

1958

An interpretive history of network news on TV 1948-1957

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AN INTERPRETIVE HISTORY OF NETWORK

NEWS ON TELEVISION

1948 - 1957

A Thesis

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and Communications

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is (1) to present in chronological sequence the various types of network television news programs that appeared between the years 1948 and 1957; (2) to evaluate the quality of news presentation on these programs by examination of their format and change in format; and (3) to determine in which area, if any, television news, as reflected in the network programs examined, is superior to the other existing news disseminating media.

In addition to the usual library sources, materials used in this study came from the files of the Program Analysis departments at the National Broadcasting Company and the Columbia Broadcasting System. At the National Broadcasting Company these files contained index cards on which each network program was outlined in detail. At the Columbia Broadcasting System these index cards contained only the beginning and ending dates of network programs, and the outline for each program was with the notes and the script that were filed. Another important source used in this study was the manuscript of a book to be entitled A Television News Manual, written by the news staff

at the Columbia Broadcasting System, and scheduled for 1958 publication by McGraw-Hill.¹

In the development of this thesis, the second chapter is devoted to a review of television news activities through the year 1947. The purpose of this review is to acquaint the reader, briefly, with the historical material preceding that which is used in the main body of this thesis.

The third chapter of this thesis deals with the years 1948 and 1949. In this chapter there is a discussion of television versus the newspaper, and the attempt that the networks made to determine how news should be presented on television.

In chapter four there is a discussion of the quality of news presentation in remote programs, such as the telecasting of political conventions, and the influence that television has had on the American political scene. Also discussed are the various format changes in the fifteen-minute news broadcasts, and the emergence of a new kind of television reporting as seen in the "See It Now" series.

In chapter five we discuss and show how the emphasis

¹The purpose of this book is to aid television stations in the formation of efficient news departments by compiling the knowledge that the Columbia Broadcasting System has gained through long experience. Reflected in this manuscript is the attitude of the Columbia Broadcasting System toward the presentation of news on television.

in news presentation shifts to production values. There is also a discussion of the newsman and his new role as part of a "show."

In chapter six we examine not only the quality of the fifteen-minute newscast, but the emergence of a new outlook toward the presentation of news as well. News-in-depth programs are dealt with at length. The importance of these programs is cited, as well as examples of the types of questions asked.

In the seventh chapter this writer presents his summary and conclusions of the thesis.

A bibliography is included.

CHAPTER II

EARLY TELEVISION BROADCASTS OF SPECIAL EVENTS

Until 1939, television was still in the stage of laboratory experimentation. The few practical demonstrations of the medium prior to 1939 were given to a select audience. On November 6, 193⁶ the Radio Corporation of America and the National Broadcasting Company presented a television broadcast for entertainment value, in Radio City in New York, to members of the press.¹ That same year, David Sarnoff, president of the Radio Corporation of America, announced that his organization was prepared to spend one million dollars in field television tests.²

The combination of investment, such as noted above, and experimentation by such men as Allen B. DuMont, Dr. V. K. Zworykin and P. T. Farnsworth made television a commercial reality. On April 30, 1939 the advance of technical achievement made possible the television broadcast of the speeches of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Grover

¹"The Television Demonstration," The Scientific Monthly, XLIII (December, 1936), 582.

²Frank J. Tate, "Television As The New News Medium" (unpublished Master's thesis, The Ohio State University, 1950), p. 18.

Whalen at the opening of the New York World's Fair.¹ That same year, television began to grow even more. The National Broadcasting Company, operating on experimental station W2XBS, pioneered the area of special events broadcasting. In the single year 1939, the National Broadcasting Company televised the Memorial Day parade, a baseball game direct from Baker's Field, a football game, the Max Baer-Lou Nova prizefight, and the six-day bicycle races from Madison Square Garden.² It appeared that television would soon be a reality for all the families in America. Progress was being made smoothly and rapidly on all the frontiers of commercial television. The potential for this new industry, forging ahead with the exuberance of its youth, was unlimited. America was a nation just out of a depression. People were just starting to earn money again, and feel that they were secure. They would have eagerly accepted television, just as they received the radio. Some television receivers had already been market sold to this audience. Television stations were broadcasting with some regularity.

. . . just before World War II, regular programs were being broadcast, under commercial license, from New York city and Schenectady, N. Y., Philadelphia, Pa., Chicago, Ill., and San Francisco, Calif., in the

¹"Television in Washington," The Scientific Monthly, XLVII (March, 1939), 289.

²Tate, 18.

United States . . . many thousand home receivers were in private hands and were in regular use receiving these programs. Program material included: sporting events, such as the outdoor pick-up of football, baseball and tennis, and indoor pick-up of boxing, wrestling and hockey, news events, studio production of plays, dance recitals, musical shows and general entertainment features as well as moving-picture film programs.¹

One of the television stations on the air at this time was station WCBW. On December 7, 1941 Adrian Murphy, Executive Director of the Columbia Broadcasting System's television activities, gave the order to put experimental station WCBW on the air immediately and for it to remain on the air as long as there was news to relate. The telecast lasted nine hours. Three men, Hubbell, newscaster; Gilbert Seldes, Program Director; and Skedgell, writer, put on the first television spectacular. It was the extended coverage of a major news event.² The Second World War had begun for the United States. As in any war, manufacturers of products for luxury had to convert to the manufacture of items for national defense. The television industry was not an exception. All the precious materials that went into the component parts of a television receiver or transmitter were now put into the component parts of guns, tanks and ships.

¹"Television," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 25th ed., Vol. XXI.

²CBS News, A Television News Manual (New York: McGraw-Hill, scheduled for 1958 publication), p. 1.

The men who operated the stations, for the most part, were taken into the armed forces. On June 1, 1942 television news broadcasts ended on station WCBW.

In his annual report, CBS Board Chairman William S. Paley noted that television news, because of the restrictions in time and available personnel and material, had for the time being become a war casualty.¹

Although the commercial possibilities of television were brought to a virtual standstill, there was still a need for television research. Television receivers were small and picture quality left something to be desired. When the United States recognized the potential military value of television, particularly in a situation where large numbers of men were required to guard restricted areas instead of being available for combat duty, it sponsored the necessary research that was so important to this new medium. At the conclusion of World War II the television industry reaped the harvest of those years of research and progressed at an accelerated pace.² The industry began to retool for peace time activities, but there was a slight lag until material and personnel became available. In the year 1946, only 6,475 television receivers were produced, while the broadcasting

¹Ibid., p. 3.

²Encyclopaedia Britannica, 25th ed., Vol. XXI.

schedule at station WCBW was only ten hours per week.¹ Only one year later, in 1947, the manufacture of television sets soared to 178,571.²

The improvements in television receivers and transmitting units that were made during World War II in the experiments that were conducted under the auspices of the United States permitted the building of better units at a lower price. Men who were trained in various electronic skills while serving with the armed forces brought these skills with them to the television industry. The pool of available manpower was increased. Money was abundant at the conclusion of World War II, and it was made available for investment into this new industry. The growth of television that was so drastically curtailed with the coming of the war began anew. A cycle was set into motion. Plants that hastened to create war materials were now building television receivers and equipment. As these receivers sold, more stations went on the air, or applied for construction permits. The operation of more television stations, in turn, created a larger demand for receiving units. The profit shown by the existing stations created the desire for increased financial investment. The industry grew quickly, and with this growth it became more ambitious.

¹CBS News, pp. 3-4.

²Ibid., p. 4.

In January, 1947, the opening session of the Eightieth Congress was televised.¹ At the same time, plans were being made to televise the 1948 Presidential Conventions live.

"Television expanded greatly in 1947, but in the year 1948 there was a chance to prove that it was more than a novelty."²

This brief survey of television activities indicates the limited aspect of television as a news medium prior to 1948. The major reason for the limitations of television growth between the years 1939 and 1947 was the advent of World War II. Although, one might say that its major deterrent was also its greatest benefactor. The Second World War brought to the television industry three things that it did not have before. The first of these was the necessary time to research the quality of the picture being transmitted. Prior to the Second World War, the achievement of being able to transmit a picture, or an image, of any quality was sufficient for the enterprising commercial interests to market this still imperfect invention. The public seemed sufficiently naive to accept the imperfect, and the concomitant breakdowns in equipment. At the conclusion

¹Edgar Allen Dale, "An Investigation of Television News Programming Practices in United States Television Stations" (unpublished Master's thesis, Indiana University, 1950), p. 15.

²CBS News, p. 4.

of the Second World War there had been sufficient research conducted, to the advantage of both broadcaster and viewer, to assure a picture of good quality and receiving units of greater durability.

The second benefit was money. As was mentioned before, by 1939 the public began to feel secure again after a prolonged depression. However, this security was something that they did not want to lose. The investment of finances was more toward the secure, rather than the new. Television still offered a certain amount of risk and this precluded any heavy investment into the industry. Far sighted broadcasters, such as David Sarnoff, were willing to expend financial resources in order to foster the development of television broadcasting. However, individuals not closely associated with television seemed to prefer to invest their money elsewhere. The Second World War, with its government contracts and demand for high production created a situation whereby many people found themselves an excess of funds. Money was easily earned, and, at the conclusion of the war, there were investors in sufficient numbers who aided in the swift growth of television broadcasting.

Finally, the Second World War provided television with a sufficient number of personnel to operate this rapidly growing industry. During the 1930's, television was primarily in the hands of a few people who had done some

experimentation in the medium. General knowledge of electronics was limited. The quick development of devices such as radar and sonar for military purposes created a larger pool of personnel trained in electronics who could become skilled television technicians.

Through this brief survey of the history of television activities through 1947, it becomes evident that there were stringent limitations on the amount of programming that an experimental device could undertake. The one regular program that appeared prior to 1948 that is still on the air is "Meet The Press," which appeared on November 6, 1947 on the National Broadcasting Company.¹ A further discussion of this program will be made in the following chapter of this thesis. Because the nature of television broadcasting prior to 1948 was such that it was considered a novelty, this study will begin in the year when television first began to grope for its place as a serious news disseminating medium. That year was 1948.

¹National Broadcasting Company Program Analysis Files, 1947.

CHAPTER III

PROBLEMS IN EARLY TELEVISION NEWS PRODUCTION

This chapter will deal with four specific areas of television news: (1) the problems that existed in network news telecasts that originated from within a television studio; (2) the use of television to present important news events with a remote telecast; (3) the genesis of the panel show as a news program on television; and (4) to discuss the apprehensions of the newspapers toward this new news medium. This discussion will include the activities of television news between the years 1948 and 1949.

Studio News Programs

The natural inclination of the people who began television news in the year 1948 was to be as fast and as visual as possible in their presentation of the news. There was not, as yet, an awareness in television of just where it fit into the overall picture of news reporting. Two of the most obvious satisfying the need for visualization of news events lay in the use of motion pictures and still photographs. Motion picture theatres had long employed filmed presentations of the news with success, and it was a simple matter to transfer this technique to television. Moreover, it was felt by the news departments of the major

networks that an audience could not be held, regardless of excitement contained within the news release, with only a verbal description of the news event.¹ With this premise in mind, the simplest recourse was to film.

On February 16, 1948, John Cameron Swayze was featured on a news program entitled "Camel Newsreel Theatre." Later, in February, 1949, the program name was changed to "Camel News Caravan," but the format of the program remained unchanged. The relative success of this program is evident in the fact that it remained on the air, with some changes made in time and day of presentation, until October 29, 1956 with the same sponsor, Camel cigarettes. At times, this particular program utilized all the visual techniques that television permitted. However, film remained the basic tool of the "Camel Newsreel Theatre."

Camel News Caravan is a daily news program using all the video methods possible for on-the-spot reporting. Up-to-the-minute news is gathered and for the first time on a regularly scheduled basis all of the industry's available methods of news reporting are used -- mobile units (live pick-ups), newsreels, visual aids, personalities and commentators. Whenever possible NBC is on the spot with mobile units, cameras and reporters with live reports and interviews with outstanding personalities. Television cameras can roam the whole television network -- from Boston, Mass. to Richmond, Va., in the East, and as far as St. Louis, Mo. in the Middle West in search of on-the-spot happenings. Film from

¹CBS News, p. 5.

NBC newsreel crews here and abroad supplements live pick-ups -- an additional 24 men have been placed on the newsreel staff.¹

This idealistic account of how the "Camel News Caravan" would function was written by the producer of the program in February, 1949. Television could only effectively operate a remote pick-up of news when it was scheduled some time in advance. The amount of work that is required in a remote news presentation is tremendous. The average remote very often requires a full eight hours of work from the engineering and production staffs in setting up equipment, doing the program, and returning the equipment to the station. The result was that Mr. Swayze merely acted as a host on the program who introduced the film before it was shown. The coverage of the news was limited to the reporting of that news on which there was film available. If the film was silent, the commentary on any news event had to be limited to the running time of the film. Any really important news on which there was no film available was reported in the same manner that a headline on a newspaper reports the news. There was a great lack of any news in depth. One could only learn the barest essentials of news from this type of reporting. The following operation sheet for the "Camel News Caravan" on January 4, 1951 is an

¹National Broadcasting Company Program Analysis Files, 1948.

example of the typical method of news reporting on this program.

JCS open with 45 secs. of news - Bob Wilson (audio only) with live narration along with film of F-80 jet planes. Swayze with VUGRAPH, then into film of Russian jets, with live narration by Rod Hall.

XX Commercial XX 1

Swayze with 45 secs. news - then from Washington - Robert McCormick with narration of film of Eisenhower - Acheson - Eisenhower announcing his plans for the future (both films shot today). Swayze switches to Chicago. Jim Hurlbut - gives narration of film made today of plane crash in Chicago. Swayze with roll cue to film of Car Wheels, SOP, Rod Hall narration.

XX Commercial XX 2 XX

Swayze intro to film of fencing - Rod Hall narration live. Swayze with news to close.

Commercial closing.¹

The requirements for a program of this nature were simple. Mr. Swayze required a desk to sit behind, and a large map to act as a background for both the desk and the host. Two cameras were employed in the studio. The only element that changed in this production format was the film. The program was on the air five days each week. That meant that some thirty pieces of film were used on this one program each week.² Although the National Broadcasting Company increased its staff of newsreel photographers, it is obvious that these men could not film all the newsworthy events on any given day. Because of this fact, agencies who sold film to the networks developed to fill the gaps in film coverage of news events.

¹Ibid. ²Ibid.

Telenews, in conjunction with the International News Service and International News Photos announced, in January, 1948, that the first complete television news service would begin on February 1, 1948. They planned to produce a daily service of teletype news, still news photographs and newsreels for television.¹ Another organization to come to the aid of television news with visual aids was United Press. They, together with Acme Newspictures, gave packets of still photographs with the news copy they distributed to television stations.² Toward the middle of 1948, United Press joined with Fox-Movietone News. The purpose of this union was to combine new news with old pictures. Fox-Movietone News had 80,000,000 feet of newsreel film covering 60 years of world history. The plan was to incorporate stock shots with news copy where there was no film available on the actual event.³ Other organizations attempted to service television stations in the same respect, but by 1949 it became apparent that Telenews was the most successful of these film services. They discovered through their experience that film for television was different than film for motion picture theatre

¹"INS-INP, Telenews Plan News Service," Broadcasting-Telecasting, January 5, 1948, p. 19.

²"News by Television," Newsweek, February 2, 1948, p. 51.

³"Words and Pictures," Newsweek, July 26, 1948, p. 55.

newsreels. They had to feature more close-ups, with flatter lighting.¹ The reason for this is primarily that in the years 1948 and 1949 the home television receiver was small in size. In order to get a reasonable view of the person or the event photographed, a greater emphasis had to be placed on close shots of the subject. Further, the flat lighting was required because the television receiver is not as sensitive as film to shadings of grey. As a result, a film with a variety of very light and very dark areas on it would show badly on television. In the shading of the image on television, it would not be possible to spread the television grey-scale to the poles that the film could accommodate.

It can be seen, then, that the news reporter on television was little more than a bridge between film clips. This was not only true on the "Camel News Caravan," but also on the "NBC News Review of the Week." This was a ten-minute news program on which major news items of the preceding week were reviewed. The events covered were only filmed news events. The program began on February 1, 1948, and continued until April 17, 1949. Roy Forrest was the original commentator on the program, but was replaced late in

¹"Trials of Telenevs," Newsweek, August 8, 1949, p. 41.

1948 by Robert Trout, who continued until the termination of the program.¹ The problems in production that beset the "Camel News Caravan" did not occur on this program. On the air only one day each week, the "NBC News Review of the Week" had only to examine the films used on the "Camel News Caravan" during the week, or seek out any new film that might have arrived during the week, and present these film clips on the program. The commentator had only to read from the written copy that was provided with each film portion used on the program.²

Often, the film used on both of these programs, which were the only network news programs of their type on the National Broadcasting Company during 1948 and 1949, were of events that could hardly be classified as news. They fell more into the category of features.

Many stations use the Telenews Daily, a newsreel package of 8-minute duration that is flown from New York to every part of the country. Films are shown one or two days after the event when taken in the United States, and many days later when they come from abroad. The commentary is general, and the film coverage is haphazard in newsreel fashion, with the availability of facilities and the photogenic character of the event determining largely the composition of the reel. A good portion of the reel is strictly "feature" material, anything from a

¹National Broadcasting Company Program Analysis Files, 1948.

²Ibid.

fashion show to a carnival abroad. This is television all right. You have to see it to get the gist of it. But is it news?¹

This criticism of the use of film for its own sake by Henry R. Cassirer, former news editor for the Columbia Broadcasting System, was one of the earliest attempts to give direction to a television news program. He set down some principles to be observed in reporting news on television.

1. It will not be true television unless it uses most of the facilities available at the station, adapting from each one the best way of reporting the individual story. (Film, for instance, is best to report a parade, graphic work is more adequate to visualize a tax debate in Congress, and remote cameras are most effective to convey the colorful scene of a convention. Maps can tell battle movements better than words, but late reports from an overseas conference are most suitable and speedily summarized by the commentator himself, speaking to his audience "on camera.")

2. It will not be a news program unless a way is found to report all the important news stories within its scope.

3. It will not be television unless much of the program is genuinely visual.

Judged by these standards, much that is being done in television today cannot be called a truly satisfactory television news program.²

Henry Cassirer tried to give some substance to the reporting of news on television. He was visually oriented

¹Henry R. Cassirer, "Television News: A Challenge to Imaginative Journalists," Journalism Quarterly, XXVI (September, 1949), 277.

²Ibid. , p. 278.

with regard to production, as was John Cameron Swayze. However, Henry Cassirer thought in terms of news pictures, not merely motion pictures. The difference in these approaches requires some elaboration.

Henry Cassirer, in some respects, was a visionary in the area of television news. He believed that "through television news your set becomes an eye with which to follow the pulse of life."¹ This belief that trying, through television, to give even the most remote viewer a sense of participation in the activities of an entire nation reflects not only a plane of thought on which good news reporting is based, but also insinuates that it is incumbent on the news reporter to present a complete picture of the news, utilizing the most effective technique. Therefore, where a reporter has to make a choice between showing a film of a carnival or discussing a Senator's views on disarmament, he should not choose the former simply because it is visual. News is worth reporting even though there are no films available. To consistently present news simply because it has been photographed, as has been the case with "Camel News Caravan" represents the narrow view of television. This view is restricted to the program itself and not the facts that made the news. Where "Camel News Caravan" thought in

¹Ibid., p. 280.

terms of itself, Henry Cassirer believed that ". . . once two-way television networks span the entire country . . . you will be able to make a visual tour of the country and see the events of the day."¹

In March, 1949, there was an attempt to formulate a theory on the reporting of news for the daily fifteen-minute news program. On the Columbia Broadcasting System, the same network which employed Henry Cassirer, Douglas Edwards was removed from his radio news program and given a daily fifteen-minute news program on television. Each of his programs required 150 manhours of work from sixteen full time members of the Columbia Broadcasting System's news and television staff. There were also fourteen part time people on the staff of this program. Telenews films were used exclusively. In defining the scope of his program's coverage, Douglas Edward's said that "we don't cover spot news in volume as radio does, but we hit the top news stories of the day . . . with the idea of keeping the viewers up with what's going on."² Further, this attitude permeated the news philosophy of the Columbia Broadcasting System.

Television news properly emphasizes the frankly pictorial aspects of the news, thus respecting the nature of its own resources.

As a news medium in its own right, television

¹Ibid.

²"News Via Television," Newsweek, March 7, 1949, p. 59.

should be at liberty to emphasize the stories and the angles it can best handle so long as it does not neglect the first responsibility of any news medium -- to keep the public informed on all major developments.¹

This marked the beginning of the use of film for the purpose of better news presentation. Prior to this time, as we have seen, it was employed as an end in itself. However, there was still a major obstacle to be overcome. Telenews was the agency supplying the majority of film to the network news programs, and they had a tendency to include as much feature material as news in their films. In an effort to secure more significant news film, the Columbia Broadcasting System, for one, decided that they could function without the services of Telenews, even though that meant the creation of a vast film department, at a considerable expense, within the network. However, the added cost of this operation could be offset by the quality of news that the network could film. Further, the Columbia Broadcasting System could rely on the emphasis of the truly newsworthy, instead of having to settle for the unique. The excessive use of feature material by television news programs did not enhance the reputation of television as a news medium. The Columbia Broadcasting System had the following to say on the subject of feature material:

¹CBS News, p. 85.

Don't overdo the feature. In the beginning, television fell into the trap created by 35mm coverage for theatre newsreels. Anything that was pictorial was snapped up, regardless of its news importance. In some quarters, television is still suffering for the questionable reputation it gained during its early days when parades, ski spills and beauty contests were used indiscriminantly. The primary objective of television news should always be -- tell the hard news first, with or without film.¹

The lone advantage that the use of feature material on television offered was speed. The news programs used the most timely films available, often photographed on the day of the presentation. There was a report of slight repercussion in the motion picture theatres because of the speed of television film presentation. In New Jersey, the forty theatre Walter Reade chain dropped newsreels permanently without a single complaint from a customer.² The reason being that news film first seen on television would often be repeated in the theatre's presentation of the news, which did not change from day to day, but only when the feature changed.

The early network television news programs, then, were concerned purely with the pictorial, and only secondary consideration was given to news events if they could not be graphically illustrated. The "Camel News Caravan" set this precedent early in 1948, and it was not until the

¹Ibid., p. 38.

²"First Casualty," Time, May 23, 1949, p. 94.

middle of 1949, with the advent of "Douglas Edwards and the News" on the Columbia Broadcasting System, that any attempt was made to give preference to news items for their own face value. Further, men like Henry Cassirer tried to formulate a philosophy of television of television news presentation, but were, for the most part, ignored. This can be attributed to two fundamental reasons: (1) the fact that television had no precedent except the motion picture newsreel to draw from; and (2) the fact that excessive emphasis was placed on the visualization of news events. These elements combined to maintain a generally poor level of reporting on television from within the studio.

Remote Telecasts

An important tool of the television news reporter, the remote telecast, was discovered in 1948 when the Republican and the Democratic conventions were carried live by the four major networks. Until this time, television was not aware of the power of the camera as a reporting instrument although it had earlier reported important political events in the same manner.

In June, 1948, the Columbia Broadcasting System, the National Broadcasting Company, the American Broadcasting Company, Dumont, and one New York local station, WPIX, planned to cover the Republican National Convention. They utilized twenty-eight cameras for this purpose. Some

eighteen stations along the Atlantic seaboard were to receive on-the-spot transmission from Convention Hall in Philadelphia over coaxial cable. The estimated potential audience of these stations was approximately ten million persons. Each of the four networks and station WFIX, which is owned by the New York Daily News, planned to use four cameras in the arena. The coverage of the convention was scheduled from the very beginning until the close. Cameras would be trained on the floor of Convention Hall as long as a delegate or a debate remained. Dumont constructed a beaverboard box studio under the stage, located on the floor of Convention Hall, for interviews. The other three networks utilized rooms surrounding the arena as television studios. The Republican Party's headquarters, located in the Bellevue Stratford Hotel, had five cameras placed within it.¹ In addition to cameras, there was the mountain of lights, cables, monitors, and personnel. The technical problems in producing a program of this nature were enormous. Television networks learned that lighting and makeup were imperfect; that they would have to plan further before attempting to present a news program of this magnitude; and that the television camera, like any good reporter, would have to move swiftly in order to present a good story.²

¹"Viewing the Convention," Newsweek, June 21, 1948, p. 58.

²"goldfish bowl," Time, July 5, 1948, p. 34.

Television that steaming Summer brought political conventions to the American people. The conferences on the convention floor, the wild surge of a demonstration, the smoke-filled rooms, the big men and the little men all came alive.¹

The greatest single group to benefit from the lessons learned at the Republican National Convention were the American people. They had the opportunity to experience first-hand what they could only read about or hear on the radio prior to this date. They could watch the speaker, or see the dejection of Governor Sigler as he waited to release his Michigan delegates. They could see the emotion register on the face of Herbert Hoover as the delegates warmly welcomed him to the rostrum.² The American public had just received its greatest single lesson in government.

There had been the anticipated errors in production, and the loss of picture, but television, "under the forced draft of its first big assignment . . . proved to be an unpolished but promising reporter."³

The Democratic National Convention followed shortly after the Republican National Convention, in 1948, and television brought a little bit more experience to this production than they had to the Republican National

¹CBS News, p. 5.

²Time, July 5, 1948, p. 34.

³Ibid.

Convention. Moreover, there was a noticeable improvement in the use of cosmetics. Pancake makeup, eyebrow pencils and lipstick aided in the removal of uncomplementary shadows, and made lips visible on the television screen.¹ At the Democratic National Convention, television moved in not only as a medium for reporting news, but as a medium for creating news. In an interview, George Allen, friend and confidant of General Eisenhower and President Truman, hinted broadly that General Eisenhower would be a candidate for the Presidential nomination in 1952. In another interview, Andrew Biemiller, Wisconsin member of the Democratic platform committee, told on a Monday television program of the strong stand he intended to take on Wednesday to push Civil Rights.² This same Civil Rights debate was the one that caused the delegates from the state of Mississippi to walk out of the convention hall. When Mississippi was called, and the delegates had already walked out of the convention, James Caddigan, Dumont's network program and production director, called for a picture of the empty row of chairs with a coat thrown over the back of one of the chairs. This was called one of the most dramatic pictures of the convention coverage ever shown.³ Reporting of this nature could not be

¹"Television Takes Over and Makes Political Vogue for Grease Paint," Life, July 26, 1948, p. 16.

²"Television Score," Newsweek, July 26, 1948, p. 52.

³Ibid.

uplicated on radio or in the newspapers because there was more than the visual impact of the picture, there was the immediacy of the situation to the viewers of the convention.

In January, 1949, the networks took their cameras to the inauguration of President Truman. Across the country as far as St. Louis, some twenty million people saw the inauguration by television. This audience constituted more people than have seen every inauguration from George Washington's to Woodrow Wilson's.¹ The merits of this production were reported by critics from one extreme to the other. One critic said that, generally speaking, the production was bad. The commentary was banal and the direction was equally bad.² On the other hand, another critic felt television had done a creditable job in reporting the spectacle of the inauguration. Although the quality of the picture was generally poor, the scope was there when needed, as was the closeup.³

It appears to this writer that the greatest value of the presentation of the inauguration on television did not lie in the effectiveness or facility in handling the tools of television, but in the fact that one could view this spectacle

¹"Inauguration by Video," Newsweek, January 31, 1949, p. 49.

²Ibid.

³"Hail to the Chief," Time, January 31, 1949, p. 55.

and, in a sense, participate in the functions of government. The seriousness of the oath of office can be easily read from a text, but it becomes more apparant when the viewer can see the pressing throngs of people at the inauguration, and the President of the United States actually repeat the words that have been spoken by every President who came before him. The inauguration, then, takes on another aspect. Instead of being merely an event in the news of the day, the inauguration takes on the full significance of an important event occuring in the history of a nation. Moreover, it brings to the viewer, in all its solemnity, the seriousness of the occasion. Politics falls to the wayside, while responsibility becomes paramount.

Finally, the remote activity of the networks for the years 1948 and 1949 ended in what can be compared with the feature story in a journalistic sense. In November, 1949, the National Broadcasting Company, by a connection with twenty-seven cities throughout the United States, brought the wedding of Vice President Alben Barkley and Mrs. Hadley to an estimated audience of ten and one-half million people.¹

Television news had found at least one form of news presentation to which it was most suited. The live remote programs of major political events constituted a giant step

¹"Peek at the Veep," Newsweek, November 28, 1949, p. 48.

forward in the reporting of news because the viewer did not require an intermediary to report the news to him. Radio, the only other medium with similar news coverage, could cover news events as quickly as television and, with its greater experience and lesser equipment requirements, could report with a greater facility. However, the major drawback of radios, as compared with television receivers, was that the audience could not stare at the picture and then reach a decision. They had to construct a picture from the words that the announcer gave them. Newspapers also had this drawback, and the additional disadvantage of being behind both radio and television in terms of time. Events could only be reported after they had happened. Through television, the viewer became a part of the event, a witness to the news. This was reporting in its purest form. As we shall see in this thesis, television would press this advantage over the other media to its utmost. Suffice it to say, for the present, that television had, in a sense, discovered a method of news reporting to which it alone had access. The live remote presentation of the political conventions and the inauguration of President Truman gave television both the audience and the experience to develop further in this vein.

Panel News Programs

A panel news program differs from both the studio news program, although it originates from within a studio,

and the remote news program in one very important way. The panel news program deals with news in depth. The studio offers all the news that falls within its scope, and the remote program, as we have seen, deals with the presentation of a major news event in such a manner as to make the viewer a witness to the event. Everything is included, and, for the most part, the viewer is expected to draw his own conclusions. The panel news program, however, deals with one particular subject area, and the purpose of the discussion is to discover as much as possible about this subject area in order that it might be more lucid to the audience. The first of these panel news programs was "Meet the Press."

"Meet the Press" originated in the National Broadcasting Company. The program first went on the air on November 6, 1947 as a live unrehearsed studio program with a panel of four experts, who were members of the press, interviewing a public figure or personality in the news. Mr. Lawrence E. Spivak has been the Producer of "Meet the Press" since its inception.¹ "Meet the Press" is, at the time of this writing, still on the air one day a week for thirty minutes. The format of the program is one in which the members of the press who are invited to appear on the program ask questions of the guest, who is an expert on the topic

¹National Broadcasting Company Program Analysis Files, 1947.

under discussion. The questions are spontaneous from the panel members, and the answers to these questions are equally spontaneous.¹ In 1955, "Meet the Press" was awarded the Look Magazine Award "for the special or continuing series which made the most significant contribution to public understanding of important issues."²

An example of the type of subject material covered on "Meet the Press" will help to show its place in news programming. On March 20, 1955, Walter F. George, United States Senator from Georgia, was the guest. He was questioned on the meeting of the heads of the major powers. On June 26, 1955, Harold E. Stassen, Special Assistant to the President for Disarmament, discussed the problem of disarmament with the panelists. Other prominent figures, such as Estes Kefauver, Thomas E. Dewey, Herman Talmadge, John F. Kennedy and Robert Frost appeared on "Meet the Press" to discuss the subject areas in which they were particularly knowledgeable.³

The place of a news program such as "Meet the Press" in the general picture of television news programming, is high on the list. In its probe for news, this program looked into important aspects of government activity and, like a three dimensional figure, gave depth to the material it

¹Ibid. ²Ibid. ³Ibid.

covered. When, in 1956, Lawrence Spivak, Producer of "Meet the Press" was asked why his program was successful, he replied:

Television has an almost infra-red quality of getting beneath the skin of the interviewee. You can match his words with his face. It adds a dimension; it's revealing.¹

The viewing audience who only heard the headline on the studio news program could look to "Meet the Press" for intelligent argument on the subject at hand, as well as a spontaneity that would be difficult to duplicate in any other medium.

Newspapers and Television

One of the primary concerns that the advent of television caused newspaper publishers was the loss of advertising. If any wholesale shift of advertisers occurred from the printed page to television, there would be the possibility that some of the smaller newspapers would be forced out of business.

Publisher Arthur Hays Sulzberger, of The New York Times, conducted a five-day test-yourself survey with his newspaper to determine how many of the stories covered would lend themselves to some phase of television. Of the 2068 stories published by The New York Times in this five-day

¹"The Battling Panelists," Newsweek, January 16, 1956, p. 78.

period, it was calculated that 207, or 10%, would have been applicable to a television news program. Of these, only eleven appeared on the first page and it was doubtful that more than six would have been good viewing. On concluding this survey, Sulzberger said that "television and radio can never replace the newspaper which devotes itself to the comprehensive publication of the news."¹

The key to the entire situation of television news programs as opposed to the newspaper seems to center about the concept of comprehensive news coverage. By its very nature, television could not be as comprehensive as a newspaper. Television news was only one type of program in an entire day of programming. The newspaper, on the other hand, devoted itself entirely to news. Further, television news programs required strict adherence to time schedules. Programs rarely exceeded fifteen or thirty minutes in length. The amount of news that could be covered in this time was limited. The newspaper, however, could print as many pages as required to cover the news stories for any particular day. The reader could then take the news at his own leisure, and in portions that met his needs.

The most important factor in the history of television news, during the years 1948 and 1949, was the fact that

¹"Untelevisable Times," Time, September 13, 1948, p. 64.

television news became a daily achievement.¹ News programs, such as those conducted by Douglas Edwards and John Cameron Swayze, built up an audience that expected an account of the day's news at a particular hour each day. These programs were viewed by many members of the family and this put a censorship of good taste on the type of news that could be reported.

Television's intimacy and its family audience requires special consideration in dealing with one category of newspaper story. The lurid, the sensational, the gruesome -- or at least the details thereof -- usually are not for television. Rape, if it must be mentioned, often becomes assault. The sordid details of divorce cases, the local arrests for drunkenness or disorderly conduct -- these, too, are normally left unreported on television.

What the newscaster could not comfortably say in face-to-face conversation in a mixed company of men, women and children probably should not be said on television.²

With all its shortcomings in reporting, television news did not even remotely resemble the sensational reporting that is the trademark of some of America's largest circulation newspapers. If nothing else, this added to the dignity of the medium and augered well for the future of television news. The special programs, such as the remote presentations of the national conventions, proved that television had an area of coverage in which it alone could do the best job. The beginnings of the panel news program

¹CBS News, p. 5.

²Ibid., pp. 93-94.

gave the interested viewer not only news in depth on a particular subject area, but also a look at the personalities who made the news. All too often the people who make the news remain, to the bulk of the public, as faceless characters in a story. "Meet the Press" added the required dimensions to the name, and gave the audience a man in action.

CHAPTER IV

DEVELOPMENT OF ON-THE-SPOT AND POST FACTO NEWS PROGRAMS

In the years 1950 and 1951 there were two types of television news programs that had far reaching effects on both television news presentation, and candidates for political office. One was the live presentation of the local election candidates, and the other was the advent of the "See It Now" programs, with Edward R. Murrow. It does not fall within the scope of this thesis to examine all of the program material used by Edward R. Murrow in the course of his series, but this writer will present a discussion of the format of the program and document the importance of the issues presented on "See It Now." Further, this chapter will include material on the development of the studio news programs.

On-The-Spot News

By 1950, the major political organizations understood, to some degree, the value of television to their candidates. They also understood that a poor appearance on television could, conceivably, lose many votes for both the party and the candidate. The same candidate who argued for his own election from the back of a truck, or from the stage of an

auditorium with effectiveness was not necessarily a desirable type to appear on television. The reason for this is the uncompromising nature of the television camera, which records for all to see, the facial expressions and the gesticulations of the speaker.

To hold a major political office, it will be increasingly necessary to have an effective radio voice, a face that can be made presentable and an even larger bankroll -- although the latter can continue to be supplied by wealthy friends or a well-heeled political machine. The attributes of intellect, training and a certain public spiritedness fall still further down the list.¹

The cost for the promotion of a candidate on television was reported to be two hundred dollars for each minute of air time.² These costs, of course, were paid from the campaign funds in each political party.

For the most part, in 1950, political candidates were naive in the proper use of television to further their political ends. One of the most successful, however, was Thomas E. Dewey. In 1950, the networks presented his campaign for the office of Governor of New York. Dewey held street corner meetings with the public in an informal manner. Questions were asked by the audience and answered by Dewey under the scrutiny of the television cameras. The Republican party claimed that this helped Dewey considerably

¹"New Political Qualifications," Commonweal, October 6, 1950, p. 622.

²Ibid.

in attaining his majority of 560,000 votes. One critic called this use of television a new type of town-meeting democracy.¹ The television camera carried both politicians and political issues into the homes of the voters in a manner that neither the radio nor the newspapers could duplicate. In a sense, then, television news began to flex its own muscles by using the camera alone to report the story as it occurred.

In 1951, General Douglas MacArthur was recalled from his headquarters in Korea by President Harry S. Truman, as a reprimand. When he arrived in New York City, General MacArthur was given a parade in his honor. Television, on the major networks, covered this parade with cameras and presented the entire ceremony to the viewing audience. The excellent coverage of the parade was attributed to the television personnel learning to be more relaxed about their business. Instead of conducting pointless interviews when nothing was going on, the camera looked at the people standing in the streets and studied the faces in the crowd. General MacArthur was followed live and on film from the time he arrived in Hawaii, until his speech before the Congress of the United States.²

One of the featured events of the summer of 1951 was

¹"Has A New Type of Political Campaign Arrived," The Christian Century, November 22, 1950, p. 1381.

²"Mac on TV," Time, April 30, 1951, p. 57.

the live presentation of the hearings conducted by the Senate Crime Committee. Senator Estes Kefauver was in charge of this committee. One of the many things that these live telecasts did was to catapult Senator Kefauver into public attention. Through his patient, yet firm, questions, Senator Kefauver became so popular that he was a candidate for the office of Vice President of the United States, in the 1952 elections. The broadcast of these heretofore closed hearings was called, by Lowell Limpus, the third revolution in the history of news communications. The other two revolutions described by Lowell Limpus were the development of the modern newspaper during the Civil War, and the development of radio.¹

The revolutionary nature of the broadcasts lay in the speed of reporting by television, and the immediate impact on the audience. However, Limpus qualified his statement by saying that people did not understand the full import of the hearings until they were explained to them in the newspapers. He further believed that "the newspaper will continue to organize the news and make it available in a compact form, which neither radio or TV can do."²

One of the major drawbacks of television news in any

¹Lowell Limpus, "Television News Comes of Age," Nieman Reports, V (July, 1951), 11.

²Ibid., p. 12.

form, thus far, has been its inability to explain because it was busy reporting. In the case of the Democratic and Republican National Conventions, there were commentators present to report, but they did not evaluate. The same situation existed in the case of the Senate Crime Committee hearings. In a situation where immediate attention is thrust on the event and the audience is not aware of its significance, it appears to this writer that an important aspect of the situation is neglected when the commentator fails to evaluate and clarify happenings for the viewers. Further, it appears to this writer that one of the basic responsibilities of a broadcaster in a news situation is to make as comprehensive and intelligent a commentary on the event as he can.

Television news has a special character. It not only tells you what is happening, it lets you see the news. It brings the world, no matter how far-flung from your threshold, into clear perspective right there before you. In reporting the news, it has one main job, to interpret the magnitude and complexity of each day's events, no matter where, into meaningful and factual terms.¹

The basic impact of the picture is not sufficiently eloquent to transmit the meaning of the situation in every case.

Through 1951, the major networks had not yet approached this situation with the proper technique to satisfy such critics as Lowell Limpus. However, the power of

¹CBS News, p. 9.

the picture was sufficient to be used by such political candidates as Thomas E. Dewey to its best advantage. There was little question that the television camera would have great effect on the visual appeal of subsequent political candidates.

Post Facto News

News programs that employed film to any great extent come under the heading of post facto news programs. The first of these programs that this writer will consider will be the "See It Now" programs, with Edward R. Murrow.

Robert Lewis Shayon, television critic for the Saturday Review, wrote, in December, 1951, that the advent of the "See It Now" program brought something to television news reporting that it had lacked until now. This quality was the suggestion that both Murrow and the home viewer were about to see a news event for the first time. He attributed this method of film usage to the fact that Murrow began his programs by sitting in the control room and offering a live introduction to the subsequent film. When the filmed portion of the program began, it appeared on a television receiver located above the head of Murrow.¹ This writer feels that Murrow also achieved the quality of live presentation in his films. Thus, in 1951, "See It Now" added

¹Robert Lewis Shayon, "Progress Through Space and Time," Saturday Review, XXXIV (December 15, 1951), pp. 37-38.

a dimension to the use of film on television news programs. Murrow preferred, apparently, to work with film instead of in a studio. This preference was indicated in his statement that "a studio in San Francisco looks exactly like a studio in New York."¹ He believed that television would have to train its own cameramen to look for the offbeat and the unusual. His emphasis was on faces, the shots of people in close up reaction to a situation.² The use of film gave Murrow a greater latitude in his selection of places and materials. The films were made by cameramen expressly for the "See It Now" program, and these films were considerably different from the ones supplied by Telenews to the newsreel type of studio news program. Murrow was trying to make an editorial comment on a situation and required this type of special film footage. The "See It Now" program ran for a total of thirty minutes and, as a result, had more time than most news programs to make a particular point. However, it differed from other news programs in that there was no effort to cover a multitude of news quickly, but to devote the entire program to one or two specific areas of inquiry. Gilbert Seldes, an eminent critic of the mass media, said of "See It Now":

¹"See It Now," Time, November 26, 1951, p. 73.

²Ibid.

Its only weakness at the beginning was that it depended so much on film. Its abiding strength is that it uses film with such brilliance of technique as to create virtually a new form. With this is coupled an editorial intelligence that makes See It Now the most important commercially sponsored program on the air -- in certain ways the most important program, unconditionally and without reservation, of any kind. It is important for the solutions it has found for some problems and equally for the problems it has tackled without finding the right answers.¹

Still speaking of the "See It Now" series, Seldes says that "its relation to TV news is like that of a weekly news-review to the daily paper."²

The presentation of the "See It Now" series, which began in 1951, gave television its first really prestige news program that appeared with regularity. The response that this program could elicit from its viewers will be discussed in another chapter of this thesis. The fact that film could be used with tremendous effect, and the real beginning of editorialization in television news came into being with the birth of "See It Now."

The other post facto news program that comes into consideration is the studio news program entitled "Camel News Caravan." This program continued almost unchanged through 1951. In June, 1951, Time reported that John Cameron Swayze omitted political events from his shows, and liked to

¹Gilbert Seldes, The Public Arts (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956), p. 216.

²Ibid.

concentrate on human interest stories. When asked what he felt his role was on the "Camel News Caravan," Swayze replied that his job was to leave the people feeling good.¹

In describing a news reporter on television, such as John Cameron Swayze, Philip Hamburger, television critic for The New Yorker, wrote:

Generally, a television news program starts with a picture of some clean-cut young fellow seated stiffly behind a large desk, like a junior credit manager. A wooden nameplate, resting on the desk, faces the audience and identifies the speaker. The speaker reads out a few brisk items of timely interest (in a voice fraught with significance), shows a few brief newsreel shots, has a nice word or two or three to say about good old Humpty-Dumpty inner tubes, reads out a few more items, and says good nite.²

Although this spoof is not a learned criticism of a television program, it does constitute an attitude. The very fact that a critic should think of a television news program in such a manner does not reflect credit on the program. This is particularly serious when one realizes that during the year 1950 the United States became involved in the Korean conflict. The only method the home viewers could see the war was through film. The networks received an average of 7,000 feet of film from Korea each week.³ The general quality of

¹"Eager Beaver," Time, June 11, 1951, p. 49.

²Philip Hamburger, "Salute," The New Yorker, XXVII (December 8, 1951), 148.

³"Korean Coverage," Newsweek, September 4, 1950, p. 48.

this film was poor because of the adverse conditions under which they were taken.¹ Although some critics seemed to feel that news was better reported verbally, or with maps, the use of film was justified by the news staff at the Columbia Broadcasting System. Speaking of film, they said:

It brought the multiplicity of factors which are war to the television screens back home in America. The streets of Seoul became real. The faces of men, women, and children made destitute by war were seen in all their hopelessness. The news cameras went under fire and brought back films of the violence and destruction of combat. The fighting men spoke from the battle lines. In their honest and superbly plain language they told what they felt and desired. The sound of their voices, the sight of what made them laugh and blush and joke, all became known to those at home. For the television film cameras were there to see, to hear, to report the news of a war in a far off land named Korea.²

One critic who held that the basic weakness in television news programs lay in the lack of time that the news reporter had at his disposal was Alan Pritchard. He cited a news program, entitled "Three City Final," as an example of a newscaster trying to do too much in too little time. This program originated at station WLW-T in Cincinnati, Ohio, and was seen simultaneously in Dayton and Columbus, Ohio, on two satellite stations. Although this is not a network news program, it can be used as an example because the program was patterned after "Camel News Caravan,"

¹Ibid.

²CBS News, p. 6.

which originated at the National Broadcasting Company. The following is a breakdown of the "Three City Final" program for February 12, 1951.

	<u>running time</u>	<u>elapsed time</u>
1. Opening	0.30	0.30
2. Headlines	0.30	1.00
3. Commercial	1.00	2.00
4. Korean Report	1.40	3.40
5. Korean Film	1.00	4.40
6. National News	1.30	6.10
7. Lincoln with Film	0.30	6.40
8. Civil Defense	3.10	9.50
9. Sports	1.00	10.50
10. Local News	1.00	11.50
11. Commercial	1.00	12.50
12. Weather	0.40	13.30
13. Closing	0.40	14.10

Of this program format, Pritchard says that due to the very precise schedule that must be met, only the highlights of the news could be offered. Further, in the thirty seconds allotted to the headlines, four stories were covered. In the segment given to national news, which lasted only one minute and thirty seconds, eight different stories were covered.¹ It is also interesting to note that only one minute of film was devoted to the Korean war. This writer wonders if any really pertinent material could be culled from so brief a film. The Columbia Broadcasting System, however, remained adamant in the feeling that the use of film was vital to a news program.

. . . whosoever sees a television news film,

¹Alan Pritchard, "How Much News On Television," Nieman Reports, V (April, 1951), 11.

knows that he sees a news story with a vital sense of discovering news events, big and small, as if he had come upon them himself.¹

Another champion for the use of television news film was Marvin Alesky, who contended that if a station did not have the actual film of a news event, they could use old films from their film library to bolster the narrative. This use of film, he contended, made the presentation seem more alive. However, this use of stock footage was only to be used as a last resort. It would be better to get the actual sound film, if possible, because "any average news seeker would prefer to watch and hear General MacArthur, President Truman . . . speak in their own voices with their own gestures . . ." ²

One use of film by the Columbia Broadcasting System, on its New Year's Day year-end news roundup program in 1951, was a two to three minute exclusive filmed interview with Generalissimo Francisco Franco of Spain. This caused a flurry of excitement because Generalissimo Franco had never consented to such an interview prior to this date. The Columbia Broadcasting System's Paris correspondent, David Shoenbrun, conducted the interview and discussed such questions with Generalissimo Franco as "The situation in

¹CBS News, p. 14.

²Marvin Alesky, "The Half-hour Format for Television News," Nieman Reports, V (July, 1951), 13-14.

Spain today," "The self-confidence of Spain," and "Collective security,"¹

Finally, the years 1950 and 1951 saw the emergence of a television news program entitled "News and News Analysis with Eric Sevareid." This program began on the Columbia Broadcasting System on April 3, 1950, and is still on the air.² Eric Sevareid is the only television news reporter on the Columbia Broadcasting System who is permitted by the organization to offer commentary on the news. It is the policy of the Columbia Broadcasting System to emphasize factual news on news programs.³

During the years 1950 and 1951, television news seemed to have improved in its use of materials and in its handling of live remote presentations. Much of the awkwardness that marked the political conventions in 1948 was absent in 1950 and 1951, when the local political contests were being televised, as well as the Kefauver hearings and the reception for General MacArthur. Moreover, there was an improvement in shooting techniques that gave the home viewer a better picture of these affairs. The major

¹"Interview with Franco," Newsweek, January 8, 1951, p. 37.

²Columbia Broadcasting System Program Analysis Files, 1950.

³Interview with Malcolm Johnson, Assistant Director of News, Columbia Broadcasting System, April 4, 1958.

shortcoming, as was pointed out by Lowell Limpus, was in the lack of evaluation of the news event that was being televised.¹ The majority of the television audience still had to resort to the newspaper for significant commentaries on the news.

The use of film on television was dignified by its application to news on the "See It Now" program, which was a product of the year 1951. Edward R. Murrow made the film respond to editorial needs, and created a series that was hailed by Gilbert Seldes as ". . . the most important commercially sponsored program on the air . . ." ² The remainder of the television news programs employing film found themselves both criticized and praised. Notably, however, it was the Columbia Broadcasting System that most staunchly advocated the use of film on television news programs. Their attitude was reflected in the following statement:

For a normal day, more than half of the news time of a program may be devoted to film -- six to seven minutes or more for a 15-minute commercial show (actually 11½ minutes of news), counting the ending feature or kicker film.³

The only significant difference in the studio news programming was the addition of a news analysis program on

¹Limpus, Nieman Reports, V (July, 1951), 11.

²Seldes, The Public Arts, 216.

³CBS News, p. 112.

the Columbia Broadcasting System. This program, "News and News Analysis with Eric Sevareid," was offered five minutes each day, five days each week. This step by the Columbia Broadcasting System was significant because it demonstrated that the network realized that there existed a gap in the area of news commentary that required attention. This could mean that the beginning of a new approach to television news was to be anticipated.

CHAPTER V

TELEVISION NEWS PROGRAMS EMPHASIZE PRODUCTION VALUES

Prior to 1952, the majority the major network news programs were of a similar nature. Studio news programs consisted of an announcer who read news bulletins and sometimes read a narrative for a film that was being shown, and an occasional second announcer who also read narrative for films. The only panel program, "Meet the Press," offered some semblance of production, but its spontaneous nature precluded the possibility of the participants on the program from becoming too involved in the production of the program.

During the years 1952 and 1953 there was a significant change in the format of news programs that affected both the quality of news presentation and the visual appeal of the news programs. In this chapter we will discuss the change that occurred in television news during those years, and describe those programs which were most influential in causing this change. In addition, there will be a discussion of the other important news programs during the years 1952 and 1953.

New Influential Programs

Until January, 1952, the major studio news program

on the National Broadcasting System was the "Camel News Caravan." As the reader has seen, this program dealt with news of an essentially pictorial nature that some critics decried because of the lack of timeliness in the films and still pictures. In January, 1952 a program entitled "Today" was originated on the National Broadcasting System, with the hope that the above situation could be rectified. The studio from which the "Today" program originated was equipped with every type of modern communication facility. Included were teletype machines, facsimile machines, weather maps and direct telephone lines to all the major news making cities in the world. The method of news presentation became an end in itself. The real function of a news program, to communicate the news, became secondary.¹

The first "Today" program appeared on the National Broadcasting Company on January 14, 1952, from seven until nine o'clock in the morning. The program was conceived as a current events service in which news was intermittently integrated. The news segments were prepared by the news staff at the National Broadcasting Company. Otherwise, the program covered such activities as mountain climbing and personality interviews. Often, such as on November 26, 1957, the program reported from remote locations. On this date, "Today"

¹"Trouble With News; Today," Time, January 28, 1952, p. 70.

featured three live news reports directly from Washington D. C. From 7:02 until 7:04; 8:01 until 8:03; and 9:01 until 9:03 National Broadcasting Company's news reporter Roy Scherer gave reports on the state of the President's health from outside the gates of the White House.¹

Guests, such as H. V. Kaltenborn, appeared on the program. Kaltenborn, a noted news analyst, appeared on December 3, 1957 to discuss the current state of the United States Foreign Policy, just ten days before the Paris meeting of the NATO nations. There was also a discussion of the new tensions in the Middle East. On December 16, 1957, H. V. Kaltenborn returned to discuss the NATO meeting, which had just concluded, in terms of its problems, possible results and agreements.²

During the year 1953, "Today" brought five million dollars in sponsors to the National Broadcasting Company.³ However, the program was not always successful. During the first nine months of its existence, "Today" had difficulty in living up to its promise as a news disseminator. Philip Hamburger, writing in The New Yorker, said that the show

¹National Broadcasting Company Program Analysis Files, 1952.

²Ibid.

³"More Elbowroom for TV Newscasts," Business Week, March 13, 1954, p. 27.

was filled with too much trivia and not enough news. There were too many repeats of weather reports and not enough late news. The news was reported in two minute capsules, and the direct lines to various parts of the globe failed to provide the necessary on-the-spot reporting to make "Today" a really lively news program.¹ By September, 1952, "Today" had made great strides toward building a regular audience. Three different news reporters gave regular, lengthier and more complete accounts of the news. Dave Garroway, the host on "Today," said that the success of the program and its great audience was due to the fact that the program tried to " . . . make the general more specific, and the specific more general."²

In considering this program a success, Dave Garroway made reference only to the size of the audience, while a critic writing in Business Week made reference to the financial achievement. Certainly there was a visual appeal in the program. However, this writer takes exception to the statement by Garroway that all things must be made level with a common denominator. The program seemed to owe its success to the fact that it aimed its material at the largest available audience. News was mixed with interviews

¹Philip Hamburger, "Television: Today," The New Yorker, XXVII (February 2, 1952), pp. 60-61.

²"TV Newspaper; Today," Time, September 15, 1952, p. 104.

with personalities from the world of sports and theatre, as well as such men as H. V. Kaltenborn. This type of reporting and programming, together with the promise of on-the-spot reporting and a well paced schedule all helped to make the program an audience rated success. Further, the personality of a Garroway added greatly to the size of the viewing audience. His natural charm and wit attracted the audience, while other members of the staff gave the news. There is some question in the mind of this writer as to the quality of the news presented. John Crosby, quoted in Time magazine, reported that television people rely too heavily on newspapers and news services. He held that the demands for television news were different.¹ Although there was no elaboration on this point, one can conclude that the requirements for television would be of the nature of those employed by Edward R. Murrow in his "See It Now" series. Materials were gathered exclusively for television, and not any other medium of communication.

If the news reports on the "Today" program could be compared with the headlines in a newspaper, the reports on the other new program to originate during the years 1952 and 1953, "Eye On New York," should be compared to a magazine.²

¹Time, January 28, 1952, p. 70.

²Interview with Nazaret Cherkazian, Producer of "Eye On New York," April 7, 1958.

"Eye On New York" originated on the Columbia Broadcasting System on June 7, 1953. This is a weekly program, sustained by the Columbia Broadcasting System, on the air for thirty minutes each Sunday. Just as any weekly news magazine, this program endeavors to present the most important news of the week, particularly as it applies to New York City. More and more, however, there is a tendency to include news that is of national interest because of the network audience. When asked by this writer whether the events in New York City had much interest in the network audience, Cherkazian replied that the greatest bulk of the program's mail comes from out of town. "People are interested in seeing what affects New York, and how we solve our problems."¹ Smooth production has always been an important element in the planning of this program. Whenever there is no film used, the topic under consideration is given an effective dramatization. Not in the same sense as a theatrical presentation, of course, but the participants in the event are interviewed with some emphasis placed on the shooting techniques and the settings. The staging is smoothly handled to get the maximum visualization out of any given topic under discussion. Because of the fact that the Columbia Broadcasting System sustains the program, there are fewer funds available for purposes of production. The emphasis, therefore, must be

¹Ibid.

placed on the creativity of the production personnel. Also, the host on the program adhere to a certain amount of theatricality in his interviews and handling of guests.¹

This emphasis on production by the major networks during 1952 and 1953 tended to make the news reporter a performer. The program itself bartered its simple appearance for one larger in scope. The networks became conscious of the importance of production techniques that were smooth because this added to audience appeal. The Columbia Broadcasting System reflected this attitude and believed that "the greater the appearance of a production which can be inserted into a show, the 'bigger' your audience will think it is."²

News programs, therefore, tended to become more visually oriented, with the result that news suffered. A discussion of how the news suffered will follow.

Problems of Established Programs

The concept that facile production techniques aided the television news program was carried over to the studio news program. In 1952, the "Camel News Caravan" ordered some 250 miles of film and used thirty-five miles of it on the program during that year. National Broadcasting Company Vice

¹Ibid.

²CBS News, p. 186.

President William F. Brooks described this acquisition as ". . . a major step in adapting the tools of a new medium, television, to the age-old job of reporting the news."¹ There was some question, however, in the mind of Paul W. White, former news editor for the Columbia Broadcasting System, concerning this emphasis on production techniques. He wondered if visualization made television news more informative, and held the opinion that radio was doing a superior job of news reporting. He did concede the fact that when television had a camera on the scene it told the story more vividly. White's greatest concern was with the excessive emphasis on production on television news programs. He made the following remarks on this subject:

Television executives . . . add newsreels and stills, charts and maps, animated art, clever drawings, other faces and voices. In short, a fifteen minute news show, which used to be dedicated to imparting information, is now dedicated to the great god of Slick Production. The concept of Slick Production . . . is not to bore the viewer at the risk of telling him anything important.²

Concomitant with this tendency toward improved production techniques was the greater participation of the news reporter in the production aspect of the program. Exact timing in each segment of the program became important

¹Ralph Howard Peterson, "Televising Today's News: Camel News Caravan," Radio and Television News, IL (January, 1953), 55.

²"On Aired Views," Newsweek, December 15, 1952, pp. 60-61.

because the production depended on the smooth flow of material for its visual appeal. By contrast, the radio news reporter had only to concern himself with the preparation of his news, and being ready to go on the air at the scheduled time. This gave him more time to prepare his program content in terms of his knowledge of the area being covered, and not in terms of the available visual material. He did not have to concern himself with such production matters as facing the proper camera at the proper time, makeup, or attending time consuming rehearsals. Marya Mannes, writing in The Reporter, claimed that television news is concerned with its visuals and their length to the extent that television news presentation is being hurt. The news reporter could not consult with the art department, makeup department, producer, director and still remain close to the news. She further contended that for those people who were concerned with the fact, news on television was boring. For those people who needed a reassuring, pleasant face the television news report became imperative.¹ This concept of the television newscaster is one sided. The Columbia Broadcasting System holds a different opinion of this same news reporter.

One must point out that his dignity, confidence,

¹Marya Mannes, "News Heard, News Seen," The Reporter, IX (July 7, 1953), 39-40.

and competence are on trial every time a news show goes on the air. He must be more than an ordinary reporter. In effect, he is a master reporter. The reasons he is sitting there facing the camera are many, but perhaps more than any other, the main reason is his high integrity as a spokesman for his station or network, an integrity based on his total experience as a newsman.

When he speaks on the air, he speaks with the authority of a man who has looked deeply and intelligently into the news. The burden he carries on the air is enormous; when success is scored, it is as much his as anyone else's. His hours off the air are spent thinking, reading and doing.¹

A qualification that this writer feels necessary to make on the attitude of the Columbia Broadcasting System toward the news reporters who are employed by that organization, is that one must remember that they are writing about themselves. The reader must also remember that for this vast network to demean its own reporters could only serve to underscore the writing of the critics in this field. Since many news programs fall under the heading of commercial enterprise, it must be remembered that an admission of weakness could lead to the loss of some of the viewing audience. The viewing audience, in turn, is the commodity that the network sells to the advertiser. A reduction in the size of the audience would seemingly tend to reduce the salability of a news program to any given sponsor. With these thoughts in mind, the reader can gain a better perspective of the sentiments of the Columbia Broadcasting System toward

¹CBS News, p. 136.

the men who report the news for that network.

Television news, during the years 1952 and 1953, received criticism from within and from without. Philip Hamburger wrote that most news commentators seem to have come from the same academy " . . . which turns them out, perfectly appointed and almost identical, like motor cars rolling from an assembly line."¹ Eric Sevareid, news analyst for the Columbia Broadcasting System, said that he felt " . . . terribly dissatisfied with television news programs . . . it is a matter of retrogression - a going back to the picture page and newsreels."² Jack Gould of the New York Times said that "for many months now both CBS and NBC major news programs have been deteriorating badly . . . the emphasis has been on show business, not journalism."³ John Daly, of the American Broadcasting Company, held that "if a picture helps, use it. But the important thing is the word - the reporting of the story and what's behind it."⁴

There was a compensating feature to this new scope that the networks were attempting to give to their news programs. The television industry had to put more effort

¹Philip Hamburger, "Man from Indiana," The New Yorker, XXX (February 27, 1954), 87.

²Business Week, March 13, 1954, p. 28.

³Ibid. ⁴Ibid., p. 29.

into news coverage. Apart from the commercial considerations, the networks had two goals: (1) to increase the amount of news coverage and improve the techniques of gathering it; and (2) to establish program formats that would make better use of television's potential for presenting the news.¹ The networks managed, by 1953, to develop a facility in the processing of film for their news programs. At that time, the Columbia Broadcasting System could film a story up until six o'clock in the evening in the New York area, process it, edit it, and have it ready for presentation on the docket of the Douglas Edwards program at seven-thirty that same evening.²

It appeared that the television industry had succeeded in developing new techniques of gathering and presenting news, which was their first objective. However, it had failed, at least from a critical point of view, to discover a format that was suitable for the dissemination of news. Problems still existed for the networks in this regard.

The only live programming of any significant nature that the networks undertook during the years 1952 and 1953, was the attempt to do interviews with dignitaries at the United Nations. This effort on the part of the networks was criticized by A. M. Rosenthal, United Nations correspondent

¹Ibid., p. 27. ²Ibid., p. 28.

for The New York Times, because he felt that television " . . . is not primarily interested in news, but in entertainment."¹ Rosenthal pointed out that delegates who had purposely eluded reporters for weeks would gladly appear on a television news interview because the questioning was considered bland. He felt that the delegate on a television program could shape his answer for the viewer in order to appear in the best possible light.²

The years 1952 and 1953 can be seen as years in which the networks sought to find a new direction; one which would lead to the proper utilization of television in news dissemination. From its early days in 1948 and 1949, when crude handling of materials and little skill in televising remote programs pervaded the television news industry, it grew to the point where it was very skilled in the technical machinations of a program. However, technical growth exceeded content growth. Television sought new formats for programs instead of searching for new content for the old programs. There was a greater emphasis placed on the visualization of a program, and the role of the news reporter as a participant in a news "show" had begun. The day when a network news reporter could simply read bulletins and flash

¹"TV and Newsmen," Time, November 2, 1953, p. 49.

²Ibid.

a few pictures had passed. By the end of 1953, television had become a medium that no longer tolerated technical errors.

The emphasis on the use of film never diminished. Rather, it increased in both quality, because the networks were shooting more and more of their own footage, and quantity, because it appeared to be the most dependable tool. The networks, for the most part, held to the idea that film made good television reporting.

Contemplation follows the seeing of the event. But the actual witnessing of it is in effect participation. To accomplish this end, television requires the camera willing to go anywhere, willing to record the decisive moments of history.¹

¹CBS News, p. 15.

CHAPTER VI

A NEW OUTLOOK IN NETWORK NEWS PROGRAMS

In this chapter we will consider the two main aspects of network news programs that appeared between the years 1954 and 1957. They are: (1) controversy on television news programs; and (2) the development of the panel news programs. Through a discussion of these two aspects, this writer will attempt to show that network news, during the above mentioned years, made an effort toward a presentation of news in depth.

Controversy on Television News Programs

The critics of television news programs, as we have seen, have long criticized the medium for its lack of thoughtful subject matter. There was, in general, a feeling that network television news was bland in the extreme. The lack of commentary on the news was deplored by critics, and one of the reasons they offered for this state of affairs was the fear of the sponsor to offend any member of the audience, and thus alienate him. It was only on rare programs, such as "Meet the Press," that one met a sponsor who had the courage to maintain an association with a program that dealt with controversial matters. Another outstanding example of this type of program and sponsor united

to produce "See It Now" However, the greater majority of the news programs that dealt with commentary or issues of controversy had to be maintained on a sustaining basis by the major networks.

One critic pointed out that newspapers could editorialize on any subject area they chose without fear of reprisal from the majority of advertisers. If any of the advertisers were not in accord with the editorial policy of the newspaper, they had the right to withdraw their advertisements. The newspaper did not suffer a loss that was disastrous because of the large number of advertisers who would remain. Television, on the other hand, had news programs which were supported by only one organization. If the newscaster on a program held views that were not popular with the majority, or even a vocal minority, of his audience, it could mean that the sponsor of the program would suffer through financial loss. It was suggested that, as in the case of the newspaper, there be multiple sponsorship of news programs in order that the newscaster could feel free to interpret news in the light of his own understanding of a given situation. In this manner, he would not fear the ire of any one sponsor threatening to cancel his association with the program. This same critic further suggested that there be a clearer definition between the sponsor and the program. Advertisers in newspapers need not hold the same editorial

views as the newspaper in order to advertise their product in it. Conversely, the editorial policy of the newspaper does not reflect on the advertiser in any way. In television, however, there is too great an association between program content and the sponsor. Their functions should be separated.¹

One of the best sponsor-program relationships existed between the "See It Now" program and its sponsor, Alcoa.

For the Aluminum Company of America had accepted the old and almost forgotten role of sponsor-as-advertiser and had not asked for the common role of sponsor-as-programmer. This meant non-interference with the material presented, and it also meant in practice that Alcoa did not necessarily know what any single program was going to be about. Alcoa, in fact, did not know that Murrow was going to exercise the privilege of dropping the commercial on six separate occasions in one year, and did not know that Murrow would repay his sponsor with a ten-minute feature about one of its operations as a reward to them for their indulgence. With this unusual backing, Murrow was able to commit a sponsored program to an attack on a controversial figure without committing the sponsor.²

This attack of which Gilbert Seldes spoke occurred in March, 1954. At that time Senator Joseph McCarthy was conducting an investigation of Communism in the United States. The method employed by Senator McCarthy, that of guilt by innuendo, was not seconded by Murrow. The "See It Now" program, on the evening of March 9, 1954, was composed

¹"The Sponsor's Dilemma," Business Week, May 1, 1954, p. 160.

²Seldes, The Public Arts, p. 219.

largely of newsreel clips of Senator McCarthy in action. This program was called, by one critic, " . . . a contrived but effective record of arrogance."¹ When asked why he chose to speak out on this controversial issue, Murrow replied that "this is no time for men who oppose McCarthy's methods to keep silent."² Max Lerner called this program " . . . the most important single program in the history of TV thus far."³

One of the fears resulting from this program revolved about the networks becoming a power in the shaping of public opinion through their own news policies. There was a feeling that the Columbia Broadcasting System had permitted judgements to enter into straight news reports. The Don Hollenbeck studio news program, which followed "See It Now," characterized itself as a supplementary report to Murrow's views on Senator McCarthy. It was felt that if a news agency became partisan, no matter how admirable the cause " . . . it can only be harmful to news reporting in the real sense."⁴ This fear of the networks shaping public opinion stemmed from

¹"The Baited Trap," Time, March 29, 1954, p. 77.

²Ibid.

³Max Lerner, America As A Civilization (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957), p. 838.

⁴W. Pfaff, "News on the Networks," Commonweal, LX (April 9, 1954), 11-14.

the fact that the audience for the "See It Now" series was both large and thoughtful. During the year 1954, the average audience for this series grew to the extent that it reached an estimated 3,009,000 homes. By 1955, the average number of homes reached increased to 3,268,000.¹

Alcoa, whose association with "See It Now" began in 1951 with the third program of the series, dropped its sponsorship in 1955. The reason for this termination was not due to the controversial nature of the material used in the series, but because of a change in advertising policy. Until 1955, Alcoa was concerned only with institutional advertising, and felt that the people reached on the "See It Now" series were the most desirable for their needs. However, in 1955 Alcoa entered the competitive retail market with Alcoa Aluminum Foil. Since this product required a different audience, and a more substantial one, Alcoa terminated its association with "See It Now" and placed its advertising on the "Alcoa Hour," a weekly hour long dramatic program with a higher audience rating.² The type of sponsor who was willing to remain with a program, although it handled more than ordinary news, was not always available. Just prior to the Murrow program on Senator McCarthy, Drew Pearson commented

¹Murray R. Yaeger, "The Evolution of 'See It Now,'" Journal of Broadcasting, I (Fall, 1957), 341.

²Ibid., pp. 342-343.

unfavorably on the methods employed by the Senator and found that his " . . . sponsor had dropped him after McCarthy had virtually called for a boycott of the sponsor's product."¹

The problem of sponsorship is a serious one. Network programs cost a considerable amount of money to organize and produce. The networks cannot be expected to sustain news programs because they are in business and must earn money in order to continue their operation. Although this writer could not discover the exact amount of money spent on individual programs, some idea of their expense can be gleaned from the fact that in the year 1957 the Columbia Broadcasting System, in their News and Public Affairs activities, spent some twenty-one million dollars on the production and other costs of programs, and received only ten million dollars on their investment from sponsors.² It must be remembered, however, that some of this money would have been spent regardless of the anticipated return because the networks are required to provide some programming that is in the public interest.

Since the cost of news programs was high, the networks were eager to hold the sponsors they already had. In the case of the studio news program, this generally meant that the

¹Seldes, The Public Arts, p. 219.

²Interview with John Day, Director of News, Columbia Broadcasting System, April 4, 1958.

subject matter of the program would remain bland. In speaking of these programs, Jack Gould said:

The broadcasters long ago largely abandoned the analytical minds in favor of the videogenic announcers who can recite a bulletin. A curtain of expediency has quietly closed off one of the country's major platforms for stimulating public opinion.

Television is the villain. It has scorned the commentator as an antiquated oddity of the crystal set era and denied him a rightful place on the screen. Yet simultaneously it has lured away the audience that used to be his on radio.

The effect of this two pronged assault on the institution of commentary has been to wrap the country's largest mass audience in a protective cloak of continuous escapist entertainment and insulate it from an adequate awareness of the realities of day to day life.

The public . . . now lives, so far as broadcasting is concerned, in a trouble free cathode age. Night after night a viewer can watch TV and never be reminded that something has happened in the world which then and there should be analyzed, discussed and thought about.¹

These studio news programs had, also, to retain high ratings in order that the sponsor could be assured of a certain sized audience whenever his program was on the air. As a result of this, the networks tried to discover who watched news programs at various times of the day, in order that they could provide the type of news that would appeal to that particular audience.

The kind of stories covered and how they are presented may change as the audience changes with the time of day.

¹Jack Gould, "On Television: No Comment," Nieman Reports, X (January, 1956), 40.

Early morning --	Adult audience in a hurry; does more listening than watching; needs the news in quick, concise fashion. Round up overnight changes, note big stories of yesterday, and mention important upcoming items, particularly when they involve reminders of local events such as last day for auto tags. Weather outlook is important.
Daytime --	Feminine audience (unless community is one where high percentage of men eat lunch at home). Slacken news pace; use more features.
Early evening --	Family audience. Broad coverage of past 24 hours with emphasis on past 12 right up to air-time. Cover as many stories as possible. Shock and horror stories may find children and dinner suffering equally.
Late evening --	Adult, relaxed audience. Both audience and editor have had a chance to reflect upon the day; editor, with most stories several hours old, can pick and choose, emphasize a few of the more significant. Pacing can slow down except for very late stories. Weather important. ¹

Controversy on these studio news programs was omitted in order to keep a sponsor who was helping to defray the cost of broadcasting. Controversial issues, if they were to be discussed at all, had to be handled on the programs that were generally on a sustaining basis. Without the fear of sponsor loss, since a sustaining program had no sponsor except the network itself, and without the pressure of having to pander to the tastes of a majority audience, the

¹CBS News, pp. 116-117.

sustaining news program could present issues and personalities that would generally be regarded as unsuitable by the sponsor. The outcome of this situation was the development of a series of programs that dealt with news in depth. Speaking of this development, Gilbert Seldes stated that the critical event in television was not the daily report, but the weekly summary and discussion. He maintained that the daily news program, referred to as studio news program in this thesis, with its emphasis on film, tended to be factual. The newsmen did not editorialize on a subject that was controversial.¹

Panel News Programs

On November 7, 1954, a weekly news program entitled "Face the Nation" appeared on the Columbia Broadcasting System.² Ted Ayers, Producer of "Face the Nation," described this program as follows:

On each broadcast the guest will face newsmen, educators, civic leaders and public figures in various sections of the country by means of two-way live television remote hook-ups. By asking questions significant to their locality as well as to the nation as a whole, these widely-separated panelists will present a cross section of thinking around the country on each broadcast.³

¹ Gilbert Seldes, "News On Television," New Republic, CXXX (January 18, 1954), 7-9.

² Columbia Broadcasting System Program Analysis Files, 1954.

³ Ibid.

This program, thirty minutes in length and maintained on a sustaining basis, presented such people as Dr. V. K. Wellington Koo, Ambassador to the United States from Nationalist China, on December 19, 1954; Harold E. Stassen, Director of the Foreign Operations Administration, on December 26, 1954; and Nikita S. Krushchev, on June 2, 1957. The program dealing with Krushchev was awarded a Sylvania Award in the area of news.¹

This controversial program, which had repercussions from the United States Government, began with a letter from Theodore F. Koop, Director of Washington News and Public Affairs for the Columbia Broadcasting System, and Ted Ayers, Producer of "Face the Nation," to Georgi N. Zaroubin, then Ambassador to the United States from Russia, on April 18, 1957.² The letter outlined the proposed project and requested that the guest be either Marshal Bulganin or Nikita S. Krushchev. On a separate page there was a suggested list of areas of discussion on which the two newsmen who would be doing the interview, B. J. Cutler and Daniel Schorr, would like to question the dignitary who appeared on the program. The areas of discussion were outlined as follows:

¹Columbia Broadcasting System Program Analysis Files, 1954.

²Herbert Mitgang, Freedom to See, An Occasional Paper on the Role of the Mass Media in The Free Society, The Fund for the Republic, 1958, p. 3.

Possible areas of discussion for Moscow FACE
THE NATION project:

Anything personal guest would care to tell about himself, bearing in mind the American public knows little of Russia's leaders and would like to know much more.

Recent economic, agricultural and cultural developments in USSR.

Present and future trends in Russian political thought; aims of Communism, its ideology and ideologists.

Relative political and economic positions of USSR and USA now and 10 years from now.

Views on war, US military aims.

Relations with central European neighbors.

Views on German problem, present, future.

Possibilities of disarmament and peaceful relations.

Relations with People's Republic of China and Far East.

Views on recent Middle East Developments.¹

The Columbia Broadcasting System did not receive a reply to this letter until May 10, 1957, when Vladimir Lobachev, press officer at the Soviet Embassy, contacted Koop by telephone. He wanted to know how the program would be translated, how much time Khrushchev would be allowed, and whether Koop would agree not to cut or censor Khrushchev's replies. When Koop advised Lobachev that the program would give Khrushchev about twenty-two minutes of actual speaking time, Lobachev said that an hour would be required. Agreements on the method of translation and censorship were made immediately. In a matter of hours, the program received permission to run for fully an hour, because of the importance of the guest.²

¹Ibid., p. 4. ²Ibid.

The presentation of this program was planned for June 2, 1957 in order that the network affiliates carrying this program could clear their channels for the extra half-hour that would be required. The crew for this program flew into Moscow on May 23, 1957 and the interview itself was filmed on May 28, 1957.¹

In addition to the spectacular nature of this interview, the "Face the Nation" staff created an important "First" in the area of news censorship within Russia. Since the agreement with the Russians included the stipulation that the recording of the interview would not be edited when it was presented in the United States, it means that the film and sound of this interview would leave Russia uncensored. No censorship of any kind was imposed on the group of journalists when they left Russia with their material. "This had not happened before in Soviet Russia."²

The main points that Khrushchev made in this interview were:

The Soviet Union desires peace but the ruling elements in the United States are preparing for war;
The Soviets are prepared to take steps toward disarmament and troop withdrawals;

There are no contradictions between the government and the people, in the Soviet Union or in any other Socialist countries;

The Soviets will eventually surpass the United States agriculturally;

"Your grandchildren" in the United States will live under socialism.³

¹Ibid., p. 5. ²Ibid., p. 7. ³Ibid.

The broadcast of this program created a furor in Congress. Joseph W. Martin, Jr., Minority leader of the House of Representatives, said that he " . . . felt it was ill-advised to open the airways to the Communist propagandists."¹ Senator Bricker of Ohio declared that "the entire question of censorship and clearance of such broadcasts by the Department of State, or any agency of the Executive Department, would appear to present many difficulties."² Representative Henry S. Reuss of Wisconsin said that "if all we do is nothing we give the Soviet Union an incalculable advantage."³ Representative Ray J. Madden of Indiana, who is a member of the House Rules Committee, introduced a resolution on July 1, 1957 which would require that advance clearance with the Secretary of State and the Central Intelligence Agency be secured on all questions that would be asked in such interviews. Representative Michael A. Feighan of Ohio killed this proposal by suggesting that the resolution be amended to have all interview questions cleared with Madden instead of the previously mentioned agencies.⁴

The audience for this program is difficult to estimate. Trendex reported that they estimated a rough total of 10,000,000 viewers.⁵ These figures were based upon a

¹Ibid., p. 12. ²Ibid. ³Ibid. ⁴Ibid., p. 13.

⁵Ibid., p. 14.

report of the comparative popularity of programs in fifteen of the largest interconnected television cities. The Nielsen rating system estimated the audience at about 5,340,000 people.¹ Later, in 1957, the Columbia Broadcasting System began to sell the program on a cost basis, as a public service, to stations in this country and abroad. It was seen in England, Canada, Australia, Cuba, Sweden, Mexico and other countries.²

The critics of television generally acclaimed this program. Newspapers and periodicals all over the country felt that a public service had been done by the presentation of Nikita S. Krushchev on "Face the Nation." The Columbia Broadcasting System was commended for its enterprise and quality of production.³

On April 1, 1956, still another new half-hour sustaining news program began, entitled "Outlook."⁴ This program originated on the National Broadcasting Company and featured newsman Chet Huntley. The description of the program offered by the National Broadcasting Company is as follows:

A news program designed to give a comprehensive picture of current world news, filling the weekend gap on news between Friday and Monday.

¹Ibid. ²Ibid. ³Ibid., p. 15.

⁴National Broadcasting Company Program Analysis Files, 1956.

Program uses live commentary by editor Chet Huntley, NBC news analyst; especially filmed reports by NBC news cameramen (stories and interviews); mobile unit pickups from scenes of newsbreaks or from areas of current news interest; and regular newsfilm. From time to time various commentators appear from NBC studios in other cities to analyze major news developments. Program is a mixture of short items (varying in length from 30 seconds to 5 minutes) and feature news stories (minimum of 6 minutes), treating certain news events, such as segregation, more extensively than others by delving into the background of a particular problem and presenting various related factors, thus clarifying the true meaning of certain news events.¹

This sustaining news program differed from "Meet the Press" and its more contemporary counterpart "Face the Nation" in that it did not attempt to probe a news item in depth, nor did it offer the panel format. "Outlook" depended on the use of film, for the most part, for its presentation of news material. In this respect, then, "Outlook" bore some resemblance to the studio news program. The use of the film on this program is shown in the run-down sheet for the first "Outlook" program, April 1, 1956.

Disposal of Radioactive Wastes Produced by Atomic Power - 7½ minute film showed how Nuclear Science and Engineering Corporation of Pittsburgh was going about the study of this problem. 2:40½ - 2:44 Switch to Washington D. C. studios. Dave Brinkley reporting on how defeated Congressmen frequently decide to continue to live in Washington D. C. after their defeat.

Desegregation -- 4 minute film (taken 2 years ago) of Senator James Eastland (D) of Mississippi, in which he strongly declares his opposition of the Supreme Court decision integrating Southern schools

¹Ibid.

and any form of integration, and related how his judiciary committee has jurisdiction over civil rights measures - can hold up confirmation of all federal judges - he believed it was his job to use this committee to protect the South. Eastland is becoming the symbol of one side of this segregation debate.

Other news in brief - Huntley reports, with occasional film clips thrown in:

Situation in Cyprus - film clip by Jack Yowell (an exclusive) showing Makarios, spiritual and nationalist leader of the Greeks in Cyprus, in exile 2000 miles away on an island in the Indian Ocean. (42 seconds).

Sherman Adams, presidential aide, labeling current Democratic controlled Congress as "do-nothing."

New Soviet "realistic approach" to the new Soviet disarmament plan.

Malenkov enjoying a weekend in Russia.

Strike at Standard Brands.

Algeria situation - French reinforcements coming in.

Regional News -- stories which tomorrow will be making the news only where they occur. One minute switch each to: (mobile units) W. W. Chaplin in Philadelphia - Ike to church and carpenter strike in Boston, 2:51 - 2:52. John Chancellor in Chicago - Julius LaRosa arrested for speeding, 2:52 - 2:53. Randall Jesse in Kansas City - murder victim in Texas not identified, 2:53 - 2:54. Bill Guyman in Los Angeles - a check bouncer has been apprehended, 2:54 - 2:55.

George Washington film feature (live narration by Huntley), 2:55 - 2:58. A look at how difficult it would be to erase all references to George Washington in this country in the same manner that Russia has been downgrading Stalin. Shots of various places and objects bearing Washington's name that would have to be removed were such the case.¹

One can easily see that this news program bore little similarity in format and content to the panel news programs. Here the news was given a presentation that was similar to

¹Ibid.

the "Camel News Caravan" in its extensive use of film. The above described program utilized fully half of its time on filmed news. Further, it is interesting to note that the issues of any real value were told through film, while the live commentary was relegated to the description of regional news. This tendency in "Outlook" to use large amounts of film can be seen again through an examination of some of the subsequent programs. On July 28, 1957 more than twenty-two minutes of film was used; on August 11, 1957 "Outlook" utilized twenty-two minutes and twenty seconds of film; on August 18, 1957, when the program was expanded to one hour for that program only, fifty-four minutes of film was used; on August 25, 1957 the program used nineteen minutes and fifty-eight seconds of film; on September 1, 1957 twenty-two minutes and thirty seconds of film was used; on September 15, 1957 twenty-eight minutes and twenty-five seconds of film was used; on November 13, 1957 there was seventeen minutes and thirty-nine minutes of film used.¹

On September 15, 1957 a live interview program conducted by Martin Agronsky originated on the National Broadcasting Company. This half-hour sustaining program was called "Look Here."² There was no panel employed on this program. Instead, Martin Agronsky interviewed guests himself. The network description of this program is as follows:

¹Ibid. ²Ibid., 1957

A live interview program conducted by Martin Agronsky, which is designed to draw from prominent persons a picture of what they are as public figures, as careerists and as human beings. Subjects - one a week - will come from all walks of life: entertainment, sports, arts and sciences, business, government, etc. The idea being to select a subject who has something thought-provoking to contribute to a timely discussion; or to obtain a controversial interview-in-depth with a subject of prominence . . . a "personality portrait" of the subject.¹

Although this program did not always fall into the area of news, it dealt with news making personalities often enough to warrant its consideration in this thesis. Persons interviewed on "Look Here" during the last four months of 1957 included John Foster Dulles; comedian Abe Burrows; Fulgencio Batista, President of Cuba; Howard Fast, American novelist who once belonged to the Communist Party; Reverend Martin Luther King, leader of the boycott of once-segregated busses in Montgomery, Alabama; William O. Douglas, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court; Honorable Lester B. Pearson, Nobel Peace Prize winner and former Secretary of State for External Affairs in Canada; John Kennedy, United States Senator from Massachusetts.²

The tendency toward news-in-depth programs continued during this period. On July 23, 1957, the National Broadcasting Company presented an irregularly scheduled debate series entitled "The Big Issue."³ Like most of the other programs mentioned in this chapter, "The Big Issue"

¹Ibid. ²Ibid. ³Ibid.

was a sustaining program. This program was only presented at various days and times when the issue warranted debate. The first program in this irregular series, moderated by Lawrence Spivak, dealt with the Civil Rights Bill. The format of this program was such that it offered the first half-hour for debate on the subject under consideration, and the final half-hour for questions from a panel composed of journalists. ¹

In the program on the Civil Rights Bill, the participants in the debate were Senators Paul H. Douglas (D-Ill.), and Jacob K. Javits (R-N. Y.), who were for the passage of the bill; and Senators Richard B. Russell (D-Ga.), and John L. McClellan (D-Ark.), who were against the passage of the bill. The newsmen who questioned the participants during the second half-hour were May Craig of the Portland Press Herald, Frank Van Der Linden of the Nashville Banner, William H. Lawrence of The New York Times, and Jack Bell of the Associated Press. ²

The two subsequent programs in 1957 were cut to thirty-minutes in length. On September 10, 1957, "The Big Issue" dealt with Juvenile Delinquency, and on September 17, 1957 the subject under discussion was Inflation. ³

Finally, the last sustaining discussion-type network

¹Ibid. ²Ibid. ³Ibid.

news program to appear between the years 1954 and 1957 was the "NBC News Hotseat." Although this program appeared for only one week, this writer feels that the scope of the news coverage it offered warrants its mention in this thesis.

"NBC News Hotseat" featured seven of the National Broadcasting Company's top foreign correspondents, who had returned to America for a brief stay. On each of the seven days that this program appeared a different correspondent was in the "Hotseat" and three of the other correspondents questioned him on events in his area of specialty. The first in this series of programs appeared on December 30, 1957.¹

Irving R. Levine, the National Broadcasting Company's Moscow correspondent, was interviewed by Welles Hangen, Middle East correspondent, James Robinson, Far East correspondent, and Frank Bourghaltzer, Central European correspondent. In his concluding remarks on this program, Levine said that Nikita Khrushchev might be out of power in 1958 due to ill health and his antagonizing tactics.²

On December 31, 1957, Leif Eid, the National Broadcasting Company's Paris correspondent, was questioned by Welles Hangen, James Robinson, and Edwin Newman, Mediterranean correspondent. Eid spoke mainly on the France-Algeria dispute.³ The other correspondents who were interviewed on this special news program were Joseph C.

¹Ibid. ²Ibid. ³Ibid.

Harsch, the National Broadcasting Company's European correspondent, James Robinson, Frank Bourghaltzer, Edwin Newman and Welles Hangen.¹

Studio news programs of a new type began to appear. In February, 1954, the American Broadcasting Company gave Elmer Davis a news commentary program on a sustaining basis.² One critic wrote of this program:

Mr. Davis does not just read out bulletins. He has thought, and thought again, about every bit of information he is passing along, and he couches his thoughts in a style that is lean and strong.³

On October 29, 1956, a new program, "NBC News," replaced the "Camel News Caravan," which had been on the air since February 16, 1948.⁴ "NBC News" tried to break away from the precedent of excessive newsreel film, which was established by the "Camel News Caravan."

This program will mark a departure in format and method from previous news shows. Huntley will present his portion of news from New York, while Brinkley reports from Washington, and occasionally from another city where major news is being made. A newly designed setting, from which the New York portion of the program will originate, has been designed around a giant relief globe of the world measuring six feet in diameter. Created by the nation's top artists, geologists and cartographers,

¹Ibid.

²Hamburger, The New Yorker, XXX (February 27, 1954), 87.

³Ibid., p. 88.

⁴National Broadcasting Company Program Analysis Files, 1956.

and costing several thousand dollars, the "Geophysical Globe" is considered the most accurate relief globe in existence. It is used to illustrate visually the geographical relationships of news sources. Commentary from New York and Washington is supplemented by filmed news stories from each of the two cities, as well as from other major cities where the news is happening, such as Hollywood, Chicago, Philadelphia, New Orleans, etc.¹

The relief globe that was especially designed for this program was used for only a few weeks and then discontinued.²

On November 11, 1956, the Columbia Broadcasting System began a studio news program entitled "Walter Cronkite and the News."³ This program, like the other studio news programs on the Columbia Broadcasting System, reflected the philosophy of the network to emphasize factual news. The emphasis on production and information without editorialization was earlier emphasized by John F. Day, Director of News at the Columbia Broadcasting System, when he said:

While recognizing that most people today regard television as an entertainment medium, electronic journalism must not forget that this is a convenient assumption, not an unalterable law of the universe, or even a proved fact. While conceding that news must be presented interestingly if it is to compete and hold an audience, newsmen must not succumb to sensationalism. Just as it is true that a good newspaper doesn't have to be dull, television news can inform with liveliness and vividness. The point is that it must not forget that its primary

¹Ibid. ²Ibid.

³Columbia Broadcasting System Program Analysis Files, 1956.

purpose is to INFORM.¹

The number of new news programs that appeared between the years 1954 and 1957 indicate that television was undergoing a change in its attitude toward news programs. The National Broadcasting Company appeared to be emphasizing news-in-depth, while the Columbia Broadcasting System attempted to offer a complete news coverage. The change is best described in the words of John F. Day:

I am a strong advocate of the complete news report. I believe that television is a basic medium for conveying information and adding to human knowledge. If we don't use it in this way, we will abdicate all claims to its being a basic news medium. I think we MUST not become obsessed with the pictorial and the merely entertaining at the expense of the meaningful. We must find ways to present news stories more effectively.²

¹John F. Day, "TV News: Reporting or Performing?," Nieman Reports, X (April, 1956), 4.

²Ibid., p. 5.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Network news programs on television can be broken down into three distinct categories, each of which serves a different audience. These three categories are: (1) the studio news program; (2) the panel news program; and (3) the live remote program. From the investigation conducted for this thesis, the following conclusions can be drawn about each program category:

1. The people who report news on studio news programs have the problem of including a great deal of news material in a brief time period. Early in their existence, newscasters on studio news programs tended to use excessive amounts of film in order to maintain a visual appeal for their audience. Although film is still used to a great extent, it is no longer depended upon so heavily. Visual appeal is now achieved through staging and sets. The amount of editorialization done on these programs is negligible. This is due to the fact that sponsors of television news programs are afraid that they will lose a segment of their audience if an opinion expressed by the newscaster is unpopular. Some guilt must also fall on the network. Policies against editorialization convert highly

skilled newsmen into announcers who read headlines with a smile. It can be concluded that reporting on the studio news programs lacks courage, depth, and, quite often, pertinent information.

2. The panel news program has been an outgrowth of the need for news in depth on television. Since most of these programs are without a sponsor, there is a greater latitude of material covered on them. Further, because panel news programs are generally of a spontaneous nature, neither the host nor the networks can control the replies to questions. This makes the program vibrant and vital. Discussions range from areas of great controversy to less controversial but equally immediate topics. The fact that the many panel news programs remain on the air on a sustaining basis indicates that the networks are not blind to the needs of television news. Considering the high cost of network programming and the number of sustaining panel news programs on the air further indicates that the networks are prepared to expend both financial and creative resources in the public interest.

3. The live remote program contributes a valuable service to the American public because it presents events of a political nature directly to them. The experience that the viewer has in seeing a political convention live on television is almost participation. After the early remote

broadcasts, which were clumsy, the networks developed considerable dexterity in the presentation of these programs. The remote presentation of political events has changed the character of the seeker of political office. Because the television camera shows the man as he speaks, it becomes difficult for him to conceal the real emotions that lie behind his words. Finally, the remote presentation of political events has contributed to the knowledge of the public of such events. The floor of a convention hall has become enlarged to include all of the United States, and has become available to millions of people who otherwise would never have the opportunity to participate in the event.

Before any conclusions can be drawn about television news in general, this writer must make one final point. Because of the tensions that have existed in the world since the conclusion of World War II, the American public has developed a need and a desire for an abundance of news. It becomes the responsibility of the various news disseminating media to meet this need because they are the most qualified to sift facts from rumors, and to make lucid commentary based on knowledge and experience. Television has both the audience and the visual impact to perform as a news agency of the first rank. However, the unfortunate situation exists that the most popular television news programs, the

studio news programs, relate news events in terms of their visual appeal to the extent that they do not give the kind of coverage that is conducive to an enlightened public. The lack of commentary on these programs stifles political debate among the great mass of the public and can only lead to general apathy.

Therefore, considering network news programs in the light of their present standing, it can only be concluded that a great chasm still exists between the efforts of the networks and the needs of the American public. There is a need for television news presentation that will be both informative and comprehensive in its scope, and universal in its acceptance by the audience which it seeks to serve.

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