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U.S. House of Representatives
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TELECOMMUNICATIONS,
CONSUMER PROTECTION, AND FINANCE
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
Washington, D.C. 20515

February 17, 1982

The Honorable Mark S. Fowler
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M. Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Although the television industry has made modest efforts in recent years to improve children's programming, significant improvements in both the quantity and quality of programming intended for this very important viewing audience remain necessary. Children, who often spend more time in front of their television sets than they do in the classroom, have an insufficient number of high quality, culturally or educationally enriching programs from which to choose.

It has become apparent that, despite the attention this issue has received in recent years, the broadcast industry could do much better in meeting this aspect of its public responsibility obligation. The pervasiveness of television and its potential to exert a positive influence on children highlight the responsibility of the Federal Communications Commission to do its utmost to meet the viewing needs of children of all ages.

While mandated regulations for children's programming represent one possible solution to this problem, where it is possible to satisfy underlying public interest needs without relying on content regulations, such an approach should always be embraced. The adoption of responsive, voluntary industry guidelines and standards is one possible way of meeting this goal.

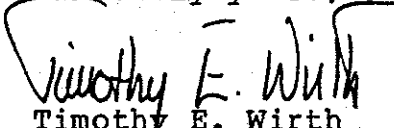
Along these lines, I understand the National Education Association has recently made a proposal that the FCC establish a temporary commission or working group, under the aegis and direction of a designated Commissioner, to explore various ways of upgrading the current state of children's programming. The commission or working group could consist of a limited number of concerned industry representatives, educational professionals, and others, who would meet in a public forum on a frequent basis. This type of cooperative approach to seeking a meaningful alternative is being used now in the public broadcasting area with the establishment of the Temporary Commission on Alternative Financing. I believe adopting a similar approach with respect to the children's television field might result in solutions which deal with the problem of inadequate children's programming far more satisfactorily than the efforts to date have achieved.

It is hoped that as competition and diversity in the video marketplace continue to increase, we will witness a concomitant increase in the availability and quality of children's programming. However, until a marketplace of video abundance exists, cooperative solutions to problems such as these might be very beneficial to the industry, the public at large, and most of all, the nation's children.

I urge the Commission to seriously consider adopting this type of mechanism to resolve this issue of critical importance.

With best wishes,

Sincerely yours,


Timothy E. Wirth
Chairman

TEW/byb

cc: Honorable James H. Quello
Honorable Abbott M. Washburn
Honorable Joseph R. Fogarty
Honorable Anne P. Jones
Honorable Mimi Weyforth Dawson
Honorable Henry M. Rivera