence occurs at the average rate of six times per hour in prime time, much of it directed against women. You can tune in any hour of the night and I guarantee that if you watch for an hour you will see two murders, of which one tends to be the murder of a woman presented in entertaining forms, in forms where the narrative justifies the outcome.

We have found that the lessons that are derived from exposure to this material are not only lessons of imitation. Depending on who they are—women, young people, old people, minorities—and the lower they go on the social power scale, the more viewers learn to see themselves as vulnerable and more dependent and, therefore, as more controllable.

As you address the question of media violence and sexual violence, you are addressing a deeper tension in our society of which this is a manifestation. You are seeing a demonstration of a structure of power which enforces some of the worst features of our society. You are addressing an exercise that makes people more resistant to accepting the changes which have been going on in our society with women, young and old people, and minorities.

Addressing violence and sexual violence will be an historic step that our organizations of parents, teachers and citizens are going to watch. It is going to be the beginning of a new environmental movement whose target is no longer only the physical environment, but the cultural, the spiritual environment, the environment that is equally mass produced as other forms of pollution in our society. And it is the first time that a highly representative national organization attends to it and makes some recommendations, and I can assure you those recommendations cannot be ignored.

The NCCC "Report on Violence and Sexual Violence in Film, Television, Cable and Home Video" is available from the Communication Commission, Rm. 856, 475 Riverside Dr., N.Y., NY 10115, for $4 per single copy, $3 each for 2–4 copies, $2 each for 5–20 copies; $1 each for over 20 copies.

OFFICE OF INFORMATION

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TO: Dr. Georg Gerlach

FROM: SARAH VILANKULU (212) 870-2228
Director Interpretation Resources

Here is the copy of NCCC Chronicle I promised to send, which contains your remarks to our Governing Board. (p. 4)

Thanks again for your help on this.

Sarah Vilankulu