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To the Graduate Council:

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PRIME TIME ACCESS RULE, TENNESSEE 1973: A STUDY OF PROGRAM PRACTICES AND NEEDS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

A Thesis

Presented to

the Graduate Council of

The University of Tennessee

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

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by

John Thomas Badgett

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ABSTRACT

This thesis has two main goals: (1) to determine how Tennessee television stations fill their returned time under the Federal Communication Commission's Prime Time Access Rule, and (2) to find out whether station programmers might purchase independently produced, non-entertainment programs to aid in filling part of the access time.

The Prime Time Access Rule limits the number of hours each evening a local station may carry programs produced by any network. Its main goal is to foster the production of more varied program fare from new sources by reducing the networks' domination of nighttime television.

To gather the information on Tennessee television, two questionnaires were prepared. One was mailed to station executives near the beginning of the 1972 program season. The second was administered by personal visit to many of these same people in the early spring, 1973.

The results generally are these:

1. Tennessee television stations program the same shows which national surveys show are popular in other markets during the access period: game shows and situation comedies.
2. The audience for these shows may not be as large as the programs previously produced by the networks

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for broadcast during these time periods, but in many cases the locally programmed shows attract more viewers.

3. The majority of Tennessee television stations do not produce documentary-type programs on a regular basis, though all stations surveyed do carry a moderate amount of public affairs programming. Except on rare occasions, no public affairs programming is scheduled during the access period.

Additionally, a majority of the stations surveyed said they probably would purchase independently produced, non-entertainment programs, though they probably would not schedule them in the access period. A comparison of the price most stations would pay for such programs--given the probable cost of the production--showed that such productions could not economically be produced for sale solely in Tennessee. In this thesis, however, an alternate method of supplying quality, non-entertainment programs to at least one station in each of the five major markets in Tennessee is proposed. The proposal depends basically on extension of an already-established air of cooperation among the television stations in the state and provides for five or more stations jointly to produce some of their public affairs and documentary programs.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Since man first energized a cathode ray tube to watch images dance across the screen, he has become increasingly fascinated with the technique of sending pictures through space. As television grew, so did the number of its admirers until today in America the magic box is perhaps among the most popular things available to the average citizen. Over the years television's popularity has climbed steadily among the majority of viewers. A recent CBS-sponsored comprehensive survey shows the American people have a noticeably higher opinion of the television medium than they did ten years ago. The survey, conducted by Robert Bower for the Bureau of Social Science Research, indicates--if it does not explicitly prove--that more people watching television today are more inclined to favor extended newscasts, more informative specials and educational television. Without a doubt entertainment programs still are the most sought after, but viewer opinion of broadcast news is higher than it was ten years ago. Forty-one per cent of the survey respondents believe television gives the most

complete news coverage of any medium; 54 per cent agree television gives the fastest coverage.[1]

There are at least two basic reasons for this new-found respect for television's informative powers: greater sophistication in the medium itself--film, lighting, color, writing--and an audience sophisticated by years of viewing the world pictorially. This changing attitude on the part of some viewers does not change the continuing controversy over what should be broadcast on television, however. There are those who believe that the American people (who watch more television than any other nation in the world) are being corrupted by the daily fare on television.

The people with this view include some who have been on the Federal Communications Commission, producers of television programs, television station and network executives, and average citizens. They believe, to one degree or another, that the quality of television programming should be upgraded to include more informational programs and fewer game shows, situation comedies and other fare which they think is meaningless.

As does any controversy, this one has another side. Here cluster those who feel that present television programming exists because it is what most people want to watch.

[1]Robert T. Bower, Television and the Public, in "Strong Shift in TV's Role: From Escape Toward Reality," Broadcasting, 11 June 1973, pp. 15-18.

As proof, they offer the ratings of the game shows and other entertainment programs which generally are much higher than ratings for informative offerings. Besides, they contend, people always have the option not to watch programs they do not enjoy or with which they disagree.

Meanwhile, back on the other side, TV's detractors are saying that they do indeed have the option not to watch what is offered, but they lament the fact that there is not enough alternative programming available. And the argument goes round and round.

I. BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

Somewhere between these two positions, apparently, stands the Federal Communications Commission. Section 303, the general powers section of the Communications Act of 1934, does not specifically give the Commission authority to regulate broadcast programming. In fact, Section 326 of the Act specifically prohibits Commission censorship of broadcasting, or FCC interference with the right of free speech on the airwaves. Some broadcasters believe Section 326 prohibits any FCC involvement in broadcast programming. Nevertheless, the Commission's broadening role in programming must be acknowledged.[2]

[2]Walter B. Emery, Broadcasting and Government: Responsibilities and Regulations (East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State Univ. Press, 1971), p. 48.

It is generally known, for example, that the Commission would like to see television programming improved by the addition of more public affairs shows and better and different entertainment shows. Perhaps the latest, strongest formal statement attesting to this is the Commission's 1971 Prime Time Access Rule. This regulation was intended to reduce the network domination of nighttime television while opening the airwaves to a wider variety of programming fare. It restricts to three hours the amount of network programming local stations can carry in prime viewing time each day. The rule was based on the notion that more producers would prepare a greater variety of programs when given the potential for additional markets for these programs.

The question arises, on the other hand, whether the majority of television viewers really want their viewing fare improved all that much. In 1960, Gary Steiner conducted a television opinion survey which he published in book form, The People Look at Television. Steiner's survey showed that Americans generally were quite satisfied with television, ranking it second only to the automobile in terms of satisfaction.[3] The survey further disclosed that most people like to watch entertainment.[4]

Steiner compared the popularity of entertainment and

[3]Gary A. Steiner, The People Look at Television: A Study of Audience Attitudes (New York: Knopf, 1963), p. 28.

[4]Ibid., p. 185.

informative programs during an eight week period. He included in informative programs those which present regular news, as well as those which offer other informative or public affairs material.[5] He found that "On the whole, then, viewers selected information 16 per cent of the times they were actually watching while it was available."[6]

For purposes of this study the most interesting aspect of Steiner's study, however, is a comparison of what people say they want to watch with what they actually watch. Steiner reported that "viewers who ask for more enlightenment select it only one fifth of the time that they are watching while it is actually available."[7]

The people who most consistently call for more information programming are the ones with the most education. But Steiner found that their suggestions for television improvement are not backed up in their program selections, "so the more critical or less enthusiastic segments of the audience are not nearly so selective as their survey responses suggest."[8]

When Steiner asked, "Should TV provide more information or concentrate on providing the best entertainment possible," the answers strongly favored entertainment. As Steiner put it:

> The results could hardly be more clear cut. The audience at large takes two shares of light

[5] Ibid. [6] Ibid. [7] Ibid., p. 188. [8] Ibid., p. 202.

> entertainment to one share of the heavy variety [drama, concerts, etc.], and virtually no information. Even the well-educated, when faced with this choice, turn in large numbers from light to heavy entertainment--but rarely to information. College viewers select the informative program only 9 per cent of the time under these competive conditions.[9]

An almost exact duplicate of the Steiner study was conducted in 1970--the CBS-backed Bower survey conducted through the Bureau of Social Science Research. The later survey indicates that television viewer taste may be changing. The study shows more and more American viewers now see television as a viable journalism force as well as an entertainment medium.[10] Still, the majority of people prefer entertainment to information on television.

The Top 50 Markets

Television station programmers are acutely aware of viewer taste. They know the average fan simply will not watch informational programs when there is a choice between them and entertainment shows. Stations arrange their program schedules accordingly. Only a small handful of the hundreds of U. S. stations choose to air instructional or informative shows during prime time. The ratings for such programs traditionally are poor and neither sponsors nor stations can afford to give up an audience. Relatively few people watch informational shows, so the stations air what the viewer wants to see, entertainment.

[9]Ibid. [10]Bower in "Strong Shift," p. 15.

TelCom Associates, early in 1973, released a survey of the top 50 markets nationwide which showed the programs carried in the access period during the 1972 season and how successful they were.

The survey reviewed programming practices in the 7-8 p.m. EST time period nationwide. The 7-7:30 p.m. time period, of course, has been a local access period for some time and the PTR did not change that. TelCom reported that "the general pattern at 7 p.m. has been to find at least one game strip opposite at least one local news. This was the case in 30 of the top fifty markets."[11] In the thirty markets programming news at 7 p.m., news won the time period fourteen times and the game strip won sixteen times. TelCom researchers inferred from the figures that news at 7 o'clock will not keep a station first in the time period, but neither is a game show a "guaranteed panacea."[12]

Truth or Consequences at that time was the strongest game show in the top 50 markets, with To Tell the Truth and What's My Line? tied for second. But a change in time period can make a significant difference in the way the audience accepts a program.[13]

The 7:30 to 8:00 p.m. slot is a little more complicated than the earlier time, and much more important for this

[11] Access Time 1972 (New York: TelCom Associates, 1973), p. 1.

[12] Ibid. [13] Ibid.

thesis because it is generally the "access" period under the 1971 Prime Time Access Rule. The major question in programming the period, at least in 1972, seemed to be whether a strip could beat a checkerboard plan. Strip programming presents the same program at the same time at least five times per week. A "checkerboard plan" offers a different program each night in the same time period. TelCom reported that

> in thirty-six of the top fifty markets, with at least one full entertainment strip, the strip program won the time period twenty times, the checkerboard seventeen Monday-Friday periods with one tie included.[14]

To Tell the Truth gained in popularity when aired at 7:30. It was in second place at 7:00, but won the top spot in 67 per cent of the markets where it was scheduled at 7:30. Truth or Consequences won about half the time over its competition at 7:30 and What's My Line? took fewer than a third of the 7:30 time periods where it was scheduled.[15]

Eight stations in seven markets extended local news into the time period, but none was very successful. TelCom noted that local news in the access period was "rather poorly received by the audience. Only one station won its time period, two were second and five finished last."[16]

TelCom's data on new programs is particularly interesting in light of the Commission's belief that "the

[14]Ibid. [15]Ibid. [16]Ibid., p. 2.

likelihood that independent production will succeed is sufficiently great" to give independent producers the time.[17] The report shows that new shows, whether on a barter or a cash basis, fared rather poorly: "overall, barter programming was not at all impressive," and "the crop of new cash offerings range from mediocre to poor, on the whole."[18] Some venturesome stations did attempt to program public affairs shows or local sports in the access period, but these programs fared poorly. TelCom reported such programming to be "uniformly unsuccessful."[19]

The Second 50 Markets

In the fall of 1972 Katz Television analyzed prime time access programming in the second 50 markets (51-100) and published their findings in a booklet for stations they represent. Katz concluded that in the twenty-three eastern and Pacific markets which fall into the 51-100 category, 91 per cent of the available access hours between 7 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. are programmed with strip shows. A total of 77.5 per cent of the access hours at 7:30 p.m. are stripped. The figures are similar for the twenty-seven central and

[17] 35 Federal Register 7417.

[18] Access Time 1972, p. 2.

[19] Ibid.

mountain markets: 96 per cent strip programming at 7 p.m.; 60 per cent strip programming at 7:30.[20]

Katz reported that only 1 per cent of the available access time between 7 p.m. and 8 p.m. in the markets studied was filled with locally produced programming on a strip basis. The figures show that there are more than 600 hours of access programming between 7 and 8 p.m. aired in markets 51-100. Five per cent of it is of local origin when checkerboard and occasional shows are taken into account. By far the majority of the access programming in these markets is syndicated entertainment programming.[21]

Program Philosophy

But audience appeal does not tell the entire story. The other side of television's programming issue is clamoring to be heard. Some people interested in the medium want TV to offer more and better public affairs programs--including documentaries and discussion shows. The philosophy of this group is that informative programming, well-done and in depth, should be available to the viewer who wants it, even if he is in the minority.

Retiring FCC Commissioner Nicholas Johnson is a leading advocate of this position. Before leaving office, he issued

[20]Programming for Access Time: A Status Report, November, 1972, Markets 51-100 (New York: Katz Television, 1973), pp. 2-3.

[21]Ibid., pp. 6-7.

a 264-page dissenting report on television station performance. In his "Broadcasting in America, the Performance of Network Affiliates in the Top 50 Markets," Johnson ranks 144 stations according to how well they meet certain programming and employment criteria.[22]

One hundred and twenty-seven stations meet Johnson's minimum standard of 15 per cent public affairs and "other" programming. The Johnson-recommended level of such programming is 20 per cent, and ninety-one stations meet that standard.[23]

The ex-Commissioner believes that the average of prime time local programming and total local programming on local stations should amount to at least 10 per cent of total programming. Sixty-seven stations of the 144 stations in the report meet this minimum. His recommended level is 15 per cent, and six stations meet that standard.[24]

The Commissioner ranks the stations according to the following criteria:

1. Amount of local programming, computed as above.
2. The number of hours per week of public affairs programming, including news and "other" programs.
3. The number of hours in a week containing more than twelve minutes of commercials.

[22]"Johnson Bequeaths a Morning Line on Net Affiliates in Top 50 Markets," Broadcasting, 9 July 1973, p. 26.

[23]Ibid. [24]Ibid.

4. The number of public service announcements carried during a composite week.

5. Employment practices.

The figures for each of these areas are used to arrive at a composite ranking. A number one ranking would be the best, with station performance "deteriorating" as the "Johnson number" gets larger. Using these criteria, KPIX-TV in San Francisco is number one in composite ranking, followed by WJZ-TV, Baltimore and KING-TV, Seattle. The worst station, in Johnson's view, is WCCB-TV in Charlotte, North Carolina.[25]

Johnson ranks Tennessee stations in the top 50 markets this way:

WSM-TV, Nashville....28	WMC-TV, Memphis....89
WSIX-TV, Nashville...61	WREC-TV, Memphis..128
WLAC-TV, Nashville...86	WHBQ-TV, Memphis..141[26]

Broad spectrum reaction was the result of Mr. Johnson's rankings, but the reactions generally were in phase with the rankings. The stations and groups which ranked near the top in the composite rankings said they were pleased with the outcome; those near the bottom of the list were not so happy. Additionally, the favorable reactions seemed reserved, while those speaking out against the ratings were much more vocal.

[25]"How 144 Stations Ranked in Mr. Johnson's Parting Opinion," Broadcasting, 16 July 1973, pp. 46-47.

[26]Ibid.

A spokesman for Cox Broadcasting, Cliff Kirtland, Jr., for example, called the report "fodder" for newspapers and others who have been generally against broadcasters for some time, and called on the broadcasting industry to pay little attention to it.[27] Taft Broadcasting fared worst of all group owners in Mr. Johnson's rankings. Taft President Lawrence H. Rogers called the ex-Commissioner "inconsistent," and, as quoted in Broadcasting Magazine, accused Johnson of being "hostile to the free-enterprise system of broadcasting."[28]

On the other hand, Columbus, Ohio's WBNS-TV was ranked twenty-second, and took out a full page newspaper advertisement to tell their viewers about it and promise to be number one next time.[29] Donald McGannon, president of Group W, the best ranked group overall, was quoted in Broadcasting as saying, "We're happy with the way the results emerged."[30]

However television programmers react to the rankings, the fact remains that programming a station is expensive; budgets for public affairs shows--news, specials, documentaries--frequently are small. It is not at all unusual, furthermore, for a local station reporter also to function as a cameraman, film processor, writer, researcher, and announcer. With all these tasks assigned to him in the

[27]"Johnson's List: How the Ranked React to the Rankings," Broadcasting, 16 July 1973, p. 24.

[28]Ibid. [29]Ibid. [30]Ibid.

preparation of two or more local newscasts a day, the reporter simply does not have time for the production of specials or public affairs programs. It is rare indeed, then, that a local station in any but the very largest markets will maintain a separate production unit for these kinds of non-entertainment programs.

John T. Kinkel, former news and documentary producer for ABC, believes there is a growing need for specialization among reporters--a widespread and longstanding trend in the newspaper business, but rare in television. Kinkel, now a University of Washington professor, asks, "Where is the local TV reporter knowledgeable in urban planning or race relations, in education or law or medicine?"[31]

Most local stations still are a long way away from spending the kind of money and effort required to have specialization among reporters, and as Kinkel says: "Television management at the local level will have to change perspective in order to live up to its obligations born of burgeoning audiences and swelling revenue."[32]

The revenues of companies involved in broadcasting have risen dramatically in the past few years, and more people are watching.[33] It is Kinkel's belief that too many

[31]John T. Kinkel, "Tribulations of the One Man Gang," Journal of Broadcasting, 12, Fall 1968, p. 131.

[32]Ibid., p. 132.

[33]"The Business in 1972: The Bulls are Running," Broadcasting, 30 October 1972, p. 17.

broadcasters are striving to maximize profits, frequently shirking their obligations to provide a viable service to the viewer.[34]

Rand Corporation economist Rolla Park would like to see more non-entertainment shows on the air. He says viewers need more than just entertainment, and the station that fails to provide more just is not serving the public. Park believes informative programs are needed "such as news and reports of public affairs, and locally originated programs tailored to the needs and interests of the community that the station serves."[35] Station owners and operators contend, however, they cannot afford to put on more programs of a public service nature; and according to Park, "The data generally support the broadcasters' contention that quantity and quality of public service and local programming are positively related to station revenue."[36] Park's research showed that stations with the larger revenues are more likely to produce more and better public service and other local shows than stations which take in less money.

Park shows there is a relationship between profits and programming, but Columbia University professor Frank Wolfe

[34]Kinkel, p. 131.

[35]Rolla E. Park, "Television Station Performance and Revenues," Educational Broadcasting Review, 5, June 1971, p. 43.

[36]Ibid., p. 44.

disagrees with the contention that stations simply cannot afford to air more public affairs programs. In his study of public affairs programming on commercial television in the United States, Wolfe says:

> The quest for profit by networks and station organizations was the single most important factor shaping the quantity of public affairs programming shown on commercial television stations in the fifty largest population centers 1966-68.[37]

It is Wolfe's contention that stations need not strive to maximize profits at the expense of public affairs programming. Within reasonable limits of production no station would lose money by airing a greater quantity of high quality informational shows, but only reduce profits somewhat. In assessing the kinds of public affairs programming aired during the period studied, Wolfe found that "regularly scheduled news programs were the most common form of public affairs programming, documentaries the least common form."[38]

There is, of course, public television for viewers who want informative programming. These noncommercial stations are supported by government and private grants. They carry a wide variety of informative programs, both at the local level and via a national network. Public television uses a large portion of its budget to support such programs,

[37]Frank Wolfe, "Some Determinants of Public Affairs Programming on Commercial Television in the United States," Dissertations Abstracts International (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1971), p. 6.

[38]Ibid.

including documentaries, talk shows, classroom instruction, and cultural enrichment programs such as concerts and ballet. Not everyone, however, has access to public television. Those who do not must rely on commercial television.

Another opinion on how television programming might be improved involves revamping the regulation system. A Ford Foundation-financed study by the Brookings Institution, made public June 24, 1973, recommends that the FCC end its long-standing policy of promoting "localism" in television and allow the development of regional stations. Such a course, the study asserts, would increase the number of channels available to each viewer and would improve program fare.[39]

The changes recommended in "The Economic Aspects of Television Regulations" would do away with a Commission concept that has been around since the 1950's. In its 1955 network study, the FCC concluded that station-to-station competition should be fostered, and said that as many communities as possible should have the advantage of local outlets responsible to local needs.[40] The Brookings study says this FCC goal has not been attained as evidenced by the programs that evolved. The study suggests the following:

> --Divest the FCC of any responsibility for program quality and content, thereby putting broadcasters on the same legal footing as the printed media.

[39]"Television Viewers are Deprived," The Knoxville Journal, 25 June 1973, p. 7.

[40]Ibid.

> --Emphasize competition and give localism much lower priority. Viewer tastes should be relied on. Encourage development of signal importing cable TV, pay TV via cable, and the broadcast satellites.
>
> --With respect to station licensing, limit the role of the FCC largely to the engineering and technical aspects.[41]

The authors say such a course would improve the viewers' position in the commercial television mainstream by providing more varied programming from a greater number of channels, but the report adds that the proposals likely would result in reduced profit for television stations.[42]

Viewer Philosophy

Realistically, however, this kind of massive reorganization is not in the foreseeable future. And the fact remains that the majority of television viewers still prefer entertainment programs, usually low taste programs as opposed to heavy entertainment.

Why is this so? Wilbur Schramm may have the answer in his explanation of how the communication process works in general. He says that for effective communication, the receiver must want to understand the information offered by the sender. That is, if the goals of the sender and receiver do not run exactly parallel the communication process is difficult or even impossible.[43]

[41] Ibid. [42] Ibid.

[43] Wilbur Schramm, "How Communication Works," in The Process and Effects of Mass Communication, ed. Wilbur Schramm (Urbana, Illinois: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1961), p. 12.

This may be one reason for the lack of success of informative or instructional programs on television. On the one hand is the producer or programmer who wishes to air an in-depth report, or a series of reports on some subject. He may produce and schedule these shows in a time period when he would expect the largest number of viewers to see them.

On the other hand, however, rests the average television viewer. His history of television use has been one of entertainment, not information. Therefore, when he settles down for an evening of television, he is not likely to choose an instructional or informational program, if an entertainment show is an available option.

A seeming anomoly appears when one reviews the ratings of news programs. News shows generally have large audiences, and they must definitely be classified as informational. The difference is probably that the information included in them is more timely than one might expect from some documentary programs. So the viewer may already be partially familiar with the information, and less concentration is required to watch a newscast than a documentary or other informational show. Additionally, the entertainment option usually is not available during newscasts because most stations program their news opposite each other.

Schramm's idea of Fraction of Selection would seem to explain the lack of interest in non-entertainment programming. All day long every day each of us is constantly

bombarded by thousands of messages, attempts to communicate. It is impossible to receive and interpret all of them, so we become selective. We choose those messages which are within our frame of reference, which deal with subjects that interest us, and that are easiest to understand. Sometimes, as at work or at school, we are forced to receive and interpret difficult messages, often ones that do not seem to be very relevant at the time. Therefore, when the day is over and we are watching television, there is little desire to view programs that also carry messages which are difficult to receive.

Schramm explains these relationships with this formula:

$$\text{Likelihood of Selection} = \frac{(\text{perceived reward strength}) - (\text{perceived punishment strength})}{\text{perceived expenditure of effort}}$$[44]

Accordingly, the smaller the perceived expenditure of effort, the larger is the figure representing the likelihood of selection. Schramm cites this notion as one reason television hurt the movie industry: it is much easier to stay at home than to get dressed, go out of the house, and spend money to see a movie.

On the cerebral level, this same notion may also apply to non-entertainment television programs: game shows and

[44]Wilbur Schramm, "The Nature of Communication Between Humans," in The Process and Effects of Mass Communication, ed. Wilbur Schramm (Urbana, Illinois: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1971), p. 32.

situation comedies require less mental effort than do informational programs. Thus, the likelihood that they will be selected for viewing is greater than for the more demanding non-entertainment shows.

In Schramm's opinion the idea of the "awful power" of mass communication has changed, and it is now generally believed that more people come to the media looking for what they want--and get it--than come to the media to accept whatever is offered.[45] If this is true, television station executives who program what the majority of viewers apparently want to see, as evidenced by the ratings, would seem to be following sound programming practices. Who is to say they have any obligation beyond giving the viewer what he wants to see? It may be information the audience desperately needs, but if they do not watch, it is doing the viewer no good and may be hurting the station economically. Admittedly it is this kind of reasoning which touches off anew the arguments among those with differing programming philosophies.

Sociologist Melvin De Fleur, for example, views the television programming situation at a much more basic level. He starts with the position that the mass media form a separate social system operating within American society, a system with a highly complex internal structure the whole of

[45] Ibid., p. 49.

which is influenced by other cultural and social conditions which surround it.

De Fleur believes that there is a continued low cultural level of offerings by the mass media. He uses his separate social system concept to explain that belief, as well as to explain the relationship between mass media content and public taste.[46]

De Fleur holds that the primary influence in this media social system which affects all components of the system is money.[47] The various components of this system--i.e., advertising agencies, local television stations, networks, etc.--must make a profit and, De Fleur says, increasing that profit seems to be the major goal of each subdivision of the system.

He points out that the one nucleus about which all components in the system rotate is the audience. As long as the audience is watching the programming offered by the networks and local stations, the ratings will be high. Good ratings mean high advertising rates for a given program, which then mean profit for the programmers, broadcasters, advertisers, agencies, and everybody else in the system.

The really significant aspect of De Fleur's theory, however, is that he believes the highest financial reward is

[46]Melvin L. De Fleur, Theories of Mass Communication, 2nd ed. (New York: McKay, 1970), p. 145.

[47]Ibid., p. 155.

realized when the content of the media is kept at a low cultural level.[48] It is this low taste content which assures that the largest possible number of people will pay attention to the offerings of the networks and local stations, which in turn assures the largest possible profit. Therefore, low taste content is what the broadcasters deliver. Additionally, De Fleur believes the chances of altering the system are remote, because the number of critics is small, and their criticism of television is only sporadically voiced. The viewing public quickly forgets even a strong outburst against the system and continues to watch the low taste content offerings in large numbers.

II. THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

When this thesis first began to take shape in the summer of 1972, there was very little information available on television programming under the PTR. Later studies, such as the TelCom and Katz studies and the 1970 duplication of the Gary Steiner investigation (released in the spring of 1973) had not yet been made public.

This researcher is a Tennessee native and is naturally interested in the people of the state, their social and business relationships. This concern, coupled with a deep interest in informational programming for television,

[48] Ibid.

prompted this project. The small number of stations in Tennessee made a study of all television markets in the state a reasonable undertaking.

It was the intent of this thesis to assess the effect of the PTR on television programming in Tennessee, and further to determine what kinds of programs from other than network sources might aid the local station in meeting its PTR obligations. Of specific interest was whether Tennessee television station programmers might schedule independently produced public affairs shows during the access period on a regular basis.

As mentioned, this researcher's primary interest is public affairs programming--informative shows in a documentary format. But the term "documentary" is quite difficult to define. It means different things to different people. Moreover, using the term exclusively for the purposes of this study could have limited the scope of the investigation. Therefore, the broader term "non-entertainment program" was used when collecting data via questionnaires and interviews. This term includes the strict documentary form--i.e., a filmed, in-depth study of a subject or subjects using motion picture production techniques--as well as the less sophisticated types of public affairs programs more common on local television stations. A general agreement on terminology was reached with the interviewee before the questionnaire was administered.

The information generally available at the national level after one year of operation under the PTR indicated the following:

1. A year of operation under the PTR had not significantly increased the number or quality of independently produced programs, either of a documentary or entertainment nature.[49]
2. The number of independent producers of material for television had not increased noticeably.[50]
3. Producers of material for television complained they were not making enough money.[51]
4. There was still a problem of reruns as evidenced by President Nixon's vow to the Hollywood unions to reduce the number of reruns in order to provide more jobs for writers and producers.[52]
5. For the most part, stations around the country were running remakes of proven shows--programs which had made it on the networks, then, for one reason or another, were retired. The Prime Time

[49] Access Time 1972, pp. 1-4.

[50] "Access Rule Hurts Majors in Hollywood, FCC Analyst Tells Burch," Broadcasting, 14 August 1972, p. 40.

[51] Ibid.

[52] "The Nixon Pressure to Slow Reruns," Business Week, 23 September 1972, p. 56.

Access Rule only brought the old standards out of retirement.[53]

With this information in hand, a survey of Tennessee television stations was conducted to find out what they were programming during the access period. Also of interest was the extent to which independently produced, non-entertainment programs dealing with subjects of interest to Tennessee viewers might aid the stations in programming their returned time under the PTR.

The study was begun with a number of assumptions to be affirmed or denied. One, that few stations in the state air public affairs programs during the prime time access period. Two, that game shows would be popular fare for the access slot in Tennessee, just as they were in most markets around the country. Three, that economic considerations were the main reason for frequent game shows and infrequent non-entertainment programs in the access period. Four, that stations would want additional independently produced, non-entertainment shows for access, and five, that the programs could be produced and marketed economically in Tennessee.

III. PROCEDURES FOR THE STUDY

Even after a full year of programming under the Prime

[53]Maurine Christopher, "Some New TV Shows Seem Not Worth the Trouble of FCC Prime Time Rule," Advertising Age, 15 May 1972, p. 10.

Time Access Rule there was little or no data collected on what stations scheduled in the access period. The reasoning behind program schedules in Tennessee was even more difficult to discover. Additionally, people interested in program production for television did not know much about the potential market for independently produced shows for the access period.

This researcher believed producers and programmers alike might benefit from this kind of information. The research project was started with a questionnaire on programming followed a few months later by another which queried station executives on program philosophy under the PTR.

Methodology

The first questionnaire was mailed to the sixteen commercial stations in Tennessee about the middle of the 1972 fall season. It was designed to discover: (1) times when the local stations were airing programs (of whatever type) which were not network originated, and (2) the names and types of these programs, as well as their source (syndicated, locally produced, etc.). The questionnaire was concerned only with prime time programming (information on other local programming, incidentally, was obtained, but it was not tabulated for this thesis) and specifically with the prime time access periods. A return of more than 80 per

cent was received on the questionnaire. Because a comparison of programming in every major market was needed, the lacking information was gleaned from TV Guide and newspaper listings. At this point in the research it was decided to eliminate WBBJ-TV, Jackson, Tennessee, from the survey because the station is small and its market is covered by Memphis stations.

The information from this preliminary survey provided a good foundation on which to build an in-depth investigation of program practices and philosophy. It provided a cross-section of local productions and access programs for each station in the state--valuable information which helped in structuring the second questionnaire and evaluating programmer response to questions on access program philosophy and plans.

The second questionnaire was administered by personal visit to fourteen station managers and program directors at commercial television stations in Tennessee. All stations in the five major markets (Memphis, Nashville, Chattanooga, Knoxville, Tri-Cities) were to be included, but one official was unavailable at the time of the visit to his city. Subsequent efforts to contact him proved unsuccessful.

This second questionnaire was administered in the early spring, 1973, about the time it became clear the PTR would be retained at least for one more season. The questionnaire was designed to verify station programming at that later

time (there were a number of changes between fall and spring), how much such programming was costing, what the management thought of the Prime Time Access Rule, and whether documentary-type programs produced by an outside source (and dealing with Tennessee subjects) might be perceived as helping the stations fulfill their obligations under the ruling.

Letters were written to the general managers of the fifteen commercial stations in Tennessee's five major markets (Jackson having been omitted), requesting time for a meeting to administer the questionnaire. In some cases the program director, assistant manager or other personnel answered the questions; in most instances the general manager himself agreed to the interview. In every case, however, someone in the top administration who had first-hand knowledge of and control over that station's programming practices was interviewed.

A tape recorder was used during the interviews to reproduce accurately any comments made by the interviewee which might supplement the information requested on the formal questionnaire. Transcripts of these recordings were made, and the information used to round out the data obtained from the questionnaires. The tabulation of the results of the basic questionnaire is shown in Chapter III. The observations made on program production costs and other programming matters, reported elsewhere in this paper,

are based in part on the results of this second questionnaire.

Literature Review

Existing studies concerning the Prime Time Access Rule represent extremely current research. Although the final FCC ruling which resulted in the PTR had its beginnings in a Commission network study in 1955, the rule itself did not take effect until September 1, 1971. Therefore, with the exception of relevant material found in the Federal Register and FCC Reports and Decisions, the review of the periodical literature was confined to material published since 1968. Some older sources provided important historical background on the television network programming inquiry as well as on basic programming theory.

In addition, a moderately thorough search of the research literature was conducted. Generally, because of the recency of the PTR decision, only material published during 1967 or later was researched. Selected government documents (other than those already mentioned) which proved useful are included in the list of works consulted.

By far the most useful publication was the weekly magazine, Broadcasting, which has provided a running history of the Prime Time Access Rule as well as the reactions of station and network executives and their programming policies under it.

A national survey of prime time access programming in

the top 50 markets, conducted by TelCom Associates, Incorporated, has proved helpful in comparing Tennessee's programming position to major markets nationwide.

The literature phase of the research was confined primarily to establishing the history of the PTR and how some stations in other parts of the country are programming under it. The information most directly related to this study came from the questionnaires and personal interviews of managers and programmers of Tennessee television stations.

Limitations of Research

Although information on television programming in major markets across the country was used to place the Tennessee situation in perspective, specific information from the fourteen responding stations in Tennessee was by far the most important. The research generally was confined to an opinion survey. The questions were designed to determine whether station programmers might make use of independently produced public affairs shows to help fulfill their obligations under the PTR. A superficial review of cost and technique also was included in the findings and conclusions sections.

There was one major but unavoidable research limitation. The programming information which will be revealed later, and the observations and recommendations which result from these data, come solely from what the programmers said.

Because of limitations of time and distance there was no attempt to monitor each station queried to determine whether the program philosophy espoused actually is followed. Indeed, this kind of research would have required several weeks in each market, a procedure deemed impracticable for this study.

Tennessee stations were chosen for the survey for a number of reasons. As a native Tennessean, this researcher has a strong interest in the state. Also, the small number of stations operating within Tennessee's boundaries made the Tennessee designation for the study attractive. Moreover, programmers and station managers from all of the television stations in Tennessee already had shown a spirit of cooperation with the University of Tennessee, and it was thought complete data could be obtained more assuredly from them than from new contacts. Finally, the state of Tennessee affords a logical boundary with both large and medium sized markets and stations with varying budget size.

The American Research Bureau rankings of Tennessee television markets as reported by Standard Rate and Data Service shows a cross section of size, with two markets in the top 50 and three in the second fifty. Specifically, based on the number of households, here are the rankings:

Memphis.....31	Chattanooga.....76
Nashville.....30	Tri-Cities.....83
Knoxville.....62	Jackson.....188[54]

[54]ARB Market Ratings 1973 (Beltsville, Maryland: American Research Bureau, 1973), n.p.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE PRIME TIME ACCESS RULE

There was a dramatic change in television broadcasting in the fall of 1971. That is when the television networks started their feed a half hour later each night, leaving it up to the local stations to fill the extra time. The change resulted from the FCC's Prime Time Access Rule, designed to promote diversity in television programming by encouraging the production and distribution of independent television productions.

Broadcasters have been operating under the PTR since September 1, 1971. The regulation as it was originally adopted says in part:

> No television station assigned to any of the top 50 markets in which there are three or more operating commercial television stations shall broadcast network programs offered by any television network or networks for a total of more than three hours per day between the hours of 7 p.m. and 11 p.m. local time, except that in the Central Time Zone the relevant time period shall be between the hours of 6 p.m. and 10 p.m.[1]

I. EARLY HISTORY

The question of whether the Federal Communications

[1]35 Federal Register 7417.

Commission has authority to regulate television programming still is being debated, but the fact that the FCC has become increasingly involved in the programming aspect of broadcasting cannot be denied.

FCC Program Studies

The Commission's interest in television programming dates back at least to 1955 when a study of network operation was conducted.[2] The FCC originally had intended to include a broadcast programming study as part of the network investigation, but when the study ended in 1957, television programming had not been investigated.[3]

On February 27, 1959, the Commission instituted another network study specifically to investigate program procurement procedures used by the networks. The inquiry was conducted by the Office of Network Study, a permanent division of the Commission's Broadcast Bureau and headed by

[2]An even earlier expression of program interest came in 1946 in the Commission's Public Service Responsibility of Broadcast Licensees--the Blue Book. The Blue Book was designed to guide station programmers in planning a program schedule which would be acceptable to the FCC. In it, the Commission criticized some stations for carrying too many commercials or for running too many commercials consecutively. Other broadcasters received praise for clearing network shows of interest to local audiences and for agreements with local groups not to delete a network show likely to be of interest to those groups without first advising them. The Blue Book also set up the basis for the fairness doctrine, a requirement for a station to give equal treatment to both sides of issues of public importance.

[3]Federal Communications Commission, Network Program Procurement: Second Interim Report, Part I (Washington: GPO, 1963), p. 3.

Ashbrook P. Bryant. In the summer of 1960 the Office issued its first interim report dealing largely with "the administrative and legislative history of broadcast regulation."[4]

It is the second interim report, however, issued in two parts (1963, 1965) that relates most directly to this thesis. Among the study group's recommendations and conclusions were the following:

> national television networks serve the public interest and perform essential functions both to television licensees and to the public. . . . independent stations in television play no significant part in network program procurement and/or selection. . . . the policies and practices of the networks in program procurement unduly restrict and restrain the competitive development of the market for independently produced network television programs. . . . regulation . . . could be applied under the Commission's present authority to bring about an increase in competition and the broadening of the base in that market.[5]

As part of the Chain Broadcasting Inquiry in 1941, the Commission stated its desire to "foster and strengthen network broadcasting by opening up the field to competition."[6] The Office of Network Study (ONS) reminded the commissioners of this earlier position in Part II of the Second Interim Report on the Program Procurement Study. Then the ONS summarized what the investigation showed: Alternate sources

[4]Ibid., p. 10. [5]Ibid., p. 11.

[6]Federal Communications Commission, Network Program Procurement: Second Interim Report, Part II (Washington: GPO, 1965), p. 10.

of first-run programs appropriate for showing in evening prime time were all but non-existent. The networks exercised virtually complete control over nighttime programming. The study group determined there were a number of factors affecting network programming policies, including increased costs of programming for television and a significant increase of filmed program series from the late fifties to early sixties.[7] The upshot of the 1959 study, as reported in 1965, was the conclusion that the three television networks had too much control over television programming, that the "monopolistic" policies should be halted and the way to break up the monopoly was to promulgate appropriate rules and regulations.[8]

The 50-50 Rule

On March 22, 1965, the Commission issued a notice of proposed rulemaking that outlines a plan to increase competition in the area of television programming. The FCC believed the networks "not only in large measure determine what the American people may see" on television, but "have unnecessarily and unduly foreclosed access to other sources of programs."[9] A major provision of this proposed rule would have limited to "approximately 50 per cent (with certain programs exempted) the amount of network prime time programming in which networks could have interest beyond the

[7] Ibid., p. 5[illegible]. [8] Ibid., p. 11.

[9] 30 Federal Register 4065.

right to network exhibitions."[10] A great number of comments were received on the so-called 50-50 rule. The three networks generally were critical of the idea. They told the Commission that "advertisers and independent producers won't rush to fill whatever gap may be created by limiting the networks' role in television programming."[11]

Besides the comments on the 50-50 rule, some other ideas were submitted to replace the FCC proposal. The Commission called for oral arguments on all the plans toward the end of 1968. The outside proposal which seemed to interest the FCC most was one put forth by Westinghouse Broadcasting Corporation to

> prohibit a television station in any of the top 50 markets in which there are at least three commercial stations from carrying more than three hours of regularly scheduled network entertainment programming between 7 and 11 p.m.[12]

II. THE PRIME TIME RULE

This Westinghouse proposal was the basis for the Prime Time Access Rule. The Commission did not believe the 50-50 rule was workable "or that it would have the adverse consequences which its opponents have predicted," but decided to hold the 50-50 rule in abeyance while primary

[10]23 FCC 2d 382.

[11]"Nets Hit 50-50 Show Ownership Rule--Westinghouse Offers Alternate Plan," Broadcasting, 28 July 1969, p. 6.

[12]23 FCC 2d 383.

consideration was given the Westinghouse Group W proposal.[13] The FCC stated in its 1970 announcement of adoption of the Prime Time Access Rule that the "Westinghouse approach is . . . somewhat more direct in opening up time for programs and sponsors outside the network funnel."[14]

Donald McGannon, president and chairman of Group W Broadcasting, said, when he made the proposal, that reruns on many stations would be a distinct possibility, but

> some stations might put on a half hour of cultural or informative programming one or two nights a week. And there would at least be opportunity in hundreds of markets for producers with different kinds of programs to make a sale.[15]

The comments received in 1969 on the FCC's announced plans did not change significantly from comments received on the earlier proposal, with one exception. All three networks had opposed the 50-50 rule. NBC and CBS continued their opposition to both the 50-50 proposal and the Westinghouse plan. The ABC network, on the other hand, said it could live with the Westinghouse plan. ABC attorney James McKenna, Junior, said in July of 1969 that if the Commission decided the WBC plan were needed, "we will not oppose its

[13] Ibid. [14] Ibid.

[15] "Group W President Rocks Broadcasters; Proposal to Let Local Stations Program for Prime Time," Business Week, 11 April 1970, p. 24.

adoption and will cooperate in its implementation." He called the plan "the least of all possible evils."[16]

FCC Explains PTR

When all of the comments had been received and evaluated, the Commission, on May 4, 1970, announced it was adopting the Westinghouse plan virtually as proposed by WBC. They labeled it the Prime Time Access Rule.[17] Reasoning for adopting the rule was outlined in the May, 1970, Federal Register. In the nearly ten year span between 1959 and 1968 the Commission found that, whereas the number of stations operating increased, the number of first-run, syndicated entertainment programs decreased by more than one quarter; off-network entertainment series increased nearly eight times.[18]

In other words, the number of reruns had increased significantly, and the Commission did not view such a large proportion of rerun material desirable. The commissioners particularly were against showing so many network programs again and again when these off-network shows were used to fill local time slots.

Even more distressing, in the Commission's view, was the fact that when independent stations were analyzed

[16]"Will FCC Finally Give Up on 50-50?" Broadcasting, 28 July 1969, p. 50.

[17]35 Federal Register 7417. [18]Ibid.

separately, the figures were about the same. That is, independent stations, more and more, were programming off-network shows. This meant, in effect, that the network influence, however indirect, on what the viewer can see on television--even on the independent stations--had increased considerably.

In 1957, for example, at least one-third of prime time entertainment programs carried by the networks was being produced by independent producers. In 1968, however, independent production had shrunk to less than 4 per cent of the total output. The networks then were producing or had direct control over about 96 per cent of the programs in the evening hours.[19]

This, then, was the basis for formulating the Prime Time Access Rule. The Commission believed a greater diversity of program fare was necessary: "The data before us indicate an unhealthy situation in several respects. Only three organizations control access to the crucial prime evening television schedule."[20] It was the FCC's plan to "restrain the domination of nighttime television and to open access to the valuable nighttime hours to independent producers."[21]

There was another aspect to this amendment to Part Seventy-three of the FCC's Rules and Regulations. This

[19] Ibid. [20] Ibid. [21] Ibid.

second portion stated that the networks could no longer syndicate their own shows in the United States for distribution and local showing, and further, the Commission ruled that the foreign syndication involvement of the networks would be limited to programs which have been solely produced by the networks themselves. After a year's grace, the rule also prohibited local stations from substituting off-network programs in the half hour of returned time pre-empted by the PTR.[22]

Reaction to the Prime Time Rule

The PTR was put into operation in the fall of 1971. Before then, and since, the access idea sparked considerable controversy. After one full season, Commission chairman Dean Burch was dissatisfied with the rule. He said it was "lousy," and should be abandoned.[23] Commissioner Nicholas Johnson did not agree. He said the PTR "never had a fair shake in the marketplace" and that it was "sound when conceived, and is just as sound today."[24]

Clay Whitehead, then director of the national Office of Telecommunications Policy, joined the ranks of those opposing the PTR early in 1973. Whitehead called the ruling "an abysmal failure," describing it as detrimental to viewer

[22] Ibid.

[23] "Burch Renews Plea for Legislation that Would Give Licensee Fair Shake," Broadcasting, 5 March 1973, p. 30.

[24] Ibid.

and advertiser alike. The OTP, however, declined to offer the FCC any suggestions on how the rule might be changed for the better, acknowledging only that even if the rule were abolished the problems it was designed to solve would still be around.[25]

Broadcasters generally were opposed to the PTR when it first was promulgated. The opposition stemmed primarily from the major networks, though ABC objected to a lesser extent than NBC and CBS. As broadcasters have gained more experience in programming under the PTR, however, opposition has softened considerably. Perhaps one of the best indicators of this notion is the recent three to one vote of members of the National Association of Television Program Executives (NATPE) to retain the Prime Time Access Rule.[26]

In response to a special questionnaire administered during the February, 1973, NATPE conference in New Orleans, programmers in almost every category chose either to keep the PTR the way it is or to keep it with certain modifications. The poll showed that 76 per cent of the broadcasters polled favored either retaining the PTR as is, or retaining it with some modification. Nearly 63 per cent of the network affiliates represented at the meeting favored retention

[25]"How Nixon Administration Plans to Cut TV Networks Down to Size," Broadcasting, 12 February 1973, p. 25.

[26]The National Association of Television Program Executives is an organization of program directors from stations across the country, primarily from the larger markets.

of the PTR in some form. In fact, the only difference between the stand on the rule taken by network affiliates and independent stations is that independents generally want it to stay as it is, whereas affiliate stations would like to see some revisions. Even though newly produced programs for the access period have not been particularly strong in the ratings so far, they appear to be improving, the variety of offerings is increasing and the NATPE survey shows producers and distributors want to retain the PTR. The only separate category of respondents who voted--narrowly--for repeal of the PTR is the designation "Stations in Below 50 Markets."[27]

Most of the respondents in favor of the rule want some changes made. The most commonly suggested change is an end to strip programming during the access period, a seemingly self-defeating request in that strip programming gets the best ratings in most markets.[28] Nevertheless, respondents to the questionnaire agreed, almost two to one, that checkerboard programming would provide "the most successful broadcast format for future prime time access programming."[29]

[27]"P. D. Cue Questionnaire Results," P. D. Cue, March 1973, n.p. (P. D. Cue is a monthly publication of NATPE).

[28]Access Time 1972 (New York: TelCom Associates, 1973), p. 1.

[29]"P. D. Cue Questionnaire Results," n.p.

The questionnaire also showed 45.5 per cent of the respondents to be in favor of allowing off-network programming in the access period--a practice specifically prohibited by the PTR. A small fraction of the answers suggested a change to allow only locally produced programs to be aired during the access period.

Interestingly, most heavily in favor of an end to strip programming were producer/distributor ballots (85%). A number of stations also favor allowing the local station to determine which time period will be the "access" period. Of course technically and legally local stations have that privilege now. If a program executive wishes to carry network programs in the 7 to 8 p.m. time period, he merely has to videotape the desired program and play it back whenever he desires. That would leave another time available to schedule his own offerings, should he wish. The fact is, few stations choose this route because it is much more difficult than to accede to the networks' choice of access time. Forty-four per cent of the questionnaire respondents believed there had been no increase in the quality of the syndicated programming produced for the prime time access period.

Problems with Prime Time Access

From the very beginning it was obvious that the rule might be off to a bad start, caused partially by network

economics, and partly by insufficient planning on the part of the drafters of the PTR. The ruling said in the beginning:

> While our rule will limit the hours of network programs an affiliate in the top 50 markets may broadcast in prime time, it purposefully does not limit the length of the schedule which the networks may offer. Indeed, as commercial UHF stations are rapidly becoming available in the top 50 markets the networks should consider the feasibility of continuing the longer schedule. Not only the public interest in the fostering of UHF would benefit, but affiliates in markets below the top 50 could continue to broadcast the longer network schedule.[30]

This would appear to have been an excellent move, had the networks complied with the FCC's wishes. Not only would it have relieved some smaller stations from the burden and expense of programming the extra time, it would have allowed individual stations to choose for themselves which half hour period to cut from the longer network schedule. A longer network offering would make allowances for different audiences in different markets and changing competitive situations among the stations in individual markets. Conceivably it could be an advantage for a station to program a strong local or syndicated show against its competition's less popular network offering, rather than matching access period for access period with the "boys across town."

Ideally, the Commission's call for the networks to "consider the feasibility of continuing the longer schedule"

[30]23 FCC 2d 395.

is a desirable method of fulfilling some of the objectives of the PTR. However, the FCC perhaps unwittingly recognized the major reason for the unfeasibility of this course in an earlier section of the PTR when it pointed out that "stations in the top 50 markets reach over 75 per cent of the available audience."[31]

Obviously the networks cannot afford to produce an additional thirty minutes of programming on a regular basis, only to find it unavailable to the majority of the potential audience. It is true that FCC rules allow the networks to place their shows on non-affiliate stations, but the networks probably would not want to produce millions of dollars worth of programs on the hope they could be scheduled on independents. Additionally, with the local stations deciding which program to pre-empt for their own offering, the nets would have no assurance which part of the network schedule might be deleted on a given night. That would make it difficult for the network to compute each time period's cost per thousand--the cost to an advertiser of reaching a thousand viewers or a thousand homes.

There is nothing in the rule which designates which thirty minute period of the previously offered three and a half hours of network programming must be cut. The networks chose the 7:30 to 8:00 p.m. segment to delete from their

[31] Ibid., p. 386.

schedules and, for reasons mentioned above, most local stations choose to go along with the network decision, whether they like it or not.

III. PREPARING FOR THE 1973-74 SEASON

The networks and local stations began gearing up for fall, 1973, programming early in the spring, and a number of problems (with resulting controversy) arose over the operation of the PTR. Throughout last year's schedule there were numerous applications for waivers of the rule for various reasons--some granted, other not.

Particularly during the 1971-72 season--the first year of operation under the PTR--the FCC responded amenably to requests for waivers of the ruling. The NBC request for waivers in the summer of 1972 for the All Star Baseball Game was quickly granted, for example.[32] ABC was given permission to go over the allotted time under the PTR in April, 1972, to present basketball play-off games, but one month later the FCC said they would not grant that kind of waiver again. The Commission order that the PTR would apply fully during the 1972-73 season, even for major sports events, came because "impinging next year, even for a few minutes into the Saturday and Sunday portions of the cleared

[32]35 FCC 2d 934.

time, may hamper efforts of affiliated stations" to present their own shows.[33]

ABC officials earlier had asked for a waiver to extend Tuesday night programming in March of 1972, as they had in 1971-72, but that request was denied. That decision was made partly because the FCC believed that granting the waiver "would have a bad psychological effect on those interested or potentially interested in the creation and distribution of non-network prime time material."[34] Additionally, the Commission said it wanted to quash rumors that the PTR would be short lived. The FCC believed that granting the requested ABC waiver would lend credence to rumors that the PTR faced repeal or substantial modification.

These actions prompted charges from some broadcasters that the FCC was not treating all broadcasters fairly. Consequently the FCC, in the fall of 1972, began another evaluation of nighttime television programming in general, and the PTR specifically. The FCC hoped to render some decision on what would be done with the PTR in time for the networks to adjust their fall, 1973, programming accordingly, but because of extensions in deadlines, comments were received until March 12, 1973.

[33]"FCC Says PTR Must Hold for Sports Events," Advertising Age, 1 May 1972, 76.

[34]"FCC Stands Fast on Prime Time Rule," Adversiting Age, 20 March 1972, p. 1.

(Oral arguments on the PTR were held before the Commission during the last week of July, 1973. The Commission heard from more than sixty witnesses from the networks, broadcasting organizations and independent stations. Generally, opposition to the rule appears to have softened further, as evidenced by the NBC comment that the network is not as "offended" by the rule as it used to be.)[35]

By late spring, 1973, the FCC saw that no immediate changes were possible: "Both networks that want repeal have formally told FCC--NBC explicitly, CBS by implication--that it's already too late for repeal to be reflected in 1973-74 schedules," because programming for the coming season already was pretty well set.[36] That means at least one more year for the Prime Time Access Rule, perhaps longer.

[35]"The Biggest Access Show to Date: Oral Arguments at the FCC," Broadcasting, 6 August 1973, p. 13.

[36]"A Dramatic About Face on FCC's Prime Time Access Rule," Broadcasting, 19 February 1973, p. 20.

CHAPTER III

PERSPECTIVE AND FINDINGS

I. PERSPECTIVE

As mentioned in an earlier section, this study was begun with some broad assumptions on television programming in Tennessee--and the programming philosophy behind what goes on the air. These hypotheses included, for example, the idea that few stations in Tennessee schedule public affairs programs during the prime time access period. Few do. Because game shows were the most popular fare at the national level, it was assumed they would show up frequently on stations in Tennessee. They did. Further, it was surmised that the reason for both of the above was economic. It was.

There was one area, however, where the early assumptions were not as accurate. Even with the known restrictions of program ratings and resulting economic considerations, it seemed probable that a profitable operation could be established by producing quality, non-entertainment programs for the stations in Tennessee. This seemed like a reasonable possibility because all stations must carry some public affairs programming, and few have the time and personnel to produce their own. The results show, contrarily, that such an operation, set up strictly on an

independent basis, would not be economically feasible. Another idea which could be more workable has been proposed below.

Philosophic Data

At the philosophic level, the research data go along with observations of Kinkel, Park, and Wolfe as reported in an earlier section. Kinkel, a former documentary producer for ABC, believes there is not enough specialization among television reporters at the local level. That seems to be the situation in Tennessee. Of the fourteen stations surveyed, only four said they maintain what could be considered a full time staff to produce public affairs programs. These four stations have one or more people at an administrative level in charge to schedule public affairs shows, or perhaps to choose subjects for these shows. In every case, however, the in-the-field production crews for these programs are employed full-time in the newsroom. When they are assigned to a documentary or public affairs production, the must leave their duties in the newsroom.

The Tennessee data also support Park's contention that there is a direct relationship between station revenue and the quantity and quality of public affairs shows. Every station executive interviewed said he believes in high quality, informative programming of a documentary nature,

but the overriding considerations of production costs and poor ratings sway their program choice.

The stations in the larger markets (the ones presumed to have larger revenues) do produce more and, in this writer's view, better public affairs programs. Yet only two stations in Tennessee are using the time returned under the PTR to schedule public affairs shows on a regular basis.[1]

The small audiences for non-entertainment shows are a factor against scheduling them on a regular basis in prime time. WATE-TV's program director, John Reese, when asked why he does not give more consideration to such scheduling, replied, "Because you'll lose your shirt!"[2] Nashville station manager Harold Crump, WLAC-TV, answered with equal vehemence when he said,

> If I'm going to have to put this up against entertainment programming on the other two channels, I'm going to get myself whipped every day! And I'm supposed to be in the business of pleasing the public, so I'm going to please the public if I can."[3]

Wolfe's belief that stations shy away from some forms of public affairs programming to maximize profits probably explains in part Tennessee's non-entertainment programming practices. It is difficult to prove such a belief, however. Stations in Tennessee do air relatively few true documentary

[1]See also Commissioner Johnson's station rankings for Tennessee on p. 9.

[2]Reese, personal interview, Knoxville, 18 April 1973.

[3]Crump, personal interview, Nashville, 27 April 1973.

programs, even though some may have a rather heavy schedule of public affairs programs. Invariably when discussing public affairs programming, station executives gave heavy emphasis to their news programs, and survey results show that the preponderance of "public affairs" programming in Tennessee is in a news format. In every case, however, this news programming, as well as the majority of other public affairs offered, is aired in other than FCC-defined prime time. Only on rare and special occasions are they offered during the prime time access period. A listing of programmers' responses to some questions on program scheduling is shown below. The question is followed by the responses received and the number of stations responding.

Have you ever seriously considered scheduling non-entertainment programs in the prime time access period on a regular basis?	No	12
	Yes	2
Do you air non-entertainment, public affairs shows at other times?	Yes	14
When?	Weekends	10
	When needed	4
Do you maintain a full-time staff to produce public affairs programs?	Yes	4
	No	10

Documentary Defined

As mentioned previously, the questions for this research project were asked in such a way to include most forms of public affairs programming. The term "non-entertainment programming" was used. Nevertheless, heavy

emphasis was given the documentary form during all of the interviews.

One of the problems encountered in discussing the programming situation with Tennessee broadcasters was a lack of a common understanding of what qualifies as a "documentary." That puzzle has confronted filmmakers and television programmers for years and never has been commonly and satisfactorily resolved. The divergence of opinion among Tennessee broadcasters, especially, is wide enough to warrant mention.

To some station programmers, "documentary" means an in-depth filmic study of some subject. The few who hold this view believe that a true documentary is a fully-produced film which employs double system sound, laboratory production and professional scripting. The cost of such a half hour documentary may run as high as $10,000 or more and usually is produced only rarely for local television showing.[4]

[4]During 1970 a New York production company traveled to Memphis for a run of the controversial musical Hair. Since it took several days for the crew to complete rehearsals and prepare the show for Memphis, WMC television decided to produce a documentary about those preparations. It was to be another Craig Leak production. Leak had produced some documentary material for WMC already. He had an immense interest in the film medium. Leak went all out on this one. Officials at WMC said most of Leak's productions cost "in the $5,000 to $10,000 class, just because of the sheer weight of film." The Hair show cost nearly $20,000. There were eleven hours of unedited sound-on-film, all of which was processed at a film lab rather than in-house at

At the other end of the continuum are those broadcasters to whom documentary and "discussion" are synonymous terms. To these few, a documentary is produced in a television studio and uses a minimum of equipment and personnel. It generally consists of an interview with one or more persons conducted by a station personality, or a panel discussion of some topic among several authorities in the field. The cost of this type of production may be nothing in out of pocket expenses, in as much as the total liability to the station may lie only in equipment depreciation and on-going salaries.

Most documentaries produced and aired by local television stations in Tennessee, however, appear to fall somewhere between these two extremes. They are predominantly studio-host shows which include film, video tape or other visual material. The cost may be $200 to $500.

Here is a breakdown on how much stations in Tennessee

WMC. The lab also took care of the dubbing, matching and printing of the film.

That probably is the most expensive program ever produced for local showing in Tennessee, and probably the most troublesome. Almost before the footage was in the can the problems started. Only a verbal agreement had been made with the owners of Hair, and as air time approached that permission was retracted. Lengthy correspondence with attorneys and owners followed. In the meantime, the CBS network contracted for a 20 minute segment of "Hair Comes to Memphis," hoping to use it on the 60 Minutes program. Ultimately WMC received permission to air the program one time, but CBS never was able to get permission to broadcast the film.

say they are spending on their locally produced public affairs shows:

Less than $200.....2	$1,000 to $1,200.....2
$200 to $400.....3	Refused Answer.....1
$400 to $600.....1	Figures Unavailable...5

The Questionnaires

The first of two questionnaires was administered in November of 1972. At that time there were a number of locally produced shows--mostly talk shows, music, and women's programs--none regularly scheduled in prime time. There were, however, two public affairs programs scheduled in prime time as designated by the FCC. (As one station programmer pointed out, though, "prime time" may be different things to different stations and markets. It depends on viewership, commercial rates, etc. For the purpose of this study, nevertheless, prime time is that period of the broadcast day so designated by the FCC.)

The two informative programs were scheduled during the prime time access period on weekends. The majority of stations, however, were filling the returned time under the PTR with game shows or situation comedies (See Table I).

No significant change in programming was reflected in the second questionnaire (Table II). The later information shows that stations in Tennessee generally schedule what many stations in the country are in the access period: strip game shows. Of the fourteen stations queried, fully

TABLE I

PROGRAMMING FOR 15 COMMERCIAL STATIONS IN TENNESSEE DURING THE PRIME TIME ACCESS PERIODS (7:30 P.M. EST MONDAY-SATURDAY, 10:30 P.M. EST SUNDAY)

Station	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
WCYB-TV	Dragnet	Dragnet	Dragnet	Dragnet	Dragnet	U F O	Police Surgeon
WJHL-TV	Variety Roundup	To Tell The Truth	To Tell The Truth	To Tell The Truth	To Tell The Truth	Hee Haw	a
WKPT-TV	Local Sports	Perry Mason	The Untouch-ables	Wild, Wild West	Star Trek	Lassie	Movie[b]
WATE-TV	I've Got A Secret	Doctor Kildare	Hollywood Squares	Let's Make A Deal	Wait Til Your Father Gets Home	L. Welk	This Is Your Life
WBIR-TV	The Price Is Right	Perry Mason	Maude	Movie	Parent Game	Hee Haw	Report[c]
WTVK-TV	The Rookies	Mancini	Explorers	Adventurer	Black Beauty	Local Wrestling	U F O[b]
WDEF-TV	Let's Make A Deal	Adam 12	U F O	Parent Game	Hollywood Squares	Hee Haw	Doctor Kildare

TABLE I (continued)

Station	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
WRCB-TV	Tarzan	L. Welk	Virginian	National Geographic	I've Got A Secret	High Chaparral	This Is Your Life[b]
WTVC-TV	To Tell The Truth	To Tell The Truth	To Tell The Truth	To Tell The Truth	To Tell The Truth	Gentle Ben	Protector
WLAC-TV	The Price Is Right	I've Got A Secret	Hollywood Squares	Anything You Can Do	Wait Til Your Father Gets Home	Police Surgeon	U F O
WSIX-TV	To Tell The Truth	To Tell The Truth	To Tell The Truth	To Tell The Truth	To Tell The Truth	Hee Haw	[a]
WSM-TV	This Is Your Life	Doctor Kildare	Let's Make A Deal	Parent Game	Kreskin	L. Welk	Network[d]
WHBQ-TV	To Tell The Truth	To Tell The Truth	To Tell The Truth	To Tell The Truth	To Tell The Truth	Hee Haw	Hollywood Squares
WMC-TV	Truth or Conse-quences	Truth or Conse-quences	Truth or Conse-quences	Truth or Conse-quences	Truth or Conse-quences	Go To the Races	Network[d]

TABLE I (continued)

Station	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
WREC-TV	Police Surgeon	U F O	Parent Game	Protectors	Circus	Dialogue	a

[a]Program not logged, but it is known not to be a local show.

[b]Access show aired at 7:30 p.m.

[c]Local news-talk program.

[4]Delayed network broadcast most weeks. Access show not logged, but it is aired at another time.

TABLE II

QUESTIONNAIRE II WITH RESULTS

Question	Response	Number
1. Are you in favor of or opposed to the Prime Time Access Rule?	Pro	5
	Con	6
	No Stand	3
2. What kinds of programs, generally, are you carrying during the prime time access period?	Game Shows (Strip)	7
	Sitcoms (Various)	1
	Mystery-Adventure	1
	Mixture (Checkerboard)	5
3. How do your prime time access shows compare in the ratings with the programs previously aired by the network in the access time period?	Better	6
	Worse	2
	Same	6
4. What is the average access program costing your station?	Less than $100	4
	$100 to $200	7
	$200 to $300	1
	$300 to $400	1
	More than $500	1
5. Have you ever seriously considered scheduling non-entertainment programs in the prime time access period on a regular basis?	No	12
	Yes	2[a]
6. Do you air non-entertainment, public affairs shows at other times?	Yes	14
When?	Weekends	10
	When Needed	4
7. Do you maintain a full-time staff to produce affairs programs?	No	10
	Yes	4[b]

TABLE II (continued)

Question	Response	Number
8. How much do you generally spend for each public affairs program?	Less than $200	2
	$200 to $400	3
	$400 to $600	1
	$1,000 to $1,200	2
	Refused Answer	1
	Figures Unavailable	5
9. If programs of this type dealing with subjects of interest to Tennessee viewers were available from an outside source, would you consider carrying them?	Yes	10
	No	4
What time periods?	Prime Time Access	1[cd]
	Where Needed	9
10. What would you consider a reasonable per-program cost for such a production?	$100 to $200	1
	$200 to $500	2
	Negotiable	7[d]

[a]One of these stations is running a locally produced talk show on Saturday night, the other is doing the same thing on Sunday night. Other stations said they thought about scheduling non-entertainment shows in the access period, but rejected the idea.

[b]Administrative personnel. In every case the production staff is pulled off of newsroom assignments for the production of public affairs programs.

[c]Not on a regular basis. Would pre-empt regular show on merit of outside program.

[d]Includes only ten stations which responsed affirmatively to question 9.

half carry game shows on a strip basis in the access period. Five other stations offer a checkerboard schedule on weekdays. In every case the checkerboard schedule includes one or more game shows. One station strips Dragnet and another carries situation comedies.

Tennessee broadcasters surveyed on the PTR were about evenly divided on the issue. Five are in favor of keeping the rule, six believe it should be abolished, and three have no position one way or the other. In taking a neutral position, however, WKPT-TV's general manager Robert Ratcliff, added, "I don't plan on giving up the 7-8 p.m. time period anytime in the next few years."[5]

There seems to be no correlation between station size or budget and its position on the Prime Time Access Rule. The primary influence causing a station to oppose the rule, generally, is a belief that the viewing public is suffering because of it. Those in opposition to the PTR do not believe it has accomplished what the FCC had hoped it would accomplish--i.e., an increased variety of quality programming. Consequently, they believe, the television viewer is the loser because program quality during the access period certainly is no higher--and in some instances, they believe, is lower--than when the network was programming the time period. As William Eckstein, manager of WTVK-TV, said, "We

[5]Ratcliff, personal interview, Kingsport, 23 April 1973.

are opposed to the rule simply because we believe the networks are capable of programming a hell of a lot better than we are here at the local level."[6]

There seems to be a very slight tendency among Tennessee broadcasters to believe the PTR extends the authority of the FCC too far into the area of programming, and they are opposed to the rule because of that. John Reese of Knoxville, for example, says simply that the PTR "puts the Commission into programming and it does not belong there."[7] The WATE-TV program director points out that anytime he has a program he believes is better than what the network is scheduling, no law or contractural agreement prevents him from pre-empting the network show for his own offerings: "We always have that alternative and it should be ours and not the Commission's."[8] Reese disagrees with the Commission's telling stations they must carry local shows an additional thirty minutes each night.

On the other hand, some TV program executives in Tennessee support the PTR. The supporters generally are behind it because it provides increased revenue to the station and the ratings are as good as--or better than--ratings for network shows in that time period. There does

[6]Eckstein, personal interview, Knoxville, 1 May 1973.

[7]Reese, personal interview, Knoxville, 18 April 1973.

[8]Ibid.

not seem to be any noticeable relationship between market size (or location) and stand on the ruling. Here are Tennessee station positions on the PTR by market:

For: Nashville, Nashville, Tri Cities, Knoxville, Memphis.

Against: Nashville, Tri Cities, Knoxville, Knoxville, Memphis, Memphis.

No Stand: Chattanooga, Chattanooga, Tri Cities.

Tennessee station executives agree that the Prime Time Access Rule has not significantly increased the number or variety of programs available for television. Because of this, they say, the viewer has suffered from the lack of quality programs in the access period. Additionally, some believe the PTR has reduced creativity and individuality in television programming, instead of enhancing it as was the intent of the ruling. Station manager Robert H. Smith of WCYB-TV is "philosophically" opposed to the rule because "it puts you on a track rather than improving the capability of unfettered imagination or competition."[9]

Smith's reasoning is that whereas he can, by using video tape, choose which half hour to use for local programs, this is rather difficult. He reasons that if the networks offered a full three and a half hour schedule, each local station then could easily substitute his own program

[9]Smith, personal interview, Bristol, 23 April 1973.

choice in whatever time period without the use of video tape and juggling network programs. Because WCYB-TV is not within the top-50 markets, Smith is not bound by the three hour limitation of the PTR. Technically he could program a full three and a half hour network schedule each evening. Under present network programming practices, however, this would be difficult because the nets offer only three hours of programs nightly.

At least one program director does not agree with the contention that the PTR has cut down on creativity in programming. To the contrary, Buddy Reagan, WSIX-TV program director, says the PTR

> has caused all local stations to think about what they are doing and it is a challenge to them. Rather than saying "the networks will take care of it," now it is ours and we really have to do something with it.[10]

He believes that because of this pressure from the FCC for local stations to schedule their own programming during the prime time access period, local stations are looking harder at their programming in general and some of them are realizing that "maybe we are not doing what we really can do."[11] This introspection, Reagan believes, can improve programming in the access period as well as during other periods of the broadcast day.

[10]Reagan, personal interview, Nashville, 27 April 1973.

[11]Ibid.

Access Economics

The general consensus seems to be that the PTR increased the cost of running a television station because programming that extra thirty minutes is costlier than when the network had the time period. The increase was more for some stations than for others, and some stations actually made money because of the PTR. Robert Ratcliff says the ruling cost WKPT an additional $30,000 a year in increased programming fees, no small consideration for a station already losing $240,000 a year.[12]

WKPT-TV's situation is somewhat different in that it is a relatively new UHF station in a well-established VHF market. The two VHF stations in the market have been on the air for a number of years. Ratcliff said it is difficult to win over viewers in such a situation, but WKPT-TV is making progress.

Reeve Owen of WTVC-TV in Chattanooga says stations which maintain that they are making money on the PTR are not looking at the full picture. Owen says his station is making money on the half hour of access time, even though the cost of the time is high, because they sell more commercials during the period than was the case when the network

[12]Ratcliff, personal interview, Kingsport, 23 April 1973. Ratcliff reported that by midway in the 1973 season WKPT had started making "a little money." That points up just one of the problems one has when moving a UHF station into an established VHF market.

was programming it. But there are a finite number of potential customers for television commercial time in a market the size of Chattanooga, so more commercials in the 7:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. time period means there are other periods in the schedule which were sold previously but are not sold now. Owen believes a larger market station may operate differently, but he says in Chattanooga the PTR costs stations money.

The only other broadcaster surveyed in Chattanooga, program director Cecil Ruffin of WDEF, disagrees: "I think without a doubt it has made us money," Ruffin says. He does not believe the success or failure of the PTR can be judged solely on whether stations are making money on it:

> I think as broadcasters we should be professional broadcasters. And my definition of professional broadcasters are people who not only use their facility to make money, but also to serve the public, because I think this is part of our responsibility.[13]

Ruffin is one of those who would like to bring more quality public service programming to viewers, but cannot because of the high cost involved: cost of the product and additional costs resulting from a heavy loss of viewership when non-entertainment programs are aired.[14]

[13]Ruffin, personal interview, Chattanooga, 25 April 1973.

[14]Ibid.

II. FINDINGS

It is obvious by now that much of the information cajoled from Tennessee broadcasters for this research project is on the theoretical or philosophic level. But running a television station is not a cut-and-dried business. The guidelines are general and the theories varied. On the scheduling of non-entertainment programs, however, agreement is nearly unanimous.

Non-Entertainment Shows and Access

Tennessee broadcasters as a rule have given little or no serious thought to programming documentary or non-entertainment shows in the access period. Many said they would like to carry such programs, but the probability for success, they believe, is exceedingly low. Additionally, the selection of available non-entertainment programs for scheduling in prime time is limited, and few stations are equipped to produce such shows of their own. For those who feel confident in building such productions, the cost is too high and the ratings too low to consider airing them on a regular basis in prime time.

Currently two Tennessee broadcasters regularly program material of a non-entertainment nature in the prime time access period. Both of these shows are aired in the weekend access slot. Several stations say they schedule such shows in the access period as specials, when a topic of sufficient

import is found and when the quality of the production (whether produced in-house or purchased from an outside source) is commensurate with the quality standards of the station for prime time. Though this special program may be sponsored, usually it is not; and it is not expected to compete successfully in the ratings either with the regular program for that time period or with another station's competitive programming in the same market for that time. These special shows are aired because the station management believes the message is worth the expected loss in viewers and revenue. Points are gained with the Commission and the public at license renewal time. As Buddy Reagan, with WSIX-TV, says, "There are time periods you give up to make up later. . . . You do things that are important and have such an effect that in the long run you get it back in multiples."[15]

All of the fourteen station executives surveyed said they air some kind of public affairs program on a regular basis--once a week or once a month--occasionally in prime time, generally Saturday or Sunday evening. As previously mentioned, these programs take a variety of forms, but they tend toward discussion shows videotaped in a television studio.

[15]Reagan, personal interview, Nashville, 27 April 1973.

National Comparison

The programs carried in Tennessee during the access period do not appear to differ significantly from those carried by most stations in the major markets across the nation as reported in a February, 1973, survey by TelCom Associates. At the time of the Tennessee survey, no station in the state was programming news during the access period, though WSM-TV assistant manager Tom Griscom says his station will try it this fall "after trying a year of various types of programs" which received somewhat lower ratings than the shows carried when the network had the time period. The station does not expect the news program to do any better in the ratings--perhaps worse--but officials decided to extend news into the access time because of a lack of other quality programming from which to choose.[16]

Other kinds of public affairs programming, the station believes, would fare even worse in the ratings against game shows and would be considerably more costly to produce. And Griscom believes

> we have a very good news department, an excellent news product, and a half hour extra of news would be the best programming we could put on, both for our viewers and from our own standpoint.[17]

Another reason for this decision is economic. WSM-TV's ratings generally are good for news, which should make news

[16]Griscom, personal interview, Nashville, 27 April 1973.

[17]Ibid.

sales relatively easy. Moreover, the station probably can produce an extra half hour of news more economically than it can purchase a syndicated show.

Access Show Ratings

How large are the audiences for access shows in Tennessee? Are the access shows doing better or worse than the previous network programs? The stations surveyed seem to be split about down the middle. Six stations reported that their access shows are doing significantly better than the network programs previously aired during the period. Six others report their ratings have dropped since the networks stopped programming the 7:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. EST period. For two stations there has been no significant change.

The symmetry in access show popularity prompted speculation that there might be a relationship between ratings and program philosophy. It also seemed possible that network affiliation had something to do with the variance in popularity between the old network shows and the new access shows. The only definite relationship to emerge from a comparison of the stations was that broadcasters who strip game shows consistently get higher ratings during the access period than they received with network shows in that time slot. Stations with checkerboard programs or strip shows other than game shows usually get lower ratings than the

former network programs. As it turned out the stations with the best access ratings are CBS affiliates. They also are the stations stripping game shows, so there does not appear to be a cause-effect relationship between access ratings and network affiliation (See Tables III, IV, V).

There seems to be a general agreement, though, among station programmers that the ratings may not tell the full story. This is not necessarily a new idea, as there have been for some time those who disagree with the way ratings are handled. If the arguments of some station executives against the ratings are valid, however, a change (assuming a change were possible) could alter what stations choose to program during the access period.

Program director Lance Russell of WHBQ-TV said, for example, that people filling out the program diary for the rating services usually do not fill it out every day. When they do get around to completing the form, the strip show in the market, because it is on every night, is easier to remember. The viewer may have watched the strip one or two nights and someone else's checkerboard offering a few nights. But this executive believes the strip show gets credit for more viewing than it actually received because it is on so much.[18] It is a matter of recall, Ed Greaney of WMC-TV says:

[18]Russell, personal interview, Memphis, 30 April 1973.

TABLE III

ACCESS PROGRAM RATINGS COMPARED WITH NETWORK AFFILIATION AND STATION PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

Station	Network	Program Type	Rating[a]
WCYB-TV	NBC	Mystery-Adventure	Better
WJHL-TV	CBS	GAME SHOWS	Better
WKPT-TV	ABC	Sitcoms	Worse
WATE-TV	NBC	GAME SHOWS	Same
WBIR-TV	CBS	GAME SHOWS	Better
WTVK-TV	ABC	Checkerboard	Worse
WDEF-TV	CBS	GAME SHOWS	Worse
WRCB-TV	NBC	Checkerboard	No answer
WTVC-TV	ABC	Checkerboard	Worse
WLAC-TV	CBS	GAME SHOWS	Better
WSIX-TV	ABC	Checkerboard	Better
WSM-TV	NBC	Checkerboard	Worse
WHBQ-TV	ABC	Checkerboard	Same
WMC-TV	NBC	GAME SHOWS	Worse
WREC-TV	BCS	GAME SHOWS	Better

[a]Better, same, or worse than network show previously carried in same time period.

TABLE IV

ACCESS PROGRAM RATINGS BY PROGRAM TYPE

Program Type	Number Stations	Better	Same	Worse
Game Shows (Strip)	7	4	1	2
Situation Comedies (Various)	1	-	-	1
Mystery-Adventure	1	1	-	-
Checkerboard (Mixture)	5	1	1	3

TABLE V

ACCESS PROGRAM RATINGS BY NETWORK AFFILIATION

Network	Total Tennessee Affiliates in Survey	Better	Same	Worse
NBC	4	1	1	2
CBS	5	4	-	1
ABC	5	1	1	3

> Someone throws out an hour and it is just too easy to remember one that is on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, whereas you have to stop and think a moment about the others, and if you did look at one you are not sure what night it was. . . . Most people identify and remember a program that is on every night.[19]

Some people believe that if it were possible to program something different every night of the week without getting beaten in the ratings, better programs might result and the programming effort might be more creative, more challenging. Checkerboard programming would allow stations to concentrate on individual shows, jockeying for position and excellence against the competition. But the way it is, with strip programs generally ahead in the ratings, "you just pour it on and hope they like Monty Hall better than they like Garry Moore."[20]

The ratings seem to support what Tennessee broadcasters say about viewership of informative shows. Apparently the quality of the program has little relationship to how many people watch it. The NBC network, for example, recently ran an informative series, America, written and produced by Alistair Cook. This is a series many professional producers and broadcasters said was among the best of its type aired on American television. The ratings in Tennessee, however, were not impressive. It drew an average of twelve thousand

[19]Greaney, personal interview, Memphis, 30 April 1973.

[20]Ibid.

homes in Chattanooga, for example, a very low figure for prime time in that market.[21]

Cecil Ruffin, program director for WDEF-TV, which aired America in Chattanooga, points out that a program would have to draw forty to fifty thousand homes on his station in that period to be considered successful. There are other factors in judging success, though. America ran opposite Marcus Welby, M.D., one of the highest rated shows on any network, for example.

Even so, Ruffin says the 10 p.m. Tuesday slot should do better than America's twelve thousand homes. The movie WDEF-TV usually runs opposite Marcus Welby, M.D. averages forty-nine thousand homes compared to Welby's fifty-four thousand. Gunsmoke, which runs at an earlier hour on WDEF-TV, generally receives sixty-five to seventy thousand homes.[22]

Program Sources

In spite of these considerations, ten of the fourteen station executives surveyed said they probably would purchase thirty minute documentary-type programs produced by an outside source if they dealt with subjects of interest to Tennessee viewers. More specifically, the programmers said the productions would have to have some local tie-in. For

[21]Ruffin, personal interview, Chattanooga, 25 April 1973.

[22]Ibid.

instance, if it were a magazine format, one or more of the segments would have to be about a local subject or one of direct interest to local viewers.

How much do programmers think a production of this type might be worth? Although a few were willing to choose a figure, by far the majority preferred to withhold comment until they could see the production. Opinions ranged all the way from "you plan cost by the seat of your pants. Hopefully it would be free,"[23] to "you spend what the man asks."[24] All generally agreed that the cost to the station of such a production is negotiable and that how much the station might be willing to spend depends on the quality of the production, how well it does in the ratings, and how much income can be realized from it, as Robert Smith said: "The cost of anything doesn't matter, it is the value to you that is important. . . . It doesn't matter what it costs if you can use it profitably."[25]

The three programmers who tentatively committed themselves to a price for such programming ranged from $100 to $500 in their estimates of per-program costs. It is believed that of the others, few if any would go beyond their current outlay for access programming. Some say they

[23]Owen, personal interview, Chattanooga, 25 April 1973.

[24]Crump, personal interview, Nashville, 27 April 1973.

[25]Smith, personal interview, Bristol, 23 April 1973.

have spent considerably more than that for a very special program, but for a series it is believed the cost would have to be kept in line with what most already spend. The range of costs for prime time access programming among the fourteen stations surveyed is from $50 per half hour to more than $500 for a thirty minute show. The average is $170, figured from the questionnaire responses below.

What is the average access program costing you?	Less than $100	4
	$100 to $200	7
	$200 to $300	1
	$300 to $400	1
	More than $500	1
Would you be interested in purchasing non-entertainment programs from an outside source?	Yes	10
	No	4
What time periods?	Prime time access	1
	Where needed	9
What would you consider a reasonable per-program cost?	$100 to $200	1
	$200 to $500	2
	Negotiable	7

The Economics of Independently-Produced Non-Entertainment Programs for Tennessee Stations

How much might it cost an independent company to produce thirty minute documentary-type shows of reasonably good quality? The following information is speculative, some of it consists of estimates based on the investigator's three years of experience in producing just this kind of program on a regular basis. The figures are skeleton costs

which reflect only the direct production costs. Such variables as cost for office space, insurance, equipment investment, etc., have not been included.

A thirty minute access time program actually runs about 28.5 minutes, leaving ninety seconds of time for commercial material at the beginning and end of the production. Additionally, within each show two commercial positions of up to two minutes each are allowed, which further reduces the actual time of the production to roughly 24.5 minutes. A generally accepted time-to-film relationship is forty feet of magnetic stripe 16mm color film per minute. So for a 24.5 minute production, approximately one thousand feet of film will be used in the finished product.[26] Although a larger ratio frequently is used for high budget productions, a 3:1 film-shot to film-used ratio is believed suitable for the kind of program under consideration. That means a producer who wanted to use about one thousand feet of film on the air should plan to shoot at least three thousand feet through the camera to insure having enough of the right kind of film to use in the final cut.

Assuming the producer or someone in the company does all the film editing (with the exception of some specialty work, perhaps) and a minimum of other work is sent to a lab, the accompanying chart (Table VI) gives a broad breakdown

[26]Robertson, personal interview, Knoxville, 10 June 1973.

TABLE VI

ESTIMATED PRODUCTION COSTS FOR A SINGLE THIRTY MINUTE PROGRAM

Item	Item Cost[a]	Total
3,000 feet magnetic stripe color camera stock	.082/ft.	$ 246.00
3,000 feet color processing	.070/ft.	210.00
2,000 feet color work print w/edge numbers	.140/ft.	280.00
2,000 feet 16mm magnetic stock	.05655/ft.	113.10
1 1/2 hours' dubbing time	$35/hr.	52.50
1,000 feet trial print (color)	.179/ft.	179.00
1,000 feet release (print (color)	.150/ft.	150.00
Special effects, creative editing, etc.		250.00
VTR dubbing and production time	$125/hr.	625.00
Travel, misc.		400.00
Total		$2,495.60

Note: These figures depend on a minimum of work being sent out to a laboratory and do not take into account capital investment for equipment and other overhead expenses. If videotape costs and other semi-software expenses were pro-rated over each production the total cost for each program would be higher. Figuring roughly $2,500 per thirty minute show, it would take fifteen buyers at the average of $170 each to break even.

[a]Price Schedule (Memphis: Motion Picture Laboratories, 1972), n.p.

of the probable costs for one typical thirty minute documentary show. The $2,500 figure is a bare minimum which could be maintained only with a small staff (two people, perhaps), planned shooting, a minimum of laboratory work and few mistakes. There naturally would be productions (those requiring no travel, for example) which could be completed more cheaply than the quoted figures, but there probably would be many others which could cost more. The average is what is important.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is extremely difficult to collate data of the kind collected for this thesis. Of necessity the questionnaire contained some speculative questions that were difficult for the television programmers to answer with a definite yes or no. Determining what kinds of programs stations currently carry was fairly easy, but a hard and fast decision on what they might be expected to carry under varying conditions in the future is more complicated and subjective.

The subject is television programming, a subject which frequently cannot be defined with hard "how to" data for an individual market. Television stations are programmed to a very large degree from the "gut" of the program director rather than from any broad base of concrete information telling him how to do it. There are guidelines which he may follow based on his own experience and that of other experts in the field, but when it is time to decide to program this or that show, too many subjective factors come into play for him to rely on a set programming formula. The fact that a show did well in Chicago or Minneapolis or Joplin does not necessarily indicate it will fare well in New York or Winston-Salem or Knoxville. People who are charged with out-programming the competition know this. They look at

ratings across the country, demographics, what kind of competition a show has had; but in the end, as Russell says, frequently "there is no sure fire way of saying how you are going to pick a show."[1]

The data collected in the interviews, questionnaires and other research for this thesis are a little like the programming data gathered by a television station programmer. The information can be listed, put into charts and compared, but when the time comes to write "Conclusions" admittedly the subjective nature of the study influences the writer's conclusions.

Broadcast Public Affairs

It is clear that although some television viewers may watch informational programs with great anticipation and enjoyment, the majority do not. For this reason, few television broadcasters schedule instructional material at a time when the resulting reduced audience may also damage ratings of important programs later in the schedule.

Nevertheless, all stations carry a certain amount of public affairs programming. Naturally some carry more than others, and the quality of the shows varies widely. All of these considerations generally are up to the individual broadcaster. There is no FCC rule as such which tells a licensee how much public affairs programming he must carry;

[1]Russell, personal interview, Memphis, 30 April 1973.

there are loose guidelines, however. When he requests renewal of his license, the broadcaster promises to carry a certain amount of public affairs programming, an amount he believes will adequately serve his community. Generally a licensee will be questioned on his intentions if he promises "less than 5 per cent News, 1 per cent Public Affairs, and less than 5 per cent of a combination of Public Affairs and Other."[2]

It is widely believed both inside and outside the industry that most stations promise no more than they think is the minimum allowable. Few seem to program more than they have promised. There are exceptions, naturally, and several of the stations in Tennessee show up well in this respect, as indicated by Nicholas Johnson's rating list (See p. 12).

As already reported, the majority of Tennessee broadcasters believe in quality public affairs programs--shows which provide the viewer with meaningful information and the station with praise and loyalty from some of the audience. Station programmers know that informative programming--no matter how well done--will not draw large audiences. Most, however, believe stations have an obligation to serve all segments of the population. For the most part, programmers

[2]Larry Perry, "Questions Concerning Your Community Surveys," Perry's Broadcasting and the Law, 15 February 1973, p. 3.

apparently feel that investigative reporting into areas which affect a large proportion of the population can be useful even though audiences may be small.

The Programs

In the previous chapter are some observations on what forms most public affairs programs take in Tennessee. It also is mentioned that the majority of station programmers would like to air more in-depth reports and documentary programs, but high cost and limited personnel are inhibiting factors.

Naturally, broadcasters would air more public affairs shows if the audiences were larger. It still is rather clear that the majority of television viewers prefer entertainment programs, but there is some evidence to show that viewers' tastes may be changing for the better (better, at least, from the standpoint of one who believes that informational programming is improved fare). A recent survey conducted by Robert Bower, Director of the Bureau of Social Science Research, and sponsored by CBS, shows that "in the public mind American television has ceased to be primarily an entertainment center and has become a major force in journalism as well."[3]

The CBS survey was conducted just ten years after the

[3]"Strong Shift in TV's Role: From Escape Toward Reality," Broadcasting, 11 June 1973, pp. 15-18.

1960 surveys which formed the basis of Gary Steiner's book, The People Look at Television. The Bower study duplicated the Steiner investigation. Among the Bower findings:

> Live coverage of national events, educational television, more channels, television by satellite, and longer news programs are all viewed as changes for the better by 70 per cent or more of the sample.[4]

On the surface these data could mean that the American television watcher may be more ready than ever before for an increase in informational programming. Of course, the confounding factor Steiner uncovered may be present in the Bower study. Steiner found that people often will say they want to watch one kind of programming, but when given the choice may view something else. Exactly what goes on in the viewers' mind is impossible to say, but there is at least the possibility that he really does want more informational programs.

A Program Proposal--The Data Reviewed

Some of these considerations prompted this thesis project. It seemed logical that if a majority of Tennessee broadcasters favored informative programs, but did not have the money or personnel to produce them, they would carry such programs if they were available at reasonable costs. It was specifically hoped the shows might be scheduled in

[4] Ibid.

the prime time access period as part of the station's fulfillment of the PTR obligations.

The data seem to quash that idea. The reasons are obvious from what has been said: ratings on this type of program are poor, meaning a station would go into the network schedule with reduced viewership; sponsors for these kinds of shows sometimes are difficult to find; and they cost more than some alternative programming.

Can there be a market for informational shows in Tennessee for other time periods? The answer appears to be yes, but the figures in Table VI (p. 80) suggest that it is unlikely that an independent firm can profitably produce programs for marketing only in Tennessee.

In the first place the equipment necessary to produce the shows is quite expensive. Even the most Spartan operation would require one sound-on-film camera and accessories, a professional tape recorder, lighting equipment, a silent camera, a film projector, and various paraphernalia for film editing. The absolute base cost for the minimum equipment would be more than $25,000.

In the second place, it does not appear that program sales could reasonably be expected to offset production costs. At a projected cost of $2,500 per show, it would take fifteen buyers, each paying an average of $170 per thirty-minute program (the average of what stations currently are paying to program their local slots), just to

break even. There are only five major markets in Tennessee, precluding the sale of enough of the shows to pay production costs. It is conceivable that well-produced documentary shows of the type under discussion could be marketed outside Tennessee, but expenses of production would go up accordingly, and the uniqueness of the Tennessee series would be lost.

Still, it would seem that if stations in Tennessee had access to more quality informational programs, at least some of them would carry the shows. This would open the airways to programs from more varied sources and provide Tennessee television viewers with meaningful informational programs on local and regional topics--some of the original objectives of the Prime Time Access Rule. There might be an economical way for stations to acquire such informative programs.

A Program Proposal--A Plan for the Future

In addition to the basic questionnaire, each station executive was queried informally on the degree of cooperation which exists among stations in Tennessee. All of the stations have some kind of cooperative arrangement with at least one other station, an arrangement which provides for swapping newsfilm, engineering data and the like. The most common such arrangement is between stations in Nashville and one or more other markets. Because Nashville is the state capital, stories which affect citizens across Tennessee

frequently are generated there and stations in other cities sometimes use film of these stories supplied by a Nashville station. Presently, all of these cooperatives operate on a when-requested, swap-out basis. Each station supplies news-film, video tape or information without receiving payment. It does not seem to matter that the flow of material frequently is one-sided--from Nashville to other cities, for example. All stations surveyed said the arrangement works well.

The reasoning behind pointing up this already established air of cooperation among Tennessee stations progressed this way:

1. Whereas station programmers admit that ratings are generally poor, they still want to air informative public affairs programs.
2. They say they would air more programs of this type if quality and price were commensurate with their program standards and ability to pay.
3. It has been shown that economic considerations preclude an independent producer from supplying stations in Tennessee with public affairs programming, even though a majority of the stations (ten of fourteen) say they would purchase the shows.
4. Whereas the majority of Tennessee programmers want quality non-entertainment productions for their station, and whereas an air of cooperation among

stations already has been established, a cooperative arrangement to produce public affairs programs might work.

If only five stations across Tennessee--one in each of the major markets--would agree to help each other in researching, writing, and producing non-entertainment programming, the cost of high quality films on Tennessee subjects could be kept reasonably low. If the five stations could get together on program goals (content, format, etc.), there is no reason why they could not establish a formal cooperative relationship--under all the necessary legal arrangements, of course, such as formal incorporation.

Once the formal co-op is firmly established, the five participants jointly could hire a small production team. Probably two versatile people would be a good place to start as long as provisions are made for expansion of the operation later. Were this crew capable--with organizational help and other part time aid from one or two key station personnel in each city--of researching, writing, filming, and producing public affairs films, the cost could be kept within reasonable limits. By splitting costs, each station in the cooperative effectively would have its own full-time documentary team for around $16,000 the first year. As noted in the breakdown in Table VII, a good portion of the proposed budget would go for equipment the first year. The

TABLE VII

PROPOSED CO-OP PROGRAM BUDGET

Item	Cost
FIRST YEAR	
Equipment (cameras, recorders, lights, etc.)	$25,000
Salaries, two people	25,000
Production (twelve thirty minute shows at $2,500/ea.)	30,000
Total	$80,000
$\frac{\$80,000}{5 \text{ stations}} = \$16,000/\text{station}$	
$\frac{\$16,000}{12 \text{ programs}} = \$\ 1,333/\text{program}$	
SECOND YEAR	
Salaries, three people	$30,000
Production (twelve thirty minute shows at $2,500/ea.)	30,000
Total	$60,000
$\frac{\$60,000}{5 \text{ stations}} = \$12,000/\text{station}$	
$\frac{\$12,000}{12 \text{ programs}} = \$\ 1,000/\text{program}$	

operation would have to start with modest goals and budget, but it should become more sophisticated quite rapidly.

Here is how the operation might function. The primary production team would operate out of one of the stations in the cooperative. Nashville would be a good central location. Here would be provided office space, probably in or near the newsroom. The operational costs of the office would be shared among the participant stations. Additionally, the production crew should have access to film editing equipment, videotape production facilities, office supplies, typewriters, and the like at all five co-op stations. In this way the documentary team would have somewhere to headquarter no matter what area of the state it might be working at any given time.

This arrangement has a number of obvious advantages. It would afford the production team the opportunity to work with newsroom personnel at stations in each market. This would help the documentary unit to become familiar with each market; to arrive at a home-town understanding of each city; to develop camaraderie with personnel from the various stations (an important consideration because the joint employees could be viewed as outsiders among local station employees unless care is exercised to develop good working relationships).

Needless to say, covering the state of Tennessee--even just the five major broadcast markets--would be a Herculuean

task for such a small production staff. It would require considerable travel, dedication, and coordination and planning help from station personnel. But the job is not an impossible one.

If the first year proved satisfacotry, the stations likely would want to expand the operation with one or two more employees. If production techniques could be streamlined, through increased use of videotape production, for example, the cost of putting a thirty minute show together could be stabilized. The proposed budget in Table VII, p. 91, reflects an increased salary allotment of five thousand dollars for a third person during the second year. Obviously this is not enough for another full time cinematographer or writer. The hope is that somewhat reduced production costs would provide additional funds for salaries within the original budget. Additionally, this third employee would not be an in-the-field crewmember. The third employee would be stationed at the "home" station in an organizational or secretarial capacity. Someone obviously would be needed to transcribe recorded interviews, set up appointments for filming, answer correspondence, keep track of supplies, handle filing duties, pay bills, and coordinate operations among the stations.

By the second year the per-station costs are shown at $12,000, or an average of $1,000 per show, assuming twelve thirty minute programs are produced. This is about the

figure quoted by stations which said they produce filmed public service shows, but these stations must pull newsroom personnel off their regular duties to produce such a special. Under the proposed cooperative arrangement, these stations would be getting a quality product for no more than they currently spend, while maintaining their newsroom at full staff. Stations which do not carry such programs because of a lack of qualified personnel could acquire these shows under a co-op arrangement at a reasonable price.

Further, depending on the time period the program is aired, a local station might realize as much as $600 income for each show, assuming four commercials within the show at an average of $150 each. That would leave only $400 per show for each station to absorb, which this writer believes is a reasonable price for a full-produced documentary.

This figure is in line with what many stations say they are spending on the majority of their public affairs offerings, and most stations say their shows of this type are not sponsored. Therefore, they already are producing a certain amount of programming of this type without realizing direct income from it because they feel the content is worth the expense, or they must do it to comply with the terms of their licenses. In any case, assuming the content and production techniques are satisfactory, stations should be more willing to absorb the loss on these shows if the additional hardship of a short staff in some other facet of

the operation is avoided. A shortage of personnel frequently occurs when news department personnel must take time out to put together a documentary or other public affairs show, for example.

To accommodate the five markets, the program likely should be constructed in a magazine format, incorporating material from several different markets on each show. Naturally, it should remain flexible enough so that when the subject matter warranted extra time, the full thirty minutes could be devoted to a single subject with broad viewer interest. Pollution and drug problems and how other areas face them are examples of programs which need not necessarily be pegged to a specific market to make the show timely for that market.

All of the station executives queried said they believe identification of on-the-air personalities by the viewer is important. That is, personalities should be easily identifiable as members of that station staff and of the community. The co-op arrangement proposed could maintain that identification quite easily, merely by restricting the arrangement to a single station in each market and taking care in the writing of the productions not to tip off the viewer to the wide ranging play of the show. A slide overlay for the opening and close of the show, or a live introduction, could be used to personalize the production for each market.

Program Topic Selection

Many of the stations surveyed already have administrative personnel who spend at least a part of their working hours deciding what subjects need to be covered in public affairs shows. This activity should continue under the cooperative plan proposed, with ideas and program suggestions funneling to the joint production crew.

Another source for program topics is the community needs survey each station prepares for license renewal. The latest community needs survey for WTVC-TV, Chattanooga, for example, assessed the opinions of more than 250 citizens within the viewing area. When the opinions were tabulated, the station had many pages of potential topics for in-depth reporting programs. As in previous years, the majority of citizens believed the most problems exist in the area of state and local government: law enforcement, communication between the public and public officials, sewage system problems, garbage collection problems, pollution control. Others wanted action and information in the areas of race relations, the education system, traffic problems, health and welfare.[5] Because the community needs survey represents the opinion of a cross section of the station's viewing public, it stands to reason that creatively produced documentary programs on the topics mentioned would capture the

[5]Media Statistics, Ascertainment of Community Needs, prepared for WTVC-TV, Chattanooga, Tennessee, 1973, p. 5.

interest of a number of viewers while possibly helping to solve some of the problems in these areas of concern.

There are some bonuses to be derived from the magazine format. Greater versatility in program construction is one of them. The magazine format would allow topics of lesser importance to be included--topics which are interesting or informative but which do not warrant a full thirty-minute treatment. By making use of shorter segments of film, it could be that film shot by newsroom personnel in the course of regular news duties could sometimes be incorporated in a documentary production. Additionally, the best segments from each show could be pulled and put together later for reruns. By cutting some bridges or an intro and close, a number of rerun shows could be produced which would be somewhat different from the original, but would cost very little to produce.

Most of the stations surveyed said they carry some form of variety or women's show, usually in the morning. Outtakes or spin off productions could be used on these shows as the hub around which to build a discussion with local people, at very little additional cost.

It also is possible that some of the segments of the documentary shows would generate news. That is, the material in them would be new enough and of such nature that the information would be useful on the evening newscasts. By pulling a short piece of film from the main production,

the station could get double duty from the documentary by airing the newsworthy portion on the local newscast, at the same time promoting the upcoming show.

Obviously this would not include fast breaking news material, but news of an investigatory nature uncovered by the documentary team in the course of producing a given show. Even though considerable time may be spent in building each program, the news aspect of the information uncovered usually can be held for release just prior to airing the complete program. There is always the danger that someone else could break the story first, and this may happen occasionally. It will not happen often enough, however, to disallow the notion that material gathered for documentaries also can be used on evening newscasts close to the time the full program is to be aired.

A question may arise about the $400 or so each station would have to absorb on each production. Considering the total station budget, however, $400 is a small amount and the money would be put to good use because these productions could soon elevate the local station in the eyes of the community. Local shows are the only opportunity the station has for developing rapport with the viewing public. It is the only time the viewer has to assess the station's involvement in the community, its personality, its competence, its concern. The rest of the time network or

syndicated programs are carried--shows the viewer likely can see in any market.

It already has been shown that ratings for these public affairs shows will not be high. Audiences for informational programs are historically small. Nevertheless, the FCC, through its decisions and interpretations relative to license renewal and programming, has shown its interest in quality public affairs programming. Moreover, the majority of Tennessee programmers believe in informative fare for those viewers who want it. So if the programs are interestingly and professionally structured, and the topics timely, the shows would be a useful addition to the station's program schedule.

Locally produced shows project the station--its talent, its mood, its personality. They could and should be used to better advantage by many operators. This improved utilization would result in an improved image for the station and its people--both within the ranks of the casual viewer and among those who pay the station to deliver their messages to the public. And these considerations, after all, over and above those of public service, community duty and creativity, are the ones which are of most immediate concern to the local station.

Obviously these considerations are extremely subjective. It logically could be argued that television programming creates an image for the station, irrespective of the

source. So that even a full schedule of network offerings gives the viewer a feeling for the station's personality, an awareness of its involvement in the community, or lack of it. True. Such a station image, however, is so impersonal as to have no real relevance to this thesis.

One could argue against the practicality of the proposed cooperative arrangement, too. It might not work; it might cost more than expected; it would require too much coordination among various broadcast markets; the work load could be too much for such a small staff. One or more of these consideration could apply. Taken as a whole they mean there is no precedent for such an arrangement in Tennessee, and that causes skepticism.

That Senate investigating committee was looking for a precedent for its action when a suit was filed against the President of the United States demanding certain documents and tape recordings in connection with an investigation of presidential campaign practices. Senator Sam Ervin, chairman of the so-called Watergate Committee, settled the matter when he observed that there originally was no precedent for <u>any</u> legal action. A precedent could only be set by someone, somewhere, taking the first step.

Guglielmo Marconi had no precedent for sending telegraph messages across the Atlantic. David Sarnoff predicted as early as 1917 a very accurate picture of modern

radio and helped pioneer the development of the medium. He had no precedent.

Television programming on a few stations in Tennessee is a subject of minor import compared to these precedent-setting achievements. But when the focus of attention is narrowed to its effect on the communities these stations serve, and the potential for change such an arrangement has on the operation of the stations themselves, its importance increases.

One might still object to the idea on the grounds that not enough viewers actively want this type of programming to warrant the effort and expense. It can be shown, however, that some viewers want it, seek it. It can be shown that the FCC favors more public affairs programming. It can be shown that the majority of television programmers in Tennessee wish to carry more quality informative programs.

On these grounds alone a cooperative programming arrangement should receive serious consideration. It can work. It should be tried.

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LIST OF WORKS CONSULTED

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

The following people were interviewed in person during this thesis research in obtaining information for Questionnaire II. Their comments were tape recorded, and written transcripts were made. These transcripts were used in completing the questionnaire and some of the material is quoted in the body of this thesis.

Max Chastain, Freelance documentary producer-cinematographer, Knoxville, 8 April 1973.

Harold Crump, Station Manager, WLAC-TV, Nashville, 27 April 1973.

William Eckstein, General Manager, WTVK-TV, Knoxville, 1 May 1973.

Peter Fennelly, Program Director, WBIR-TV, Knoxville, 11 April 1973.

Edward Greaney, Program Director, WMC-TV, Memphis, 30 April 1973.

Tom Griscom, Assistant Manager, WSM-TV, Nashville, 27 April 1973.

W. H. Lancaster, General Manager, WJHL-TV, Johnson City, 23 April 1973.

Jack Michael, Program Director, WREC-TV, Memphis, 30 April 1973.

Reeve Owen, General Manager, WTVC-TV, Chattanooga, 25 April 1973.

Robert Ratcliff, General Manager, WKPT-TV, Kingsport, 23 April 1973.

Buddy Reagan, Program Director, WSIX-TV, Nashville, 27 April 1973.

John Reese, Program Director, WATE-TV, Knoxville, 18 April 1973.

Ernest Robertson, Director, University of Tennessee Photographic Services, 10 June 1973.

Cecil Ruffin, Program Director, WDEF-TV, Chattanooga, 25 April 1973.

Lance Russell, Program Director, WHBQ-TV, Memphis, 30 April 1973.

Robert Smith, General Manager, WCYB-TV, Bristol, 23 April 1973.

APPENDIX B

A final summary question was asked each broadcaster at the time the second questionnaire was administered: "What do you think Tennessee broadcasters need--anything at all--to help them operate more effectively in the service of the public?"

The answers are interesting and should be included in a report of this kind, though it was not felt they apply directly to the purpose of the thesis itself. Therefore the responses are included in this appendix.

Some of the broadcast executives could think of nothing broadcasters need, others had some pretty definite ideas. Portions of some of the responses are reproduced below.

Robert Smith, WCYB-TV:

> Motivation to use the medium and develop its technical capabilities. And if one can't do the job, then two or three ought to get together to do it. All kinds of things are possible if somebody just wants to do it.

Robert Ratcliff, WKPT-TV:

> A better news service in Tennessee, something that could be put together cheaply through more station to station contact across the state if broadcasters were more interested in it.

Peter Fennelly, WBIR-TV:

> A state news service. Nobody thinks when they watch their news what they get. They get local news and they get national and international news. They get very little state news. There is no state news service. . . . I'd like to dump much of our

national news . . . because CBS handles that . . . and concentrate on local and in-state news. It has to happen within the news departments.

William Eckstein, WTVK-TV:

Well, we have an interchange of ideas, of course. Every station in the state is a member of the Tennessee Association of Broadcasters, and we get together two or three times a year to exchange ideas.

Question: How effective is TAB?

Eckstein:

TAB probably is a good organization. It is not as active or as effective as our neighbors in Georgia. They probably have one of the best state associations of broadcasters in the country. They are a lot more active, they have a lot more seminars, a lot closer liaison with the members. Overall, I don't think as far as television is concerned, TAB does that much good. I think it is more radio oriented than it is television.

Question: Does there need to be a stronger organization for television?

Eckstein:

Yeah, I think so. Actually I don't think there needs to be a stronger organization, it could be a part of TAB.

Cecil Ruffin, WDEF-TV:

I think basically what the Tennessee broadcasters need is a common purpose. . . . I think what television needs generally is a common purpose. Television, like any other business, has professionals and non-professionals, and I feel the non-professionals are holding the edge.
Every broadcast facility within the state of Tennessee should get together under somebody's banner, whether you call it the Tennessee Association of Broadcasters or whatever, and every station should be represented . . . group officers should be formed and business should be conducted. If the organization did nothing more than lend purpose to the broadcasters, then it would be well worthwhile.

Harold Crump, WLAC-TV:

A much stronger association. We have a TAB and that association needs to be strengthened so it actually takes stands on issues, contacts and physically lobbies in the legislatures--our state legislature and with our representatives in Washington. It needs to do this not because our own interests are so selfish, but because we need to have our point of view exposed.

If these people do not agree with our point of view and they vote in bills we don't agree with, that is fine. But if these laws are passed because of ignorance on their part about our particular problems--and there are a lot of problems that are peculiar to our industry, just as each industry has some--then that is our problem. And this is the weakest thing that we have now.

It is basically because this organization was put together loosely, the constitution is loose and it is run loose because of this, and we are anticipating trying to tighten it up.

Now this would cost a lot of money, perhaps $100,000 a year would do it. And what we have got to find out is whether or not the broadcasters in Tennessee are willing to pay for what they get. We are getting excellent return on what we put in now, but we don't put in hardly anything.

Buddy Reagan, WSIX-TV:

Number one, broadcasting is a business, and anybody is in a business to make a profit. Now, along with making a profit, you are fulfilling a need. . . . [But] you have so much pressure now, greater than before, from all phases, and you are constantly in a bind as to whether you are fulfilling your obligations.

You've got all the rules and regulations from the FCC which are becoming more and more complicated . . . [and] you have the minority groups which put pressure on the broadcaster.

So I think the main thing that would help all broadcasters is to give them more flexibility to operate on a more creative basis, putting more effort into creativity rather than putting a stamp on them and saying 'you're only going to be able to go this far.' I think the rules have got to be relaxed.

Lance Russell, WHBQ-TV:

The only things I can think of would have to do with internal operations, you know, having a regular exchange of systems, forms, and things like that.

Question: How effective is TAB?

Russell:

I think it is pretty effective. . . . It disseminates information well among the stations. . . . I don't know that is the most forceful influence in broadcasting in Tennessee, but I think it does a good job for what it is supposed to do.

Question: Does the TAB need to be more forceful?

Russell:

I don't think so. Of the problems we have right now, there is nothing that I know of that would give us relief from a more active TAB. The problems we have are internal problems: the problem of cost going up, how do you go about doing shows that serve the public, that sort of thing.

Edward Greaney, WMC-TV:

I don't know. Maybe if you got a whole lot of them around a table they would say, 'well, if we had this inserted in our news,' or something. But again, thinking of our geographical location, even our weather comes from another direction. . . . Very, very seldom does the wind blow from the east . . . .

Question: So generally everyone programs on an individual basis?

Greaney:

Yes, you have to unless it is a hot item right out of Nashville that the legislature has done or hasn't done, there isn't much that I can see on an overall basis that you couldn't or shouldn't get out of Little Rock or New Orleans. There are so many things that affect us that aren't involved in boundaries anymore.

Question: How effective is the Tennessee Association of Broadcasters?

Greaney:

We've never had a real close association. We have some people [at WMC] who have been involved in it. . . . I don't mean we cut ourselves off in complete isolation. If there is anything in concert we can do as far as getting legislation or getting some public support on some things, I suspect we would all pull together. I don't see anything against it, but on the other hand I don't see any reason to rush out and join up.

Jack Michael, WREC-TV:

We have an association, the TAB which convenes twice a year. Our common interests are discussed at those meetings. Nothing else [that broadcasters need] occurs to me right now.

Question: Is there a need for more cooperation among the stations in Tennessee?

Michael:

There might be, but I'm not aware of it.

VITA

John Thomas Badgett first entered the field of Communications upon graduation from high school in 1962. He accepted employment with a radio station in Maryville, Tennessee, while attending the University of Tennessee. In the summer of 1964 he accepted a position with the Johnson City Press-Chronicle's Johnson City, Tennessee, radio station, WETB. He continued his education at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City until the fall of 1966, at which time he returned to Knoxville to work for WATE radio and television. In the fall of 1968 he received a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Tennessee with majors in Spanish and English.

The following fall he was employed by the University of Tennessee's statewide news bureau as newsfilm and documentary producer. He began taking classes toward a Master of Science degree in the winter of 1972, leaving employment at the University of Tennessee that spring to pursue full time classwork. He received the Master of Science degree with a major in Communications in December, 1973.