

Washington Report

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FCC

Recent UHF TV channel assignment changes affect two ETV stations: Hanover, N. H. ETV channel has been changed from Ch. 20 to Ch. 27. In Hartford, Conn., the Connecticut State Board of Education's station WEDH (Ch. 24) has been ordered to show cause by Dec. 10 why its permit should not be modified to specify a site at least 20 miles from the proposed site of Ch. 20 - WATER-TV in Waterbury, Conn. (current short-mileage separation is 9 miles).

Board of Regents of the Universities and the State College of Arizona have been granted CP for a new ETV station to operate on Ch. 8.

Allocations rule-making has been started on conflicting proposals to shift Ch. 7 from Calais to Bangor, Me. for commercial use and the proposal of U. of Maine to reserve Ch. 10 Augusta, Ch. 7 Calais, and Ch. 10 Presque Isle for ETV use.

A challenge to the FCC's primacy in ruling on the equal time provisions of the Communications Act has successfully been turned back by WGBH-TV Boston in the U. S. District Court. Write-in Congressional candidate David Franklin from Mass. 5th District claimed the station failed to afford him equal time on a news interview program on which Democratic and Republican opponents appeared. The argument was heard on a WGBH-TV motion to dismiss the complaint because Mr. Franklin had not first asked the FCC for relief.

FUTURE OF HAGERSTOWN ETV EXPERIMENT?

Continuance of the famous Hagerstown experiment, nation's most ambitious venture in classroom television, depends upon the people of Washington County which will be obliged to underwrite the cost when the \$1 million grant from the Ford Foundation expires next July. The 5-year program, carrying TV instruction into public school classes at every grade level in the county has been a major showcase for ETV and Hagerstown has been visited by thousands of educators, administrators, trustees, school board members from all over the nation and the world.

The County Board of Education has asked the Commissioners to allocate sufficient funds in next year's budget to continue the closed-circuit TV operation. It pointed out that it will cost more to drop the TV project than to continue it, since ending instruction by TV would require hiring 25 additional high school teachers at a cost that would wipe out any saving. Furthermore, another 105 teachers would be needed to provide music, art and foreign language instruction (which are now taught entirely by TV) at the elementary level.

Parents and teachers will make their views known at a public hearing Dec. 1.

THE ELECTION

It is generally agreed that the Kennedy administration has a greater appreciation of the importance of broadcasting than any in history. President-elect Kennedy's answer to whether he could have won without the "Great Debates", was "I don't think so." Current study of regulatory agencies ordered by Kennedy to improve "the effective dispatch" of agency business and other indicators show that the administration will keep an extremely sharp eye on regulatory aspect of government.

FCC will get a new chairman with Comr. Robert B. Bartley the probable selection. Other possibilities: Comr. Craven, Kenneth Cox, Seattle attorney; Ed Shelton, ABC vp; J. Leonard Reinsch, exec. dir. of the Cox stations. Chmn. Ford is expected to

step down from chairmanship but remain on Commission. Rep. Comm. Charles H. King, appointed by Eisenhower to fill remainder of Doerfer's term (to June 30, 1961) will be replaced by a Democrat.

There is likelihood that Congress may reorganize FCC. Dean Landis, appointed by the President-elect to study and report on the regulatory agencies by Dec. 15 has long been critical of such agencies for failure to anticipate problems and take corrective action in advance. Senator Magnuson (D-Wash.), Chr. of the Senate Commerce Committee, has announced that he will conduct his own investigation of the regulatory lag. He is said to lean toward putting FCC under an administrator with the commissioners serving as a sort of appellate board. Meanwhile his opposite number in the House, Congressman Harris (D-Ark.), has let it be known that curbs on trafficking in TV and radio licenses will be priority items on the investigative agenda of the new Congress.

Sen. Magnuson's ETV bill has much improved chances of being passed. Senate passed it in last Congress; House Commerce Committee approved another version -- but Eisenhower administration opposed and Rules Committee killed it. In this connection, it is pertinent to cite excerpts from a statement made by President-elect Kennedy for NABE's San Francisco convention:

"Today our schools and colleges face a crisis of appalling proportions in terms of deficits in dollars, teachers, classrooms and services. American progress and even our national survival is directly dependent on what we as a nation do now about the shameful weaknesses and deficiencies of our educational system.

"We must seize all means at hand to help education cope with these dire shortages and improve both the quality and quantity of educational opportunities available to our citizens at all levels, both in and out of school.

"Television, a device which has the potential to teach more things to more people in less time than anything yet devised, seems a providential instrument to come to education's aid. Educational television has already proved that it can be a valuable supplement to formal education and a direct medium for non-formal education.

"Despite the heroic efforts of people such as yourselves to establish educational television stations across the United States, only a small part of the total potential has been achieved. To date, only 50 of the 267 channels reserved for education have been activated and 2/3 of the population still has no access to educational television service. This is not for lack of zeal or interest on the part of educators or state or local officials, but, primarily, for lack of funds for the initial capital investment required for construction of stations.

"Since education is a matter of national concern, the Federal Government should assist in expediting and accelerating the use of television, as a tested aid to education in the schools and colleges of the nation and as a means of meeting the needs of adult education. I pledge you that I will back actively suitable legislation aimed at this objective in the next session of the Congress and will urge its support by my Democratic colleagues."

NEW EDUCATIONAL TV SERIES

The Association for Higher Education has just announced a new TV series -- MEET THE PROFESSOR -- scheduled to start Jan. 29 on ABC to introduce teachers of today's college students to the American public. The series is designed to provide Americans with a realistic picture of the men and women who have such a vital role in shaping the country's future and to replace present stereotypes about the professor. Different disciplines, types of institutions, and parts of the country are being taken into consideration in the selection of outstanding participants for the Sunday afternoon presentations.

Managers of ETV stations will be invited to nominate professors from their communities for inclusion in the series.

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Having written last month about some of the criteria I feel are pertinent to evaluating an NAEB convention, I have been especially interested in looking over the completed questionnaires which have been returned by those attending the San Francisco meeting. The response covers a predictable range, reflecting the particular interests and experience backgrounds of the attendees. Many were enthusiastic -- almost ecstatic -- asserting it was the "best convention ever"; others, less influenced by San Francisco's undoubted attributes, were, nonetheless, impressed by the quality of the program. Most of the critical comments dealt with nonsubstantive aspects, such as the high cost of the rooms and the remote location of the hotel. Still others deplored the lack of relevance in some of the program features to the precise interests of educational broadcasters.

The significant comments -- and the genuinely disturbing ones -- concerned the failure of the convention to provide for carrying on the business of the association: to give the membership opportunity to really discuss and debate, to examine alternatives, to make decisions. There were remarks such as these: "We came to vote and never had a chance." "It was all cut and dried." "Too much power politics." "I didn't feel like a participant, just an observer."

There is too much truth in these observations. Much of the time in the business sessions was consumed in reporting -- an exercise that might better be limited to delivering oral briefs of written reports. This arrangement would leave more time for discussion and interchange -- for the reverberant aspect of the convention I described last month. Perhaps an hour might be set aside solely for the purpose of interrogation by the membership of its officers (a lively feature of the Norman meeting).

Unquestionably, more time could and should be reserved in future conventions for business sessions conducted in a thoroughly professional fashion with time effectively utilized for group consideration and decision making. We will continue to try to improve each convention over its predecessor. However, in my judgement, a convention by its very nature can never be an adequate mechanism for thorough study and analysis of the organization convening. The pressures of a three-day program of varied activities is not conducive to probing in depth, to giving deliberate consideration, to making conscientious choices and clear judgements, to developing creative group thinking, to shaping self-destiny. And yet, every now and again, these kinds of functions need being done.

Any mature association must have some sort of self-correcting feed-back mechanism which helps it to change directions in response to unanticipated conditions or in recognition of unproductive programs. It must also develop the means for orderly correction of recognized shortcomings.

A part of these functions can be fulfilled at the national convention, in regional conferences, via the committee and board structure, and through correspondence and personal interviews. But these approaches only partially do the job I am thinking about: a full-scale examination and agonizing appraisal of the NAEB itself.

During the past 10 years NAEB has held more than 30 seminars and workshops devoted to helping its members improve themselves in everything from creative writing to television production -- and to help advance the cause of activities (in which its members have a stake) ranging from communications research to live, interconnected networks. It is high time, it seems to me, to devote a seminar to the association itself, e.g., an NAEB seminar on the NAEB.

On the 12th anniversary of the first Allerton House seminar -- a landmark meeting which established the aims of educational broadcasting -- I propose an Allerton House conference devoted to a study of the aims (and means of implementing them) of educational broadcasting's professional association. It would include a thorough check-up plus prescriptions to insure the association's continuing good health and robust future.

Who would be the attending specialists? For the most part they would be drawn from our own ranks: officers, directors, committee chairmen, and retained consultants. Personalizing the association for a moment, I think of NAEB (a la David Riesman's formula) as being largely inner-directed, in the sense that its source of direction was implanted by the pioneers in the movement and is directed toward destined goals and generalized ideological aims. Thus, rather than being overly responsive to the expectations and wishes of others, the NAEB has a gyroscope that keeps it on course. On the other hand, the association must avoid rigidity in its attitudes, maintaining a delicate balance between the demands imposed by maintenance of traditional direction and the impact of the external environment. So, in addition to a gyroscope, it must have radar as well, so that, while adhering to what we know is good and true, we can still be responding and utilizing signals from a changing environment. In other words, ours should be a self-propelled organization that is also realistically responsive to altered circumstances.

Accordingly, I envision the Seminar as being largely our own show -- inner-directed -- with our own leaders bearing the major responsibility. To avoid astigmatism and self-deception, a few outside experts might well be brought in to give us the benefit of their insights and special competencies. To the contribution of these "others" would be added the inner contribution of working papers provided by each of the standing committees of the NAEB. The preparation of these studies would constitute the principal activity of these committees from the time of their appointment in January until the staging of the seminar in July. With some stimulating presentations from consultants plus carefully prepared papers from the committees, the seminar should have an ordered body of pertinent material to dig into that should go a long way toward assuring a fruitful outcome to its deliberations.

The first Allerton House meeting is reported to have been characterized by the revelation of a great truth -- the truth that educational broadcasting has a job to do and is capable of doing it. I am confident that a third Allerton House seminar such as is here proposed would generate the same sort of revelation and exhilaration and would inspire realistic confidence and assurance that the NAEB not only has a big job to do but is fully capable of doing it.

In future columns -- providing there is sentiment to support such a seminar -- I will discuss in greater detail some notions concerning its organization and operation.

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