

PROBLEMS, PRACTICES, AND POLICIES OF PUBLIC
AFFAIRS PROGRAMMING AT KMOX - TV
ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

THESIS FOR THE DEGREE OF M. A.

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ABSTRACT

PROBLEMS, PRACTICES, AND POLICIES OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROGRAMMING AT KMOX-TV, ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

by Gerald Kenneth Bates

Addressing the National Association of Broadcasters in 1961, former Federal Communications Commission Chairman Newton Minow referred to television offerings as a "vast wasteland." One aspect of this wasteland was, and is, a dearth of high quality public affairs programming on the local level. The reluctance of broadcasters to program such material is based on what they suppose to be economic facts of the medium: these programs are expensive; they cannot compete with entertainment in attracting an audience; consequently they cannot attract sponsors; therefore, they are barren of profit.

Yet even before Minow's speech, some stations had been turning out good public affairs programs regularly and finding them profitable. KMOX-TV, Channel Four in St. Louis, contends this can be done consistently.

This study seeks evidence to support KMOX-TV's contention. An examination of audience surveys and local sponsor reaction to the station's public affairs offerings indicates that these have enjoyed substantial audiences in the face of national competition, have helped to create respect for the station as a responsible member of its

community, and have consequently attracted strong sponsor support both for themselves and the station as a whole. Financial loss from public affairs programming, then, does not appear to be inevitable.

Hypothesizing that KMOX-TV's success in this area may be due in significant measure to the policies and practices which govern its public affairs programming and production operations, the study examines these operations by means of direct observation and through interviews with staff members both of the station and of cooperating community organizations. Thereby a number of guidelines have been derived for the suggested use of other local stations and community organizations which may be encouraged to follow KMOX-TV's example.

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AFFAIRS PROGRAMMING AT KMOX-TV,
ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

By

Gerald Kenneth Bates

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of Study

This study proposes to analyze the problems, practices, and policies related to the public affairs program at KMOX-TV, St. Louis, Missouri, which is Owned by CBS, Inc., and Operated by CBS Television Stations Division. From such an analysis, the author hopes to construct a guide to aid production of meaningful television public affairs programming at the local level.

KMOX-TV was chosen as the primary source for this study for three basic reasons: (1) KMOX-TV has won national recognition for its outstanding leadership in public affairs programming, (2) both the station's general manager and its director of public affairs are driving forces in behalf of public affairs programming, and (3) audience measurement services report that KMOX-TV attracts the largest share of the television audience in the St. Louis area.

The term "meaningful," as used in the preceding statement of purpose, denotes a public affairs program which is sufficiently attractive and forceful to motivate interest in the program subject and to provide action by the audience if such action is suggested on the program. Or, to put it

another way, without the abilities to attract and motivate a specified audience, to what extent can one say a public affairs program has meaning? Similarly, producers of public affairs programs who do not motivate their intended audiences in a useful manner waste the audience's and the television station's time and efforts. "Meaningful" public affairs programs are worth the time and effort of the station, and especially of the audience.

Defining Public Affairs

There is a problem in defining the term "public affairs" because it is used in many ways within the broadcasting industry. To further complicate the matter, the terms "public affairs" and "public service" are often used interchangeably by some broadcasters.

"Public service," the more generally accepted term, is used to describe a very broad and ill-defined area of programming. Sydney Head notes this confusion when he describes public service programming as sometimes including all "non-entertainment programs," sometimes all "non-commercial programs," or some of both groups.¹

Judith Waller suggests that the term "public service" was coined to avoid reference to the word "education" which was thought to be "a little austere and does

¹Sydney Head, Broadcasting in America (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1956), p. 337.

not connote a type of program which might be amusing, entertaining, or easy to listen to."²

Chester and Garrison attempted to classify certain program types under the title, "public service programming." Their list was as follows: (1) special events, (2) news and commentary, (3) talks and interviews, (4) forums and discussions, (5) documentaries, (6) religious programs, (7) women's programs, (8) farm programs, (9) children's programs, (10) school broadcasts, and (11) public service announcements.³

Such classifications, however, are not confirmed by any official governmental authority. The Federal Communications Commission does not define "public affairs," or "public service" programming as a distinct type. Their breakdown on application forms for construction permits and license renewals calls for:

1. Entertainment (this includes programs intended primarily as entertainment, such as music, drama, variety, comedy, quiz, breakfast, children's, etc.)
2. Religious (this includes all sermons, religious news, music, and drama, etc.)
3. Agricultural (this includes programs containing farm or market reports or other information specifically addressed to the agricultural population)

²Judith C. Waller, The Fifth Estate (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1950), p. 133.

³Giraud Chester and Garnet R. Garrison, Radio and Television (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1950), p. 57.

4. Educational (programs prepared by or in behalf of educational organizations)
5. News (this includes news reports and commentaries)
6. Discussion (this includes forum, panel and round-table programs)
7. Talks (this includes all conversational programs which do not fall under previous titles, and sports)
8. Miscellaneous.⁴

✓ The British Broadcasting Corporation has quite another definition. The BBC uses "public service broadcasting" to describe its entire system as contrasted to American "commercial broadcasting." The BBC reasons that the government is motivated only by service to the public as opposed to the advertiser. This concept, therefore, embraces entertainment as a part of public service broadcasting.

Prevalent American usage, as we have seen, tends to eliminate pure entertainment programs as a public service type. In fact, a comparison of the FCC list with the one formed by Chester and Garrison would give us the impression that nearly all programs except those falling under the "entertainment" heading would be considered a public service program. Some broadcasters go further and call any program a public service. ✓

⁴See Federal Communications Commission, Form 301, Application for Authority to Construct a New Broadcast Station or Make Changes in an Existing Broadcast Station, sec. IV (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1957). ✓

In a somewhat less than formal release called Public Service Responsibility of Broadcast Licensees, the FCC was more specific in outlining standards for minimum public service activities of broadcasters. Though the following excerpt from that paper does not attempt to define public service programming, it does charge stations with carrying sustaining as well as commercial programs, and expects stations to:

. . . perform a five fold function in (a) maintaining an over-all program balance, (b) providing time for programs inappropriate for sponsorship, (c) providing time for programs serving particular minority tastes and interests, (d) providing time for non-profit organizations--religious, civic, agricultural, labor, educational, etc., and (e) providing time for experiment and for unfettered artistic self-expression.⁵

KMOX-TV's Director of Public Affairs, Parker Wheatley, chooses the broad definition: "programming of an educational or informative nature as opposed to 'straight news.'" "Public affairs" is chosen over "public service" for several reasons. To begin with, the Columbia Broadcasting System and its Network use the former term to describe similar programs. Secondly, "public service" includes services beyond programs such as spot announcements, general programs without regard to any particular timeliness or purpose. "Public affairs," on the other hand, Wheatley states, is "programming with purpose and design."

⁵U.S., Federal Communications Commission, Public Service Responsibility of Broadcast Licensees (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, March 7, 1946), p. 55.



Working Definition

For the purpose of this paper, public affairs will include informative, educational, religious, or cultural programs not including news reporting or commentary. /

Public Affairs Programming Concerns
Television Broadcasters

The varied attempts at defining public service or public affairs programming reflect the broadcasters' concern for understanding this area. Some broadcasters take the responsibility for programming public affairs upon themselves. The degree of responsibility taken is usually revealed in the extent and caliber of each station's programming. When that responsibility appears to be lacking, there are a number of pressures in our society which will come to bear on the broadcaster and which are intended to insure that he take a more acute interest in that responsibility. There are (1) the pressures of Congress threatening to introduce new legislation to force the broadcaster to take account of this area; (2) the attitudes and actions of the Federal Communications Commission and general support of these actions by the courts; (3) the force of public opinion; and (4) the traditions and attitudes of groups within the broadcasting industry itself.

Pressures of Congress on Broadcasters

Since the emergence of broadcasting, many government officials and opinion leaders who have studied the problems

of broadcasting in America have felt that informative, educational and cultural programs are valuable in maintaining our nation's advance to a better life; that broadcasting should serve as a medium for free speech; and that broadcasting should serve local needs. These advocates have hoped that programs which we now label "public service" or "public affairs" would fulfill that need.

The Congress of the United States laid the basis of permanent government interest in broadcasting by passing the Radio Act of 1927. Though primarily concerned with jammed airwaves, the Radio Act suggested certain principles of public service. It established that the radio waves belong to the people. It also held that broadcasting was a unique service because of the necessarily limited access to the airwaves, and it therefore required equally unique regulation. Licenses, the Act stated, were to be issued in the public interest, convenience, and necessity.

Broadcasting abuses outside the jurisdiction of the 1927 Act prompted Congress to pass The Communications Act of 1934. In essence, the new legislation was based on the principles of the earlier Radio Act. It retained the direction that licenses would be issued to persons as required by "public convenience, interest, or necessity;⁶ and it also authorized control over the use of the broadcast channels

⁶U.S. Code, Title 47, c. 5, subc. iii, sec. 303.

which are licensed "for limited periods of time."⁷ Furthermore, the Federal Communications Commission was created by this act and was given the duty to "generally encourage the larger and more effective use of radio in the public interest."⁸

These two acts established guideposts for the Federal Communications Commission's rulings and the assignment of broadcast frequencies. A number of attempts have been made to pass legislation to remedy alleged deficiencies in the Act, but broadcasters have effectively prevented most such proposals by voicing their fear that new legislation would ultimately lead to government censorship. On the other hand, congressional consideration of new laws to enforce minimum broadcasting standards in the public interest have often stimulated broadcasters to strengthen and improve their programming in the areas of information, education, and enlightenment.

The subsequent interpretation and application of the Act of 1934 has become the dominant single pressure for public service programming in this country. Shortly after the establishment of the Federal Communications Commission, that body began a number of attempts to prod broadcasters into giving an adequate public service.

⁷Ibid., sec. 301.

⁸Ibid., sec. 303g.

Acting in the name of "the public interest," the FCC charged numerous broadcasters with failure to maintain the public trust through their stressing financial gain above service to the public. Revocation or refusal to renew broadcasters' licenses was threatened. Theoretically at least, unless corrective action was taken by the licensee, the case could be taken to the courts. The practice of revoking or refusing a license renewal was most unusual, however, and abuses continued.

A number of congressmen in early 1939 subsequently expressed a dissatisfaction with the progress of the FCC in bringing about higher standards of programming. These congressmen were of the opinion that the Commission was not forceful enough to insure that broadcasters fulfill their obligation and proposals of public service programming. On the other hand, there were complaints about the vague wording of the laws concerning public service programming requirements.

Pricked by charges of the congressmen and broadcasters, the FCC began a serious study in order to establish more specific criteria governing the programming services of broadcasters.⁹ The Commission hoped that its suggestions

⁹See U.S., Federal Communications Commission, Committee Report on Proposed Rules Governing Standard Broadcast Stations and Standards of Good Engineering Practice, Docket No. 5072-A (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, April 1, 1939), p. 30.

might be enough to prevent broadcasters from using the public channels solely for their own financial interest, and to clarify broadcasters' responsibilities in the public service area. Issuance of such a guide was not to be available until after the Second World War, however.

The problem facing the Commission was not a new one. Concern in this area was evident in a 1931 decision of the Federal Radio Commission, the administrative body set up under the Radio Act of 1927, which stated that:

while it is expected that a licensee of a . . . broadcasting station will receive some remuneration for serving the public with . . . programs, at the same time the interest of the listening public is paramount, and may not be subordinated to the interests of the station licensee. A license to operate a radio broadcasting station is a franchise from the public, and the licensee is a trustee for the public.¹⁰

But 1939 passed, as had 1931, without definitive legislation.

In the early forties, numerous complaints from the general public were forwarded to the FCC. The complaints charged that broadcasters failed to operate in the public interest; gave little or no broadcast time to local live talent and community organizations; presented too few religious, educational, and cultural programs; and that discussion and talk programs dealing with local issues were seldom heard, and if they were, they were often unfair and biased.

¹⁰KFKB Broadcasting Association, Inc. v. Federal Radio Commission, 47 F. (2d) 670.



Spurred by public complaints, the FCC planned a more detailed review of license renewals in April, 1945.¹¹ The Commission requested that broadcasters list their operations in programming entertainment, religious, agricultural, educational, news, discussion, talks, and miscellaneous programs by percentage of total broadcast time. A report on the percentage of commercially sponsored and sustaining programs was also requested. With this information, the Commission hoped to have a guide to determine each station's comparative service to the public. But this information did not in itself lead to any revocation of licenses that year, even though there were some obvious cases of failure in public service programming.

The following year, 1946, the much publicized report Public Service Responsibility of Broadcast Licensees detailed the Commission's philosophy on programming. The "Blue Book," as it was more popularly called, was greeted by the industry, press, and public with mixed reactions ranging from the familiar cry of "censorship" to the "most significant milestone in the entire history of radio regulation."¹²

It has been suggested that this informal publication was issued to "avoid the connotation of inflexibility

¹¹U.S., Federal Communications Commission, Public Service Responsibility . . ., p. 3.

¹²Llewellyn White, The American Radio (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947), p. 184.

generally associated with rules."¹³ The report emphasized the need for balanced programming consisting of (1) sustaining programs, (2) local live programs, (3) discussions of public issues, and (4) an end to advertising excesses.¹⁴

While the report was to help guide broadcasters in more nearly meeting their obligations to the public, it also served as a warning that changes were in order if broadcasters neglecting their obligations wished to retain their licenses. But again no licenses were refused on grounds of programming at the time of renewal hearing. However, some renewals have been delayed, and some requests for a change in operation have been denied in competitive hearings for an allocation sought by a more public service minded broadcaster.¹⁵

The biggest shock to broadcasters was the "vast wasteland" characterization of television in 1961 by the then FCC Chairman Newton Minow. His speech served as a battle cry to seek judgment of a broadcaster's performance in carrying out his programming promises made when his license was granted. An analysis was also to be made of program balance.

¹³Herbert H. Rosenberg, "Program Content--A Criterion of Public Interest in FCC Listening," Western Political Quarterly, II (September, 1949), 385.

¹⁴U.S., Federal Communications Commission, Public Service Responsibility . . ., p. 55.

¹⁵Chester and Garrison, p. 122.

The boldness of the statement took broadcasters aback momentarily. Then the oft-repeated barb of "censorship" was hurled at the FCC by some, while others tended to move with the spirit of the request on their own. More activity was stirred up in the National Association of Broadcasters and a great public relations program under the Television Information Office was undertaken to "show the public" that broadcasters were meeting their obligations. The pressure persists.

Courts Support of FCC as Pressure

Three typical cases brought before the United States Court of Appeals demonstrate that court's support of the Federal Communications Commission's right to demand and expect public service programming from a broadcaster. These cases also illustrate the advantages a public service minded broadcaster holds over competitors in hearings for broadcast allocations.

In the Bay State Beacon case, the court supported the Commission's contention that stations should attempt to achieve an over-all balance of programs, and that sustaining programs are a part of this over-all balance. The Commission held a hearing on mutually exclusive applications for a radio construction permit in Brockton, Massachusetts. While Bay State Beacon, Incorporated, had proposed limiting its commercial programs to a maximum of 80 per cent of the total broadcast time, and another 15 per cent on

"institutional" sponsorship for half-rates, the competing Cur-Nan Company proposed a total commercial limitation of 60 per cent. Largely on the basis of the proposed program service, the Commission held that the Cur-Nan Company would be able to more fully serve the public interest by devoting at least twice as much time to sustaining programs toward the achievement of an over-all balance of programs.¹⁶

In the case involving the Kentucky Broadcasting Corporation, Incorporated, the same court supported the Commission's assertion that public service connotes time devoted to local sustaining programs of a cultural and controversial type. This corporation had applied for a construction permit involved in a request for a change in frequency. The application was turned down largely on the grounds that the station had carried only a few local sustaining programs in the past, even though it had carried a large number of network sustaining programs. The FCC reported that in an analysis of a typical week, the Kentucky Broadcasting Corporation had carried only one five-minute daily local sustaining broadcast between the hours of 6:00 A.M. and 6:00 P.M., Monday through Friday. In addition, the record was completely barren of

live sustaining programs designed to develop local talent and local programming in the fields of music, drama, and speech. The record is also barren as to

¹⁶Bay State Beacon v. Federal Communications Commission, App. D.C., 171 F. (2d) 826.

roundtable or forum types of local broadcasts concerning controversial local issues of public importance.¹⁷

Not only may the Commission expect local sustaining programs of controversy, but it may expect an "affirmative effort . . . to encourage broadcasts of forums or discussion groups dealing with controversial issues," declared the court in the Johnston Broadcasting Company case. The court mentioned specifically "controversial issues or topics of current interest to the community, such as education, labor, and civic enterprises."¹⁸

Public Opinion as Pressure

The pressure of public opinion may be either direct or indirect. There have been times when an irate mother's phone call to a broadcaster has influenced a station's programming. Most generally, however, public opinion is indirect and slow working.

Public opinion comes from a wide range of civic, social, educational, cultural and economic organizations as well as individuals. The opinions vary in their directness, emphasis, and effectiveness. This wide diversification of often conflicting opinions tends to confuse many broadcasters since many groups may claim to have the proper criteria

¹⁷Kentucky Broadcasting Co. v. Federal Communications Commission, App. D.C., 174 F. (2d) 38.

¹⁸Johnston Broadcasting Co. v. Federal Communications Commission, App. D.C., 174 F. (2d) 359.

for balanced programming. Suggestions for proper criteria are often set forth in speeches, group publications, general magazines, books, letters to broadcasters, letters to the local newspaper editor, letters to sponsors, petitions, resolutions, special meetings and discussions of citizen groups, public opinion polls, and everyday conversation.

Perhaps the most spectacular showing of public opinion grew out of the quiz and "payola" scandals of 1959. That pressure, along with threats from Congress, produced a long parade of witnesses in a hearing before the FCC in December, 1959.¹⁹ Witnesses represented perhaps the largest group of organizations outside of the broadcast industry to be heard by the Commission in its then twenty-five year history.

The criticism which came out of the hearings concerning the programming activities by some stations was a jolt to the industry. There was a genuine fear that government regulation of broadcasting might possibly go beyond that which many broadcasters would feel is reasonable and fair. Many broadcasters responded with greater emphasis on public service programming.

¹⁹See Broadcasting Magazine beginning with December 7, 1959 and following issues.

Broadcasters' Responses to Pressures

Broadcasters' responses to government pressures and public opinion have been both reactionary and co-operative. In 1946, many broadcasters rallied around the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) to find the answer to their problems. Some individual broadcasters who were not satisfied with the NAB's services struck out to find their own answers on what to do about the demands for public service.

Following the release of the "Blue Book," the members of the NAB gathered their forces to strike at anything they felt would tend to control programming.

NAB Resistance to FCC Review of Programming

The "Blue Book's" explicitness concerning programming frightened a number of broadcasters into the belief that the FCC would attempt to control programming through its authority to license stations. The NAB, therefore, lobbied for an amendment to the Communications Act of 1934 forbidding any such control by the FCC.²⁰ A spokesman before a hearing of a Senate Subcommittee in 1947 argued that FCC review of a station's past programs was unnecessary, unwise, and legally unjustifiable. Economic incentives, he asserted, as modified by the broadcasters' own evaluation

²⁰U.S., Congress, Senate, Subcommittee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, Hearings on S. 1333, To Amend the Communications Act of 1934, 80th Cong., 1st Sess., 1947. See pp. 302-309.

of public opinion provides a sufficient control over the program service.²¹

The NAB-backed amendment was defeated. Senator Wallace H. White, chairman of the committee studying the plea, summed up the subcommittee's attitude on the FCC's right to review programming:

I just do not see how there can be any judgment as to whether a station is serving a public interest or not unless there is a chance to review and view the programs which a station has been passing out. . . .²²

Subsequent court cases supported the FCC's right to review past programming in determining the qualifications of a licensee.

Self-legislation through the NAB Code

With the avenues and adherents of resistance to government pressures on programming cut off, broadcasters in the NAB decided to strengthen their own position through a show of self-regulation. They hoped to demonstrate that new legislation was not needed to insure adequate public service programming.

In 1948, the NAB adopted a newly revised code to curb those stations whose primary aim was to turn a profit, even at the expense of their broadcast service to the

²¹See Lyman Bryson, "Other Points of View," Time for Reason about Radio (New York: George W. Stewart, Publisher, Inc., 1948), for a discussion with Charles Seipmann on the stand of the industry toward FCC regulations.

²²U.S., Congress, Senate, Subcommittee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, p. 409.

public. The NAB majority felt then, and still feels, that these stations could permanently damage the freedom of the industry by provoking government legislation on all broadcasters. NAB President LeRoy Collins stated at a 1963 management conference that the organization planned to project and enforce the code. It is the hope of the NAB that effective discipline from within the industry would curb restrictive demands originating from outside the industry.

The NAB later expanded its 1948 Code to serve as a guide for the television industry. The Television Code of the National Association of Broadcasters contains the expression that television broadcasters

(a) Should be thoroughly conversant with the educational and cultural needs and desires of the community served.

(b) Should affirmatively seek out responsible and accountable educational and cultural institutions of the community with a view toward providing opportunities for the instruction and enlightenment of the viewers.

(c) Should provide for reasonable experimentation in the development of programs specifically directed to the advancement of the community's culture and education.

The Code also expresses the need for community responsibility, controversial public issues, and religious programs as a normal part of service.²³

Llewellyn White observed that "except for the efforts of NAB . . . self-regulation in the broadcasting

²³National Association of Broadcasters, The Television Code of the National Association of Broadcasters (Washington: The Association, 1959). See subheading "Advancement of Education and Culture."

industry has been a matter for the consciences of individual broadcasters."²⁴ Unfortunately, some individual broadcasters were unwilling to move in the spirit of either the FCC recommendations or the NAB code.

Why Some Broadcasters Continue to Evade
Their Public Service Responsibilities

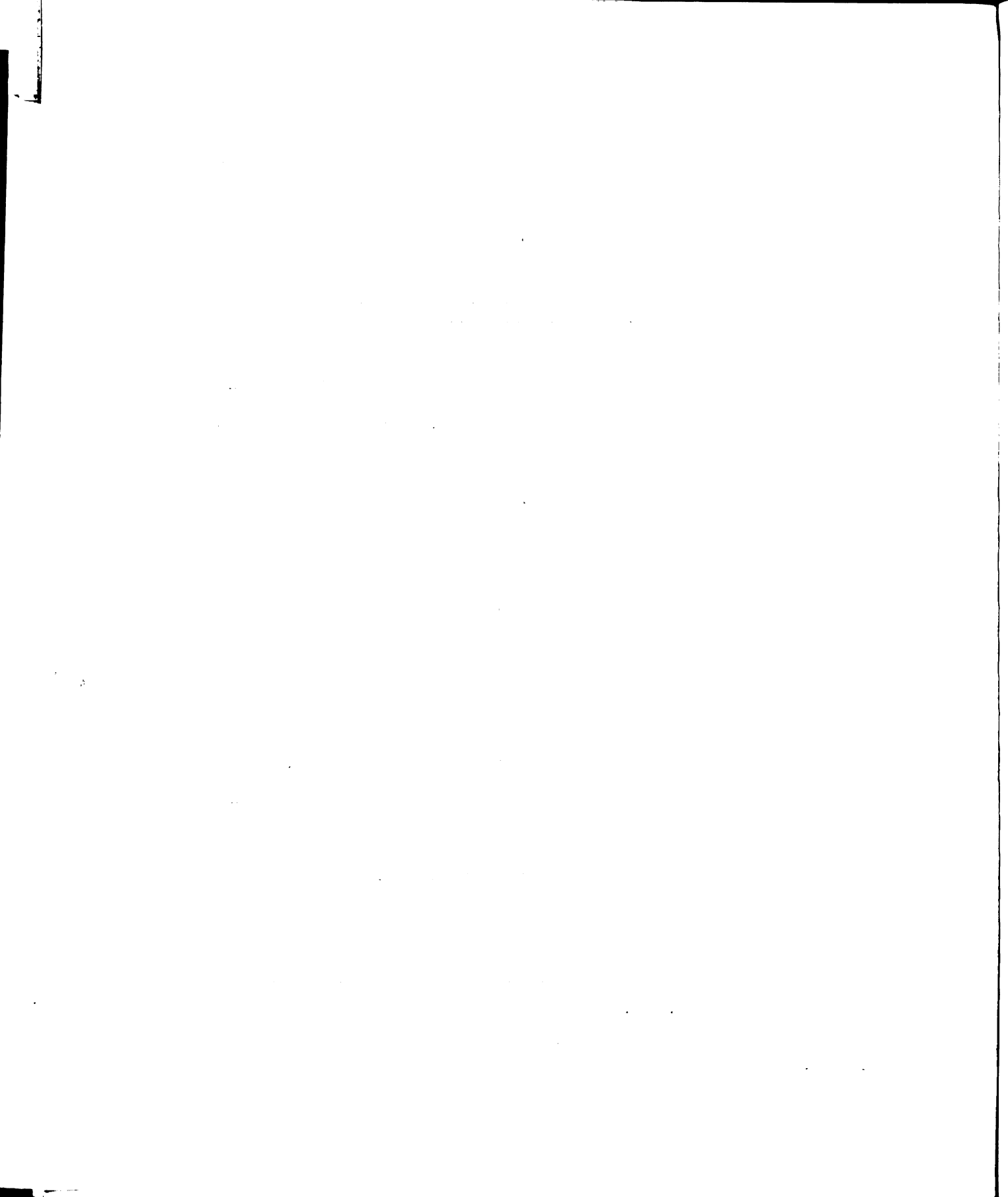
Some of those broadcasters who did not follow the industry code found a number of ways to hedge on their obligations as outlined in the "Blue Book." These broadcasters attempted to rationalize their neglect of public service programming in a number of ways.

Argument 1: Large Audiences Mean
Public Interest

Niles Trammell, former NBC President, stated before an NAB Convention in 1946 that "the broadcasting of any program which a substantial proportion of the available audience wants to listen to at the time it goes on the air is an example of broadcasting in the public interest."²⁵ Conversely, according to a few who follow this line of argument, a program must demonstrate a large audience tune-in to prove it is in the public interest at all. In essence, each member of the audience is casting his vote for his interest. Programs attracting few voters should give way

²⁴White, p. 88.

²⁵"The Revolt against Radio," Fortune, March 1947, p. 103.



to a more popular program. Thus, the broadcaster need only give the public what the majority of the public wants. The thought of programming for community welfare or public inspiration does not seem to be of concern to such adherents.

Argument 2: Public Service Programs Do
Not Attract Sponsors

Public service programs seldom draw large audiences, the argument goes; and without large audiences, sponsors stay away. Advertisers feel that to get the greatest value from their dollar investments, they must have their advertising messages exposed to the greatest number of people at minimum cost. Station management, for that reason, tends to cater to those programs which are the most popular and which most generally are entertainment programs. To carry programs without a chance of sponsorship is poor business.

Carried to the extreme, these broadcasters appear to have presupposed that their sole function is to bring in the highest possible revenue without regard to responsibility other than the letter of the law.

Argument 3: Public Service Programs
Diminish Audiences from Other
Programs

The principle of audience carry-over maintains that the size of the audience of one program is partly determined by the size of the audience of the programs preceding and following that program. Therefore, a public service program which appeals to a relatively small group or share of

audience will affect the size of adjacent offerings. Those sponsoring a program adjacent to a public service program may feel that their message would reach many more viewers if they followed or even preceded a program with more popular appeal. Those sponsors may then exert pressures of their own upon the broadcaster. Faced with the alternative of losing a sponsor, the broadcaster may relegate public service programming to time slots where they will not interfere with commercial programs. The broadcaster might even go so far as to cancel certain public affairs programs completely.

Argument 4: Broadcasters Cannot Afford Sustaining Programs

Public service programs, just like commercial programs, require an expenditure of money and effort from a station. If the program is sustaining, there is no remuneration and the station must carry the entire cost.

A televised public service program normally requires the standard facilities and crews used in commercial programs. There is no doubt that the cost of such programming is heavy and must be made up by the sale of commercial time.

Some small market television stations just do not have the facilities, personnel, nor supporting revenue to provide the same well-produced public service programming as those stations in the larger market areas. But a lack

of slickness in a production is one thing, a lack of public service programming altogether is quite another thing.

These four arguments are overly used by some broadcasters to escape the heavy cost of public service programming. They do not find it difficult to indicate on FCC reports a greater program output and significance in this area than actually exists. Thus, they may lower expenses while avoiding their obligation and at the same time seem to provide it by FCC standards.

Besides the four arguments just mentioned, some broadcasters may hedge on public affairs programming because they are quite confident that little, if any, consequence will befall them if they do.

FCC Seldom Takes Action on Hedging

The immediate monetary profits through excessive commercialism appear to make the gamble of government or public reproach worthwhile.

Seldom have licenses been revoked solely on the grounds of the station's programming. The decision by the Chairman of the FCC in 1944 indicates the Commission's reluctance to take such a drastic action as revocation:

. . . we go through long hearings, but when you get right down to it the penalty is so severe that the Commission is not inclined to do anything about it. The upshot of it is that ultimately they try to get the thing straightened out and let it go right ahead, and

I don't know whether that is a healthy thing.²⁶

A more effective weapon was introduced in 1952. An amendment to the Communications Act gave the Commission power to issue a "cease and desist" order to violating licensees. It was effective simply because it was not so severe and could be more easily applied to smaller infractions of the licensee. But at the same time, it had little meaning other than official rebuke which could readily be ignored by the worst offenders after that single deficiency had been corrected. A promise to do better the next time usually has been sufficient to receive a grant of renewal from the Commission.

There is uncertainty as to just what changes will be made since Minow's "Vast Wasteland" speech, his retirement from office, and the recent installation of E. William Henry as FCC Chairman.

The NAB Is Weaker Still

The NAB, of course, can do nothing about those stations which do not subscribe to the NAB's Television Code. It can do little more against subscribers who violate its principles.

Withdrawal of the Association's Seal of Approval from the subscribing station is the only weapon available

²⁶U.S., Congress, Senate, Senate Committee on Interstate Commerce, Hearings on S. 814, To Amend the Communications Act of 1934, 78th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1944, p. 933.

to the NAB. Such action, however, is little noted outside the industry itself, and therefore does little damage to the station's business reputation. Consequently, many broadcasters are not above ignoring the Code, nor are they reluctant to withdraw as a subscriber to the Code if it should interfere with the station's business.

In June, 1959, for example, eighty-four Television Code subscribers were in violation of the Code by carrying advertising for a hemorrhoidal remedy which was considered to be in bad taste. Within two weeks of an NAB announcement that it would enforce its Code, thirty-eight of those eighty-four subscribers (45 per cent) found continued business in violation of the Code far more rewarding than their concern for NAB standards.²⁷ The NAB Code was effective only if its subscribers chose it to be so.

Very often, the only apparent loss to the punished offender was the removal of the Seal's image from the television screen at sign-on and sign-off. The FCC has recognized one factor of the ineffectiveness of the NAB censure and raised the question: "How can the Code be effective if violators are not made public?"

²⁷Meyer Weinberg, TV in America (New York: Ballantine Books, 1962), p. 93.

Minimizing Public Service
Programming Costs

A few broadcasters who consider public service programs a nuisance, concentrate on ways and means to minimize the cost of this nuisance while squeezing all the publicity they can out of offerings they do have. These public services are usually limited to announcements and flamboyant publicity gimmicks.

This is not to suggest that cutting costs or taking advantage of possible publicity is wrong, but it is suggested that extreme efforts in this direction tend to lessen the service value to the community of any public affairs program.

A second device for minimizing costs in this area is to pawn off as public affairs programs, in reports to the FCC, programs which would fall more properly into another category.

The avoidance of locally produced public service programming is a third technique used by some stations. Costs are minimized by programming ready-made materials. Free films, for example, are imported whenever possible without regard to their value to the local community. These films cut down the broadcasters' own production costs while satisfying FCC requirements for at least a minimum percentage of public service programming in the total broadcast time.

A fourth device is widely used. Expenses can be minimized and profits maximized by relegating public affairs programs to time slots which are not commercially desirable. Sell as much time as you can, the theory goes, and then schedule a few films and some talk in the spots you can't sell. These program spots tend to be at times when any audience would be small.

These are only a few techniques used to reduce public service costs while maintaining at least minimum percentages of broadcast time defended as public service programming to the FCC.

Television Leadership

While some broadcasters treat public service programming as a nuisance, a few stations are advocating community leadership by producing commendable programs of public affairs.

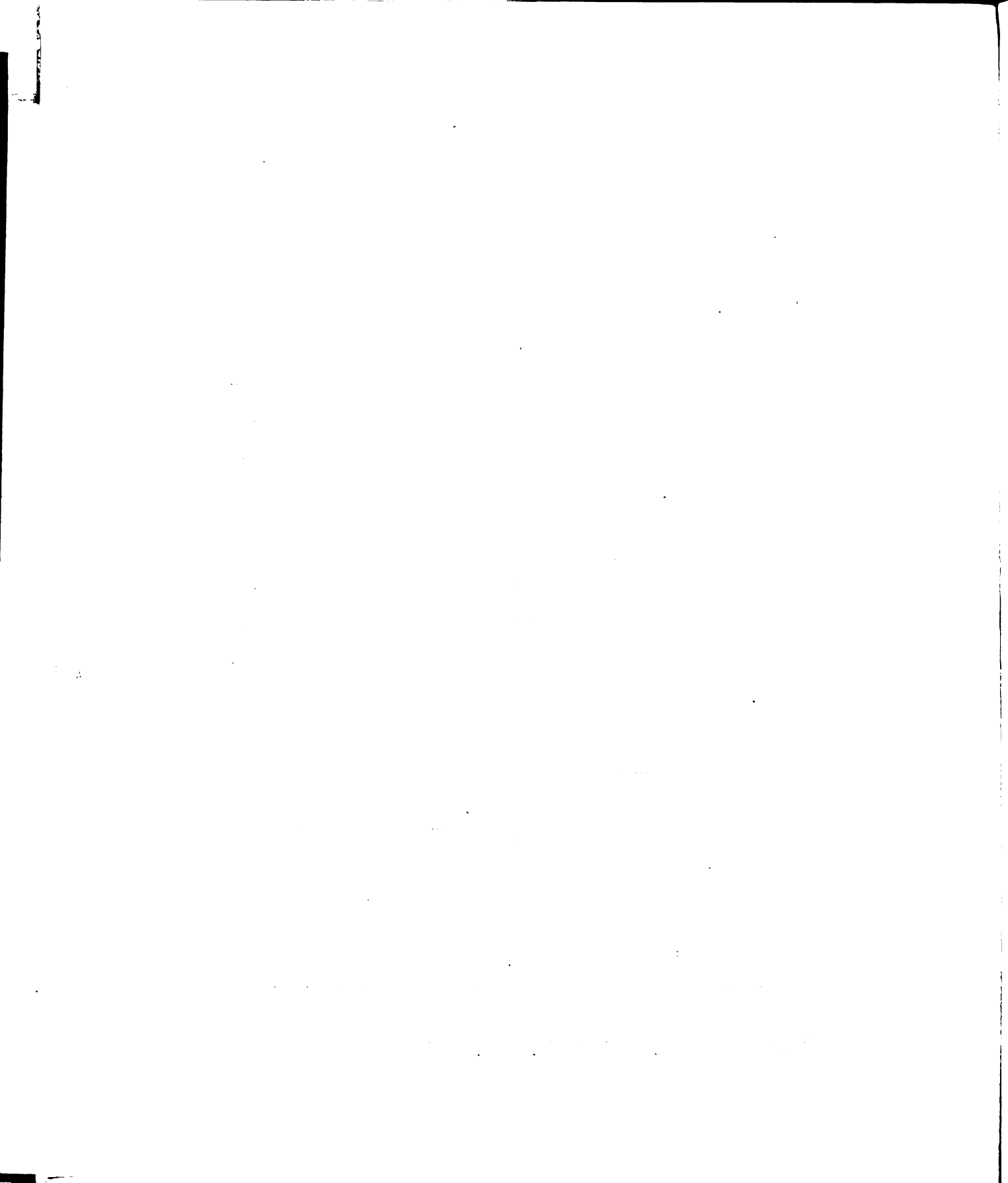
A Milwaukee broadcaster declared:

In television--ten times more than in radio, the station itself MUST take an aggressive, active part in all its public service activities. Ten times more than in radio, the station MUST seek out--it must control and it MUST actively direct all its public service programming.²⁸

A Maryland broadcaster put it this way:

We believe that the best return on that investment of the station's monetary backers will come when our

²⁸Bruce Wallace, "Public Service Programming," Twenty-two Television Talks, BMI TV Clinics (New York: Broadcast Music, Inc., 1953), p. 107.



station is recognized and accepted by our community as a spokesman for the interests of the community, and as a leader in the continuing effort to better the community.²⁹

The study of problems and successes at a station holding such views can be valuable in developing guidelines to aid other broadcasters to a better and a more profitable service. The resulting services should mean that the public would receive more meaningful programs offering a comprehensive view of community problems. These programs could then forward the struggle to overcome those problems.

With such study, community organizations may find more efficient ways of promoting public interest and support for their activities, as well as a guide to bettering their own public affairs efforts.

Advertisers studying this area will be better equipped to insist on top quality public affairs programs which will in turn better the clients' public service image, and perhaps their sales.

A broadcaster's success in public affairs programming should provoke a better response from the public and, consequently, from potential sponsors.

Evidence of the benefits arising from meaningful public affairs programming problems is already apparent in some degree at KMOX-TV. The following chapters should

²⁹Joel Chaseman, "Public Service Programming," Ibid., p. 48.

reveal the benefits, the problems, the policies and practices of public affairs programs.

CHAPTER II

PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND PROFITS

A Traditional Conflict

Former FCC Chairman Newton Minow's "Vast Wasteland" speech created a near furor among some commercial broadcasters. Minow's plea for better programming was nothing radically new to broadcasters, but many thought the pressure was more threatening than anything experienced to that time. For years, a growing vocal but ill-defined "public" had called for "better programming," which was usually construed to mean more public affairs and cultural programming. While broadcasters tended to agree that public affairs programming was intrinsically good, they did not always relish the thought of developing more of it. Stereotyped with small audiences and little, if any, financial return, public affairs programming drew little practical support from most broadcasters.

Though some critics may be satisfied that profits should not be the final consideration in developing public affairs programming, there can be no doubt that profits are a necessary part of commercial broadcasting.

If it could be shown that public affairs programming actually promoted business profits, perhaps some

broadcasters might consider such programming more objectively. Therefore, the questions of public affairs and its relationship to business is worth study.

Although it is not the purpose of this paper to delve deeply into this specific question, the surface implications of that relationship will be examined. Perhaps such examination will also provide some indication for further study required in this area.

KMOX-TV, Profits, and Public Affairs

A Belief in Public Affairs Programming

"Can public affairs programs increase my station's profits?" is a legitimate question. The apparent answer is that as long as advertisers seek only mass audiences, and as long as the majority of television viewers appear to seek entertainment over public affairs programming, there will be little chance of direct profit. Yet, KMOX-TV's General Manager, Eugene Wilkey, has often repeated:

I do not believe that the news and public affairs field is necessarily a costly or non-profit operation even in its early stages. I believe that good management demands the creation of Public Affairs programs that can be sold--programs with which sponsors are happy to be identified.

.....
A generous investment of time, talent and money in this type of programming pays off in the profit column. We have found this to be true.¹

¹Eugene B. Wilkey, paper read at First Annual Broadcast News Workshop-Seminar Conducted by the University of Missouri School of Journalism, Columbia, Mo., November 12, 1959, p. 5. (Mimeographed.)

Wilkey's contention is supported by the upper echelon of his staff which is in the best position to evaluate available information, and by other factors which will be discussed below. The development of KMOX-TV programming will aid in understanding the relationship of public affairs to profits.

Public Affairs to Build Image

In the planning of KMOX-TV, Wilkey hoped to find ways to demonstrate management's interest in the general welfare of metropolitan St. Louis. This was to be done by building public confidence in the station as a channel for reliable information and a platform for community leadership as well as entertainment. If such a relationship could be built, Wilkey felt the station would prosper.²

To build this image, the station's staff planned a thorough public relations campaign to support strong local public affairs programming.

In February, 1958, CBS, Inc. became licensee of Channel Four in St. Louis.³ Prior to that time the license was held by KWK-TV, a CBS-TV affiliate, which had been programming its own local programs and CBS Television Network

²Interview with Wilkey, February 18, 1960.

³The FCC granted KMOX-TV a license, dated March 29, 1957, for operating Channel 11. Later negotiations with the owners of KWK-TV operating Channel 4 resulted in the sale of that property to KMOX-TV. See New York Times, March 30, 1957, p. 39, and September 27, 1957, p. 43.

offerings since 1947. Both the American Research Bureau and A. C. Nielsen rating services reported that KWK-TV attracted the second largest audience of the city's three commercial stations. Wilkey hoped to put Channel Four, now KMOX-TV, in the forefront.

Policy Attracts New Viewers

The building of an image as envisioned by Mr. Wilkey was evidently successful. Within two months of the KMOX-TV take-over, Channel Four's over-all audience grew to be the largest of the three existing commercial stations, according to the same rating services. (A fourth commercial station, KPLR-TV, began broadcasting a year later.) The growth appears to have been a result of a change in local programming, largely in the area of news and public affairs according to the station's General Manager, Program Director, General Sales Manager and Public Affairs Director.⁴

There is evidence to support that belief. The only significant change in St. Louis programming was effected locally by KMOX-TV. Program listings for the months adjacent to the time of the CBS-TV take-over show no change in network programming in the St. Louis area. Also, changes at the local level by other stations were few and limited to the substitution of one syndicated action series for

⁴Interviews with Wilkey, Leon Drew, Charles McAbee respectively, February 18, 1960, and with Parker Wheatley, November 16, 1959.

another, or a daily change in "Hollywood" films. At Channel Four, the change was limited to a different approach to public affairs programming and the addition of a new program. The new approach will be discussed in the following chapter.

At this point, it is only important to consider the effect of these public affairs programs on the station's advertising revenue. New and modified programs at KMOX-TV attracted larger audiences than previously experienced among public affairs programs in St. Louis.

"Eye on St. Louis" Proves Competitive

One program in particular surprised sales and programming authorities in St. Louis. That was "Eye on St. Louis," a fifteen minute interview and information program scheduled for 10:15 to 10:30 Monday through Friday evenings. The consensus among competitors and advertisers was that the program could not attract an audience large enough to sustain the program in prime time.⁵ There were serious doubts at KMOX-TV, too, but the program began as scheduled.

By October of that same year, "Eye on St. Louis" was established as the second most popular program broadcast on a Monday through Friday basis in St. Louis according to Telepulse ratings.⁶

⁵Drew, Ibid.

⁶Telepulse (New York: Pulse, Inc., October, 1958).

The successful prime-time "Eye on St. Louis" has more than proven it can consistently attract audiences from syndicated "action" series as "This Man Dawson," "U. S. Marshall," "Border Patrol," "Highway Patrol," "Bold Venture," and a host of others.

Similarly, "Eye on St. Louis" has faced such noted personality programs as Jack Paar, succeeded by Johnny Carson, and Steve Allen with gratifying results to persons working in public affairs. The table and figures in this chapter demonstrate the competitive ability of this public affairs program.

Other Public Affairs Programs Show Results

Other KMOX-TV public affairs programs are broadcast outside of prime time hours. The percentage of homes using television at these times is traditionally less; therefore, audience figures for these programs are much less dramatic. They are, however, important.

Of these, the nonreligious programs usually compete with film fare, syndicated action series as "Racket Squad," or children's programming, and occasionally another public affairs program. Religious programs generally compete against other religious or public service programs. The bar graph (Figure 3) on page 39 illustrates the competitive drawing power these programs have in their time periods.

With the help of all these programs, KMOX-TV was able to quote Nielsen and American Research Bureau Ratings

TABLE 1.--Average Monday through Friday 10:15-10:30 P.M. audience, St. Louis Metropolitan Area in quarterly months^a

Month Reported	"Eye" KMOX-TV		KSD-TV		KTVI		KPLR-TV ^e	
	%HUT ^b	%SOA ^c	%HUT	%SOA	%HUT	%SOA	%HUT	%SOA
1958								
April ^d	13.1	31	24.3	56	5.5	13	...	...
June	12.9	32	19.7	48	7.0	17	...	...
Sept.	13.2	33	20.2	56	6.4	16	...	...
Dec.	18.8	40	23.1	48	4.5	9	...	...
1959								
March	22.0	49	18.4	40	4.9	11	...	...
June	18.4	41	15.1	34	5.3	11	5.8	12
Sept.	15.3	39	12.6	33	5.4	13	5.1	13
Dec.	18.6	41	10.4	23	10.6	23	5.1	11
1960								
March	23.2	46	12.4	24	11.5	22	3.3	6
June	17.7	40	13.7	31	8.1	18	4.3	9
Sept.	15.6	34	12.5	28	11.8	22	7.1	16
Dec.	17.6	35	16.1	32	12.2	24	3.7	7
1961								
March	16.6	36	15.7	34	10.9	23	2.5	5
June	16.6	36	12.5	27	13.4	29	3.7	8
Sept.	11.0	28	12.6	32	10.8	27	4.7	12
Dec.	15.6	30	15.4	29	15.9	30	5.5	10
1962								
March	13.0	28	17.0	37	12.9	28	3.4	7
June	12.2	30	13.0	32	11.8	29	3.4	8
Sept.	16.9	38	11.6	26	13.7	22	6.6	14
Dec.	18.2	39	14.4	35	10.7	22	2.8	6
1963								
Feb. ^f	16.4	31	18.7	36	13.3	25	3.9	7

^aComputed from Nielsen Station Index, permission of A. C. Nielsen Co., copyright 1958-1963.

^b%HUT indicates percentage of Homes Using Television tuned to channel indicated out of the total homes having television receivers.

^c%SOA indicates percentage Share of Audience watching indicated channel out of total sets in use at stated time.

^dApril, 1958 was first full month reported after KMOX-TV commenced programming.

^eJune, 1959 was first quarter month reported after KPLR-TV commenced broadcasting.

^fLast report available at time table was computed.

Fig. 1.-Channel selection among homes using television 10:15 - 10:30 P.M. weekdays as averaged in quarter months by Nielsen Station Index.

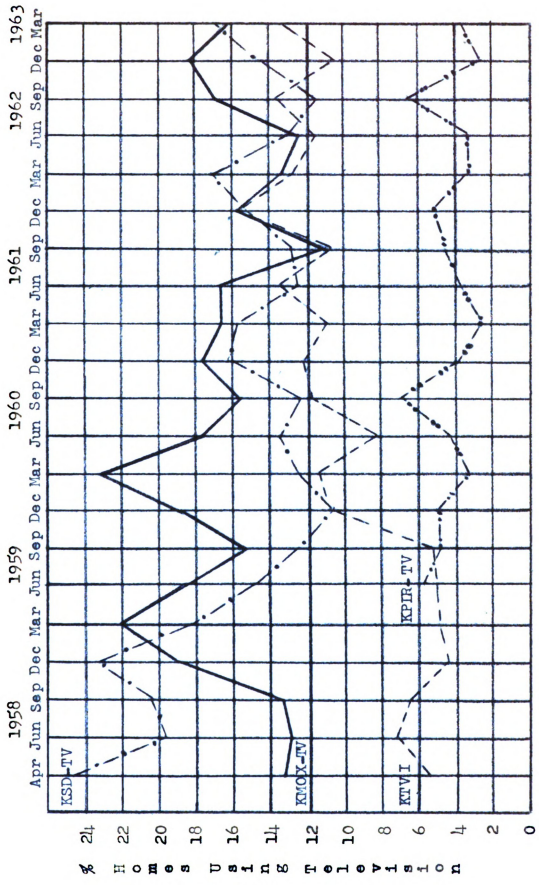
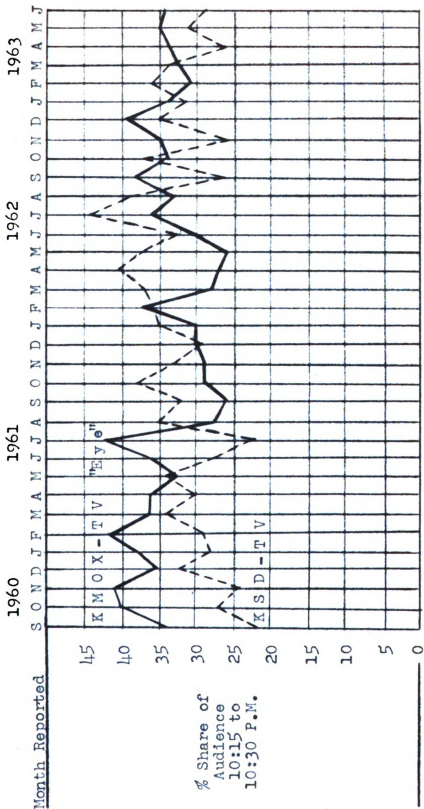


Fig. 2.-Effect of Jack Paar and Johnny Carson ("Tonight") Shows on "Eye on St. Louis" share of audience as reported by Nielsen Station Index.



Notes:

The "Jack Paar Show" began as competition in October, 1960; the last of that series and the first "Tonight Show" is included in the April, 1962 report.

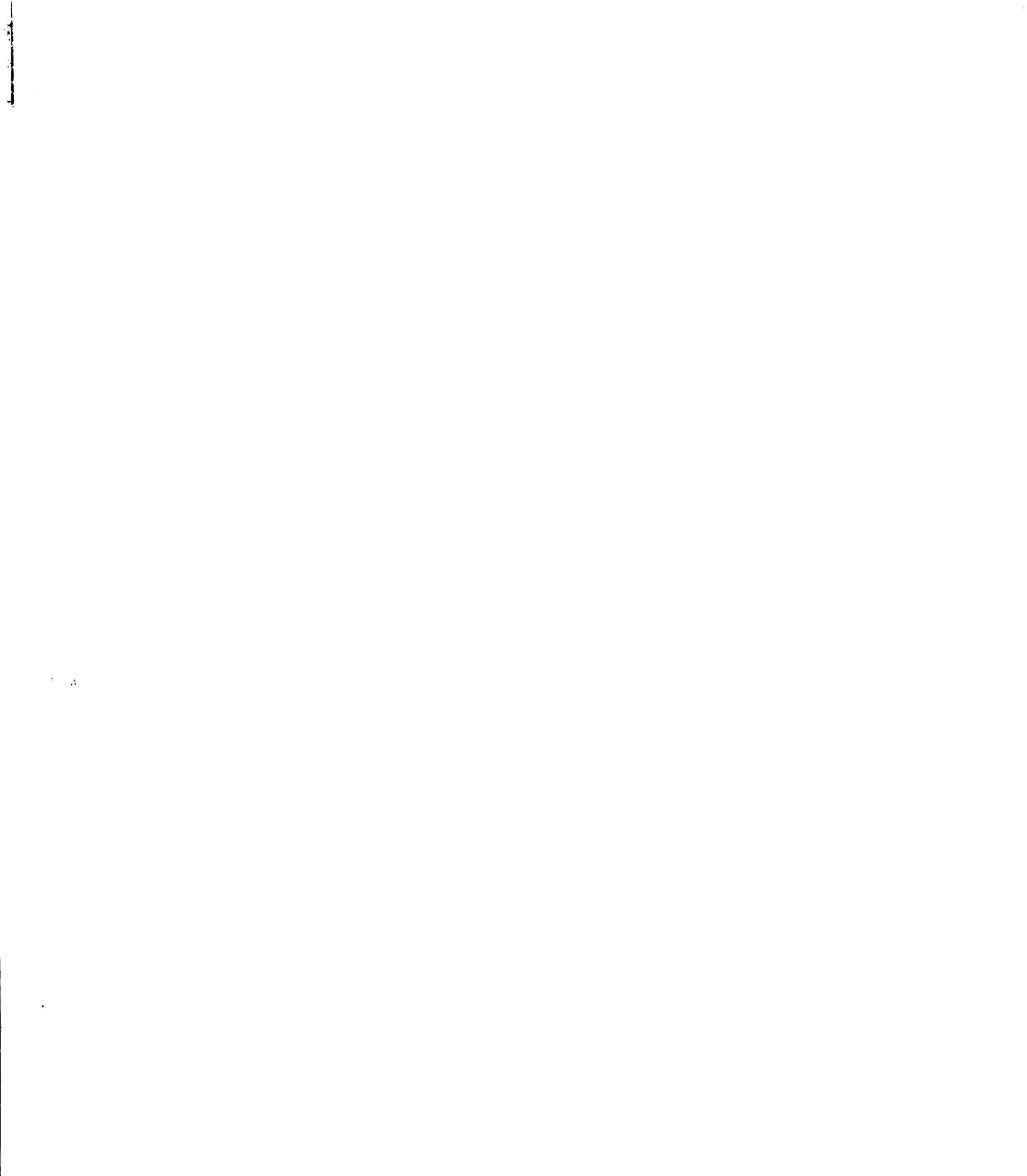


Fig. 3.-Non-prime time public affairs program ratings.



^aNumber of consecutive months in sample taken from longest uninterrupted period without pre-emption. Wild Life and American Economy are both one month samples.

^bVT indicates the program was carried at various times Saturday or Sunday.

to demonstrate its over-all audience superiority. For example, the 1960 Nielsen report listed KMOX-TV as having a total day share of audience of 41 per cent. Its competitors were listed as having 31, 22, and 5 per cent audience shares.⁷

Public Affairs Programs
Bring Profits

There was little difficulty in attracting new advertisers to Channel Four once the size of its audience was established. "Eye on St. Louis" also proved that public affairs could be sold. Within a short time, the station had a six-month backlog of advertisers signed for sponsorship of the program.

Charles McAbee, KMOX-TV's General Sales Manager, cautions that one should not yet expect a public affairs program to provide a direct profit. Despite the size of the audience "Eye on St. Louis" receives, there is still some question as to its ability to attract a sponsor to completely underwrite all immediate and operational expenses. Therefore, the program is charged "Class B" advertising rates, which are less than other prime time charges at KMOX-TV.⁸

⁷Nielsen Station Index (New York: A. C. Nielsen, Inc., March, 1960).

⁸Other "Class B" time periods include 5:00 to 6:30 P.M., 10:30 to midnight Monday through Friday; 5:30 to 6:30 P.M. Saturday; and 5:00 to 6:30 P.M. Sunday.

There is more to the program's contribution than partial payment of its own expenses, however. Though these other contributions are indirect, they are exceedingly important, McAbee maintains. It has already been noted that the public affairs programs have contributed a great deal to the station's over-all audience. This aided the station in attracting thirty new commercial campaigns within the first few months of the station's operation.⁹

According to McAbee, "Eye on St. Louis" is effectively used as a "plum" in sales presentations to attract advertisers to other time spots in package deals that the advertiser would not likely consider alone. The program has now established a reputation beyond local advertising circles and contributes greatly to the securing of regional and national accounts for adjacent programs and spot announcements. The General Sales Manager feels these benefits are not measurable by objective standards, but the program's cost is much more than repaid. This view has unqualified support by the upper echelon of management whose views must be respected simply because they would have most to lose if their judgments were in error. Mounting profits from year to year reinforce their confidence in these benefits.

The prospects for public affairs aiding station

⁹McAbee.

business are still growing, believes Program Manager Don Markley.¹⁰ The large body of audience does not yet readily accept public affairs programming, and until they do the large body of advertisers will continue to shy from such programs. As the success of "Eye on St. Louis" and other programs like it becomes better known, however, and as more and more offerings are made in prime time when the larger audiences are available, the situation will greatly improve, he feels. In anticipation of greater acceptance, KMOX-TV is beginning to actively offer more programs in the area of public affairs for sponsorship, perhaps in a "prestige package" of programs.¹¹

Advertisers and Public Affairs

Prestige Value

Generally, advertisers on "Eye on St. Louis" feel there is an element of prestige in identifying with the program. Some refer to "favorable backdrop"¹² for their commercials, or a "certain quality"¹³ indicating that they realize a positive effect but are unable to describe it.

¹⁰Interview with Don Markley, March 16, 1963.

¹¹McAbee.

¹²Letter from Harry D. Honig, Jr., Radio and Television Director for Batz-Hodhson-Neuwoehner, Inc., St. Louis Advertising and Marketing Service, April 22, 1960.

¹³Letter from official at Weintraub and Associates, Inc., St. Louis Advertising Service, April 18, 1960.

A few believe that the type of program makes little difference in attracting consumer use of their products.

Controversy and the Advertiser

Local sponsors of "Eye on St. Louis" vary in their opinions about connecting their name with controversial programs which sometimes develop. A spokesman for a bank suggested "that the more controversial subjects get more listeners and we, as a result, get more people."¹⁴ Another feels he must "be ever watchful" to see that the program is not offensive. Five expressed the greatest confidence and ease with the programs and the men who presented them. As one agency representative put it: "The staff of 'Eye on St. Louis' is recognized for their ability to produce a program of public interest that will in no way offend the viewer. . . ."¹⁵

Within the experience of advertisers on KMOX-TV, controversy is nothing that would frighten them from sponsorship, and in some cases it might attract them to it.

Audience Make-up

The standard conception of audience make-up for public affairs programs has been that they cater only or

¹⁴Letter from John W. Blood, Executive Vice President of Clayton Federal Savings and Loan Association, April 18, 1960.

¹⁵Honig, Jr.

largely to upper socio-economic households. This is important to the advertiser who desires a specific audience for a given product and it can greatly influence what kind of advertising support a public affairs program will receive.

A Telepulse survey was undertaken at the request of a loan company sponsoring "Eye on St. Louis."

It was concerned about the economic status of the "Eye on St. Louis" audience lest it be composed of people having little need for small loans which the company made. Using the size of rental or house payments as an index of family economic status, the survey concluded that the "Eye on St. Louis" audience included all economic groupings in approximately the same ratio as they existed within the St. Louis metropolitan area. There was only a slight shift toward "Eye on St. Louis" viewing as economic status rose.

The results of this survey surprised a number of people who were also convinced that advertising on public affairs programs would be limited to building corporate images. The wide range of happy "Eye on St. Louis" sponsors also tends to refute this argument.

Public Affairs Programs Can Offer A Wide Variety of Sales

The sponsorship of "Eye on St. Louis" programs is not limited to building corporate images. While it is true that the Plumbing Industry Foundation sponsored "Eye on St. Louis" one evening a week, the program had also attracted

the Ravarino & Freschi Company (an importer and maker of macaroni, spaghetti, and noodles), Adams Dairy, banking companies, service organizations such as the Automobile Club of Missouri, a national manufacturer of electrical appliances, and others. These advertisers all professed to be happy with the results of the program and that there had seemed to be no problem because of the line of goods or services sold.

Other Studies of Public Affairs and
Its Effect on Broadcasters

WCBS-TV Study Suggests Benefits

Some other recent studies tend to confirm KMOX-TV's contention that a strong program of public affairs is good business. A WCBS-TV analysis of a study made by the Institute for Motivational Research, Inc.,¹⁶ for example, arrived at six major conclusions applying to the New York Television Market. One of the conclusions made was that a balanced variety of programming "provides more favorable a climate for more relaxed and responsive viewing of all programs--entertainment, news, and information--because they are in company with other programs thought to be worthwhile." While this is a rather general statement, the implication

¹⁶An Analysis of the Motivational Research Study of New York Television Channels conducted by The Institute for Motivational Research, Inc. in association with Market Planning Corporation (New York: WCBS-TV, 1959).

seems to be that public affairs programs contribute to the over-all responsiveness of the audience to other station fare, which is similar to the findings of KMOX-TV.

Another conclusion supports Wilkey's theory. The image of "reliability," or "trust and confidence" as the New York study refers to it, "tends to be carried over into a pattern of greater trust and confidence in commercials and products associated with a station."

NBC Panel Suggests Value of PA

At an NBC Spot Sales Opinion Panel in April, 1960, 65 per cent of 292 panelists representing 225 advertising agencies or offices throughout the country held the opinion that a strong public service identity also provides greater sales effectiveness for advertisers.¹⁷ While this is opinion supporting KMOX-TV's contention that public affairs leads to profits, the profession of these panelists lends weight to their collective judgment.

The Telepulse study on the audience make-up of "Eye on St. Louis" probably would have surprised these panelists, however. Seventy-three per cent of the timebuyers present felt that public service programs have a limited but a high "quality" audience which could offset the value of mass audience.¹⁸

¹⁷"There's Money in Public Service," Broadcasting Magazine, April 18, 1960, p. 30.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 31.



There is another discrepancy between the NBC Panel and the St. Louis experience. Nationally, judging from the Opinion Panel, the feeling of timebuyers tends toward a belief that public affairs programming can sell certain kinds of products best. While 95 per cent of the timebuyers felt such programs are effective advertising vehicles for molding a corporate image, only 64 per cent thought such programming could also sell high cost "hard" goods, while only 25 per cent agreed that low cost, high turnover products could be sold in this manner.¹⁹

Panelists tended to agree that more sales could be made in the area of public affairs if stations would provide more qualitative audience information.²⁰ They complained that broadcasters simply did not promote such programs with nearly the same enthusiasm as they did more popular types of programs.

The call for "a more qualitative rating system"²¹ was still lacking a year later however, and still lacks fulfillment.²² The recent congressional investigations into audience measurement services, headed by Representative Oren Harris, may move those services toward this end.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 30, 31.

²⁰Ibid., p. 30.

²¹"Public Service for Profit," Broadcasting Magazine, April 18, 1960, p. 120.

²²Charles E. Claggett of Gardner Advertising Co., St. Louis, in a talk before Broadcast Advertising Club of Chicago, March 14, 1961. (Mimeographed.)

CBS Sponsored Study of
Television Viewers

The People Look at Television reports on a study of the national television audience profile as surveyed in 1960.²³ Documented by the Bureau of Applied Social Research of Columbia University, the recently published book describes the "Average American" viewer as entertainment prone, and the "Average Non-Average American" viewer also entertainment prone but concerned with public affairs programming as well.

Dr. Gary A. Steiner, who headed the research project, points out that the audience was concerned about public affairs programming. The "average" viewer felt he "wasted" too much time on entertainment programs. The "average non-average" viewer felt that more public affairs programs were needed but neither group took much advantage of informative programs that were available during the time of the study.

When queried: "As far as you are concerned, where is the greatest room for improvement in television programs?" 23 per cent of 1,210 persons mentioned that there should be more or better information, news, and education programs. These types of programs were mentioned more than those in any other single area.

²³Gary A. Steiner, The People Look at Television (New York: Knopf, 1963).

TABLE 2.--Educational analysis of those favoring improvement in public affairs and news programs

	All	Grade School	High School	College and Beyond
Should be more or better information, news, education	23%	10%	22%	41%

Source: Gary A. Steiner, The People Look at Television, p. 141.

The breakdown in responses by education was also interesting. At each level of ascending education completed, the percentage of responses in this area doubled. Thus, the higher the education, the greater the interest in public affairs programming.

Dr. Steiner, in his conclusions, tended to lump economic and educational achievement together. This lumping leaves the impression that, by and large, a measurement on an economic basis would equal a measurement on an educational basis and vice versa.

The Telepulse study²⁴ of the "Eye on St. Louis" audience gives a somewhat different picture of program interests. While it is realized that the Telepulse study was not nearly as comprehensive as Dr. Steiner's report, it did provide evidence that economic status, at least, made little difference regarding audience viewing habits for KMOX-TV's "Eye on St. Louis."

²⁴See p. 44, above.

Such differences and others noted in this chapter give rise to speculation that KMOX-TV has achieved a degree of wide appeal without sacrifice of quality of content in local public affairs programs which are attracting large audiences from all economic segments of the community.

In any case, KMOX-TV public affairs audiences have exceeded the expectations of local broadcasters and advertisers. This audience type is also not as limited as the national audience outlined by Dr. Steiner.

Let us explore the philosophy of KMOX-TV regarding KMOX-TV's public affairs programming and how problems in this area are handled.

CHAPTER III

KMOX-TV PHILOSOPHY AND STAFF SUPPORT PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROGRAMMING

The preceding chapter indicated that local public affairs programming was one of the basic reasons for the dominant community acceptance and concurrent financial success awarded KMOX-TV. The object of Chapter III is to explore the philosophy which is basic to this success.

Philosophy: Foundation of Success

On the first day of KMOX-TV broadcasting, the general philosophy of the station was publicly announced in the form of a creed which stated:

We believe that it is by privilege, not right, that we enter your home.

We believe that it is our duty, not privilege, to bring you the best in programs which entertain, inform, challenge, and inspire.

We believe that it is our privilege and right and duty to assist in the economic and social progress of the metropolitan St. Louis area.

We therefore pledge our every effort to live up to our responsibilities with integrity, fairness, good taste and neighborliness.

You, and we, with God's help, can make this a better community, a better nation, a better world in which to live.¹

To this broad philosophy can be added three more parts as expressed, though not so formally, by Eugene

¹The Creed was read over crawl March 16, 1958.

Wilkey and Parker Wheatley. These three expressions more specifically delineate the philosophy held for public affairs programming at KMOX-TV.

Meeting Community Needs

The first of these three parts can best be illustrated by a recurring theme in Wilkey's addresses to various meetings. In this sample excerpt of a speech given at the University of Minnesota, Wilkey demonstrates the practical difference between KMOX-TV's and some other stations' approach to public affairs.

The station that is trying to do a good job will relate its public service programs to some genuine aspect of community welfare. The programs will frequently feature original research, and they will be scheduled at times when they conceivably do some good. There will be evidence of publicity before the programs and of follow-up afterward.

But contrast this with the station that runs an occasional syndicated film on any subject under the sun . . . from army recruiting to control of the Japanese beetle. The subject of the picture doesn't matter; community importance of the subject doesn't matter; nothing matters except checking off a half-hour of "public service time" in the report to the FCC.²

Wilkey clearly feels that local public affairs programming must meet community needs to be of value to both the potential viewer and to the broadcaster.

²Eugene B. Wilkey, "A Manager's View of the Plusses and Minuses in News," talk delivered at University of Minnesota School of Journalism's Radio-TV Short Course, February 5, 1960, pp. 6-7. (Mimeographed.)

Open Issues to Public Thought

A second addition comes from KMOX-TV's Public Affairs Director, Parker Wheatley, who feels that commercial broadcasters should present controversial issues of public importance even though they may not currently be popular topics. If the public is not well aware of situations affecting vital community and personal interests, the broadcaster can inform it. If the public has become complacent about situations harmful to a part of the community, the broadcaster can again bring the neglect to its consciousness. New ideas can be given a platform for expression and can be publicly examined. A broad range of community thought should be directed toward these issues as they relate to the changing cultural, economic, political, religious, and social ideas of everyday life. Again, these ideas must be genuinely relevant to the specific needs of the community so as to make the issues as vital as possible.

Public Affairs Unique

This does not mean to imply that the station should be judge and jury of the community, but that it should seek out these expressions from the community. KMOX-TV, as an impartial moderator and public forum seeking to meet the community needs, must reserve its personal comment to announced editorial programs.

Furthermore, KMOX-TV's role in acquainting the public with important issues is somewhat different from an

educational station's role. With the economic requirements of commercial broadcasting, the successful attraction of a broad audience is important to KMOX-TV. The commercial broadcaster may be limited to stirring interest or curiosity in a subject, not to delve so deeply that only a small handful of viewers is reached. Educational television's role, Wheatley feels, is somewhat different. Since audience size is not as crucial a factor in ETV, more specific and detailed subject matter is feasible. It can pick up where commercial television must end because the expectations of audiences are different for each.

Lest this leave the impression that KMOX-TV does not program "in depth," the reader should be assured that KMOX-TV has made a number of comprehensive studies, including more than thirty special programs since 1958, of which eighteen were hour-long presentations. These programs will be further examined in a later chapter.

Worthy of Management Support

The third addition also comes from Wilkey. He reiterated the idea that public affairs broadcasting builds a necessary station image, and that if public affairs broadcasting is to be taken seriously by management, efforts in that area must be considered worthy of creative effort and support from the management.³ He put it this way in a

³Interview with Wilkey, February 18, 1960.



speech:

News and Public Affairs programs set the tone and character of a station. They, more than any other facet of broadcasting make a station a vital force in its community; therefore, deserve . . . the full support of a healthy budget and a demanding management.⁴

There, in the creed and in three separate statements, appears to be the basic philosophy of KMOX-TV toward public affairs programming. It is the foundation on which the programs are built. Now it may be important to consider those whose responsibility it is to put that philosophy into practical effect.

The care with which the KMOX-TV management sought and recruited its basic staff reflects the importance it attaches to this area of programming.

An Able Staff: The Builders of Success

Parker Wheatley, Director of
Public Affairs

After an extensive search, culminating with auditions in New York City, Eugene Wilkey selected Parker Wheatley to head the KMOX-TV Department of Public Affairs. Wheatley's credentials were impressive. With nearly thirty years of experience in broadcasting and a reputation for originality in programming, he had a background as educator,

⁴Wilkey, paper read at First Annual Broadcast News Workshop-Seminar Conducted by the University of Missouri School of Journalism, Columbia, Mo., November 12, 1959, p. 5. (Mimeographed.)

as creator, writer and producer of programs. Wheatley has been a commercial radio station program director in Chicago, advertising agency account executive, university radio director and educational radio and television station manager in Boston.

Perhaps his first contributions of note in public affairs and educational programming were as Assistant Director of the University Broadcasting Council in Chicago and as lecturer on radio in the Downtown College of the University of Chicago School of Business. Subsequently, he was appointed Radio Director of Northwestern University and lecturer on broadcasting in its School of Commerce.

During World War II, Wheatley supervised the selection of network public affairs and educational programs for Armed Forces Radio Service stations overseas and later planned and supervised the production of special troop information broadcasts. He was Chief of Radio Programs Section in the Information and Education Division until 1946 when he was discharged with the rank of Major.

Selected as the first Director of the Lowell Institute Cooperative Broadcasting Council of Boston, he led that organization to national prominence as it received numerous citations and awards, including a George Foster Peabody citation "for outstanding contribution to Education through broadcasting" and a Variety Showmanagement Plaque.

Continuing as Director of the Broadcasting Council, he was largely responsible, as their General Manager, for the building of educational station WGBH-FM which began broadcasting in 1951, and WGBH-TV, Channel Two, which went on the air in 1955. He held these positions in Boston until he was engaged by KMOX-TV in 1958.

Presently, in addition to his duties as Director of Public Affairs, he appears as host on "Eye on St. Louis," and produces "Close Up," "Challenge" (all award winning programs), and "P.S. 4."

Helen Hagen: Writer-Producer

To support the Director of Public Affairs in writing and production assignments, KMOX-TV selected Helen Hagen. She had previously written and produced "The Great Crusade" series for the St. Louis Catholic Archdiocese when she was still a student at Webster College in suburban St. Louis. She also wrote special programs for educational television station KETC, Channel Nine, in St. Louis. In addition, she had had experience and training in education, and later taught drama and speech at St. Louis University.

Her contributions to KMOX-TV have been significant with the writing and production of "Montage," and now "The Story Shop," both regular weekly features. In addition she writes and produces "specials" such as "The Changing Mind," a series devoted to the problems of the mentally ill; and two hour-long explorations of the problems of the Negro in

the changing metropolitan community. For the special series on mental illness, KMOX-TV received the Albert Lasker Award; and for the first hour-long presentation on community problems of the Negro, KMOX-TV won the 1959-60 TV-Radio Mirror Regional Gold Medal Award for "The Most Original Program on Television."

Related Staff

Other KMOX-TV staff members contributing to the production and writing of public affairs programs are Mark Russell, Executive Producer of KMOX-TV; Spencer Allen, Director of News; James Dutson, Special Projects Writer; Kathy O'Sullivan, a part-time writer for Public Affairs; and Stephen Fentress in a newly created post--Manager of News and Public Affairs. This latter post was felt necessary because of the extensive growth in activities of the two departments. A need was felt to generally combine the departments' efforts and facilities and to achieve a closer coordination and direction of the two departments.

How the staff puts the general philosophy of KMOX-TV into effect will be discussed in the following two chapters.

CHAPTER IV

PROBLEM SOLVING IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROGRAMMING

Policies and Practices: Building Blocks of Success

In a highly competitive city with four commercial television stations, it is an impressive discovery that KMOX-TV's public affairs programs should attract a high percentage of the viewing public, even against popular "action" or other entertainment types of programs. The graphs in Chapter II, for example, gave some indication of the appeal of "Eye on St. Louis."

Further indication of the appeal and competitive value of "Eye on St. Louis" is illustrated below in Table 3. The audience ratings reveal the greater share of audience "Eye on St. Louis" received, averaged over a month, against competing "action" programs carried at the same time on the other three St. Louis commercial stations.

This table is not meant to suggest that "Eye on St. Louis" continuously dominates all action programs but simply serves as an indication that it can effectively compete with these "entertainment" programs.

TABLE 3.--Greatest monthly share of audience "Eye on St. Louis" received against select competing "action" programs

Month, Year Reported by A.C. Nielsen Co.	"Eye" % SOA ^a	Day	Competing Programs Carried at the Same Time on Other Stations
Dec. 1959	53	Wed.	"U.S. Marshall," "Not for Hire," Film
March 1960	50	Tues.	"Whirlybirds," ^b "Highway Patrol," Film
March 1960	48	Mon.	"This Man Dawson," "Manhunt," Film
Dec. 1962	47	Tues.	"Tonight Show," "Steve Allen Show," Film
Nov. 1960	47	Fri.	"Sea Hunt," "Jack Paar Show," Film
Sept. 1959	46	Fri.	"Border Patrol," Film, Film
Feb. 1961	44	Mon.	"Coronado 9," "Jack Paar Show," Film
Oct. 1960	42	Thurs.	"Interpol Calling," "Rescue 8," Film

^aSOA indicates Share of Audience.

^b"Eye on St. Louis" received a top SOA of 50% against "Whirlybirds" when it was also running with "Bold Venture" and film as reported in December, 1959.

"P.S. 4," broadcast Monday through Saturday, demonstrates a kind of effectiveness with the television viewing audience. This television classroom without credit has effectively dealt with the educational deficiencies of many adults in the St. Louis area. Though broadcast 6:30 to 7:00 A.M., more than five hundred letters and cards with expressions of gratitude and testimony for the program were

received in its first three weeks on the air.¹ The mail generally came from relatives of viewers commenting on the improvement of their education as a result of watching the program. There is another measure of the series' success in that over 2,500 requests for a booklet entitled TV Tips: Read-Write-Spell Better² have been received in the first few weeks of 1963.³ This figure is especially significant since the booklet is designed only to supplement the "P.S. 4" program which carries no credit for mastery of the lessons offered. The booklet can only be of value, and therefore desirable, to those people who want to improve themselves.

According to the American Research Bureau, an average of 5,000 to 5,600 homes were tuned to each "P.S. 4" program during a sample month. While it is only a fraction of the 850,000 homes in the KMOX-TV coverage area, the American Research Bureau Report is significant, in the opinion of KMOX-TV and area educators, especially when one considers the time of broadcast, subject matter, and audience composition.

¹Interview with Eugene B. Wilkey, February 18, 1960.

²TV Tips was written by the teachers on the "P.S. 4" series, William L. Tybura and Anne E. Price. They are also teachers employed by the Board of Education of the City of St. Louis.

³Interview with Fred S. Heywood, KMOX-TV Information Services Director, March 18, 1963.

"Challenge," "Montage," "Quiz-a-Catholic," and some special programs have also received national awards and publicity in recognition of their effectiveness in the community.

It is the purpose of this chapter to outline the policies and practices which have brought KMOX-TV this response, to examine some of the problems in public affairs programming, and what actions KMOX-TV takes to manage these problems.

Policies Assure Management Support

One of the principal reasons for Channel Four's success in public affairs programming must be attributed to the strong support given by KMOX-TV management. The philosophy of management support explained in Chapter III has been translated into three distinct policies of implementation at KMOX-TV:

1) The Public Affairs Director has direct access to the General Manager in addition to his normal administrative channels to the Program Director and the Manager of Public Affairs and News.⁴

2) The management devotes approximately 25 per cent of its broadcast day to the programming of news and public affairs, of which about 14 per cent is the

⁴Interview with Parker Wheatley, KMOX-TV Public Affairs Director, April 19, 1960.



responsibility of the Public Affairs Department.⁵

3) All production facilities and personnel are available to the Public Affairs Department.⁶

These are significant policies which will be examined further.

On the Public Affairs Director's Access to Management

Public affairs programming has been traditionally labeled as "sustaining," meaning "non-commercial" programs. As such, the public affairs departments generally were considered relatively unimportant to decision making policy.

A provision for direct access to management gives the KMOX-TV Public Affairs Department an influential voice in the station's over-all service and a desired prestige conducive to impressing employees with the value which management attaches to this area of programming. This may curtail a possible fall-off in effort of production crews for this type of programming. In turn, the management becomes informed on current public issues as felt by the community and is more fully aware of reactions to this programming, thus receiving a more accurate evaluation of its program service and reception. Furthermore, working in concert with management assures the Public Affairs

⁵Interview with Leon Drew, former KMOX-TV Program Director, February 18, 1960.

⁶Ibid.

Department a voice in its own growth.

On Time Given to Public Affairs

Stating a minimum percentage of time to be filled with public affairs programming serves to establish certain expectations from management and to prevent any inadvertent loss of time to a more commercially productive program. In 1959, KMOX-TV felt that a balance of 75 per cent entertainment to 25 per cent news and public affairs a good rule of thumb. About 14 per cent of total non-entertainment was then devoted to public affairs programming, the rest to hard news reporting, agriculture and sports. The typical week in 1963 has increased news and public affairs programming to about 26 per cent, over 15 per cent of which consists of public affairs. Fourteen hours or nearly 10 per cent of the total programming for the week is produced by the KMOX-TV staff in public affairs. The remaining 5 to 6 per cent comes from the network and syndicated film sources.

Whatever the difference during the years, the general division of time used at KMOX-TV is considered an ideal balance as experienced by the management. This quantity of time is important in that it allows the public affairs department an ample amount of time to represent the broad community in a number of ways.

Just how this time and the programs are arranged to give the community its needed voice will be outlined in a following section.

All Facilities and Staff Are Available

In a further move to prevent talent or facilities from being diverted from public affairs programming to commercial programming, management has made it clear that the public affairs department will have equal claim to the use of all facilities and production crews. Thus, the needed studio space, cameras, and personnel are assured to maintain excellent production standards. In addition, this policy has enabled the station to extend its production in a number of ways. Spencer Allen, for example, is the KMOX-TV News Director, but he also serves as moderator on such programs as "Close Up." This same policy allows a number of programs such as "Good Morning St. Louis" to present public affairs material while being produced in collaboration with the Public Affairs Department. It gives the department access to funds for payment of talent with \$9,000-\$10,000 earmarked for teachers on the "P.S. 4" program alone.⁷ An unusual application of this policy enabled the department to secure transmission lines to KNXT-TV, Los Angeles, another CBS Owned Station, to carry a special Lutheran Triennial Church Ceremony on "The Way of Life."⁸ All requests for production needs are routed to the Production Manager who is in charge of the facilities, staff, and funds.

⁷Wheatley, June 19, 1963.

⁸Interview with Ernest Byrne, KMOX-TV Director of "Way of Life," January 24, 1960.

Without this understanding, the production quality given local programs most probably would be greatly reduced.

In regard to personnel, it is normal procedure to assign production personnel to a given public affairs series on a relatively permanent basis. This tends to promote continuity and efficiency.⁹ It is interesting to note that many members of the production staff have indicated a preference to work on public affairs programs because they believed there was more opportunity to be creative. These staff members also seemed eager to give more to the program than a routine performance of their duties.

Policies and Practices in Selecting Programs

Policies

The selection of programs is tied to three basic policies of implementation, some of which are an outgrowth of those already discussed. The first is that programs must meet the needs of the community. Leon Drew, former KMOX-TV Program Director, now KNXT, Los Angeles Program Director, added a second in an interview stating that cooperating production groups outside the station which may either plan or produce a program or series must be representative of the community thought, and be responsible spokesmen representing such thought. The third policy is

⁹Drew.

to work toward a wide range of program opportunities.

Meet community needs,
be responsible

The first of these policies was made clear in the preceding chapter by General Manager Wilkey, while the idea of securing responsible spokesmen tends to forestall the self-seekers and the "lunatic fringe" from usurping time which could be better used by other organizations and individuals offering programs of interest and importance.

Parker Wheatley explained his interpretation of this philosophy in an address to the Institute for Education by Radio-Television at Columbus, Ohio in 1961.

Informing citizens on vital issues requires regular, continuous, year-round examination of important topical and controversial issues before the community, by the persons involved in debating and examining them . . . by [those] who raise and resolve these issues in any given community.

This requires fresh, thoughtful, adventurous programming every week of the year. And it requires a fair and balanced representation of the diverse groups who constitute a community--representatives of the little people as well as the big. Representatives of the community's people regardless of race or creed or color. Representatives of the unpopular as well as the popular view on controversial issues. . . . Representatives of groups reluctant to be counted, as well as the eager.¹⁰

Strive for full complement
of programs

The hope of KMOX-TV is that these policies will promote a full complement of locally produced programs,

¹⁰Parker Wheatley quoted in "Controversy on the Air," St. Louis Post-Dispatch, May 20, 1961, p. 4.

each to be unique, and the whole to be an outstanding schedule of public affairs. While holding a desire to continually improve, the management generally feels that the station's objectives have been reached and that their achievements surpass those of their competition.

To substantiate this belief, Wheatley pointed out:

No other St. Louis television station offers a local public affairs program in prime time as KMOX-TV's "Eye on St. Louis," 10:15 to 10:30 five nights a week.

No other station has a weekly one-half hour public affairs discussion program with "newsmakers" on matters of local, regional and national, and international significance as KMOX-TV's "Close Up."

No other station has a weekly one-half hour panel devoted to education as "Challenge."

No other station has a full four and one-half hours of religious programming each week, including four different faiths participating in live locally produced programs.

No other station has a forty minute morning program in which public affairs interviews and information is regularly presented as "Morning Scene."

No other station has six one-half instructional programs at the elementary and high school level or for non-literates as "P.S. 4."

No other station has a weekly half-hour program devoted to the arts and culture in St. Louis as "Montage."

No other station has a means to publicly exchange views of the television audience with the station management as "Inside KMOX-TV."

To this, he could have added a multitude of prime time and other special programs and an extended regular schedule of exchange offerings produced by the other four CBS Owned stations in New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and Los Angeles. Beyond that, there are other programs many broadcasters would claim as public affairs, "KMOX-TV Editorial" and "KMOX-TV Views the Press." These programs will

not be considered public affairs programs in this study because they are productions of the editorial board and news department personnel.

Excluding those specials and exchange programs, KMOX-TV regularly offers a wide range of programs which provide the community a generous portion of time to express their views on its needs and provide a variety of culture and information to the community.

Practices

Program ideas: From where do they come?

The programs mentioned above evolved from a number of sources through a process of experimentation and study, or have been inherited from the management which previously operated Channel Four. Principal sources of programs have been four in number: (1) those newly proposed by management in its license application to the FCC, (2) those carried over from the previous management of Channel Four, (3) those instituted as a result of developing community needs, and (4) those suggested by the parent organization.

Management commitments to the FCC

Prior to Wheatley's appointment at KMOX-TV, the station management had carefully studied ways in which it could best serve the St. Louis area. These ideas were outlined in the management's application to the FCC and in

effect were pledges that a certain amount of time would be devoted to public affairs programming and that those programs which were outlined would be carried.

Included in the proposed outline of service was a description of "Eye on St. Louis" which the management declared was to be carried in prime evening time. The program is still being carried.

Carry-over from the previous management

Some programs which had been carried under KWK-TV were continued, at least for a time, for several reasons. (1) The program might have been considered a good program; (2) the program, though not desirable would provide a means of continuity in a given subject area such as education, until a better program could be devised; and (3) the program would temporarily fulfill FCC commitments as to time devoted to public affairs until a better program could be devised. The latter two reasons were considered unavoidable due to a sudden change in target dates as a result of KWK-TV's decision to sell Channel Four.

"Quiz-a-Catholic" and "The Way of Life" fell into the first classification. The first program was truly unique among religious offerings in St. Louis and so, thought KMOX-TV's management, deserved to stay on the air. The latter program was retained not only because of its quality, but also because of its highly efficient

organization and compatibility with the accepted form of religious programs of the day.

"Look, Listen, and Learn" falls into the second category. This program was carried over from KWK-TV with the hope of improving it in time. From this daily ten minute offering evolved the present weekly half-hour "Challenge." Whereas the first program was largely a means of exhibiting what the schools were doing to teach its students, "Challenge" is primarily concerned with probing for answers and alternatives to the problems of the schools. It also provides a unique opportunity for the public expression of opinion by means of a participating small audience of parents and an invitation to viewers to telephone questions during the actual live broadcast without screening or editing.

A few other programs continued from KWK-TV have since been abandoned in favor of a program considered to have greater value. At the time of the change of station management, these early programs helped fulfill obligations to the FCC as far as time allotted to public affairs programming was concerned.

Community study indicates
new needs

Part of KMOX-TV's successful public affairs programming is a result of management's being alert to community needs coupled with creative efforts interpreting

those needs in terms of program ideas.

For example, an investigation of educational achievement among the population of Greater St. Louis by the 1950 United States Census revealed that two-thirds of the adult population had never received a high school diploma.¹¹ Approximately 73,000 adults in the St. Louis area were termed "functional illiterates." While somewhat surprised at the gravity of the situation, the Program Director and others grew excited over the possibilities of performing a real public service.¹²

Philip J. Hickey, Superintendent of Instruction for the city's public schools, was consulted about the possibility of a joint effort to meet this problem. The Superintendent was already aware of the great in-migration of rural people to St. Louis, bringing with them too few skills and an inadequate educational background to effectively compete in the labor market or to "perform their labors at a skilled level."¹³ Hickey, therefore, readily agreed to

¹¹A more recent study confirmed the percentage at this level. See Higher Education and the Future of Youth in the Greater St. Louis Educational Area, A Report to the Governor's Committee on Education Beyond the High School in Missouri and to the Citizens of the Greater St. Louis Educational Area, Prepared by the Committee on Higher Educational Needs of Metropolitan St. Louis (St. Louis: The Board of Education of the City of St. Louis, January 22, 1960), pp. 55, 131.

¹²Drew.

¹³"P.S. 4: New Television Series to Exploit Community Education," KMOX-TV publicity release, dated January 7, 1960, p. 1. (Mimeographed.)

help.

A joint planning committee was organized to develop a series of programs which would contribute to the education of adults lacking even secondary school skills. They wanted to meet the needs of these adults without attaching a stigma of illiteracy to them which could provoke their pride and drive them away from the programs. Credit which would stipulate a grade-level was not offered for the self-help course.

In January of 1960, "P.S. 4" began its six days-a-week schooling. Exceptional teachers were offered the job of television instructor at basic American Federation of Television and Radio Artists rates. "P.S. 4" was divided into segments teaching "How to Spell" on Monday and Thursday, "How to Write and Speak" on Tuesday, "How to Understand Government and Politics" on Wednesday and Saturday, and "How and What to Read" on Friday. Each of the programs began at 6:30 A.M.

Since that time, new series and subject matter for the same audience have been introduced each January, June, and October without so much as a semester break between each series. Introductory studies in mathematics, science, family living, and world affairs have been offered. At the time of this writing, "P.S. 4" is devoting each of the six days to an all-out effort of promoting the communication skills of reading, spelling, and writing among the

illiterates and semi-illiterates.

The 6:30 to 7:00 A.M. air time of the program is justified by the success of similar early morning "college level" programs, and by the theory that the viewers' minds are fresh, alert, and able to take advantage of the lessons. In addition, the local educational television station, KETC-TV repeats the "P.S. 4" programs at 7:30 P.M. the same evening.

"Close Up" and "Montage" are other current local programs which evolved from a knowledge of the community and its needs.

Discovering that the community had no practical way of meeting important spokesmen of local to international importance who passed through the city, KMOX-TV established the "Close Up" series. The Public Affairs Department solved the problem of locating informed persons to question these spokesmen for the general public by arranging for the Bar Association of St. Louis to select a weekly panel of three. This group enthusiastically responded by securing either its members or other parties having knowledge of the topic and the guest for the program. "Close Up" guests invited by KMOX-TV have included newspaper publishers and editors, legislators, businessmen, military personnel, clergymen, union representatives, foreign diplomats and many other public figures. Featured guests have ranged from local politicians to the former Prime Minister of

Great Britain, Lord Clement Attlee; and from noted sports figures to the late Dr. Thomas Dooley, medical missionary to the Far East.

"Montage" also developed from community needs. There simply was no single outlet which regularly gave expression to the arts and culture of St. Louis or satisfied the community's curiosity about them.¹⁴ "Montage" serves to give balance to programs of community problems and religion with a program giving expression of the arts. Its fare varies from program to program, perhaps displaying and commenting on primitive pottery to photo-journalism, modern jazz or dramatic scenes from a play. Constant surveillance of the community activities is required to stay abreast of all the possibilities for the weekly program and to insure representation from the community.

These and other programs came as a result of KMOX-TV's interpretation of community needs.

CBS Television promotes
local public affairs

KMOX-TV's parent organization, CBS Television Stations Division representing the licensee, CBS, Inc., is concerned with the operations of its local stations. At one time, this Division felt KMOX-TV lacked an instructional program and suggested this deficiency should be corrected.

¹⁴Interview with Helen Hagen, KMOX-TV Writer-Producer, June 22, 1961.

The result was "P.S. 4."

Another suggestion was made resulting in "Inside KMOX-TV." CBS Television Stations Division, like many other broadcast operations, was concerned after the quiz scandals of the late 1950's and wanted to establish regular channels of communication with viewers. It was felt that the problems broadcasters face when trying to meet the desires and needs of an entire community were not well-known and a program on television might be one way of informing the public of those problems.

Letters from viewers and studio guests posed questions about programming, violence on television, advertising practices, etc. Representative questions were selected to be answered on the air by staff members having responsibility in the area questioned. The program was considered successful enough that it served as a model for the other CBS Television stations hoping for better understanding with their viewers.

It should be pointed out that no important on-the-air changes have come about as a result of questions received on "Inside KMOX-TV." This is partly because of the lack of control KMOX-TV has over the areas questioned such as filmed commercials with excessive sound volume or the content of network programs. Industry practices are frankly explained on the program and the suggestion is made to write the advertiser or network directly. These questions

are passed on to the responsible authority. Questions about local fare have been generally handled with an explanation about KMOX-TV policy and philosophy. For example, a viewer bemoaned commercials during the late movie. It was explained that KMOX-TV used that profit to support its sustaining public affairs programs which the management felt were important to the community. The station management is satisfied that the program has effectively helped give the community an understanding of the television industry.

Thus, while the parent organization suggests a program type which might be added to the program schedule, discretion is left local management on how to best construct the programs according to the local situation and needs.

Selecting programs

Before any public affairs program proposal is subjected to public trial by actual broadcast, it must come under close scrutiny by both the public affairs and program directors. These men must determine whether:

- 1) The over-all program service would suffer without the program;
- 2) there is a similar program already representing similar interests;
- 3) the program would promote the character of the station;
- 4) the program would promote balanced programming;
- 5) the group backing the program is a responsible member of the station's service area; and



- 6) whether the proposal would make unreasonable demands on the station budget and talent.

If the answers to these questions are favorable, then it must be determined if and when the program can be scheduled. A determination of the following must be made:

- 1) What audience is sought?
- 2) What times would that audience most likely be available?
- 3) Is this program better than the program presently in the time period desired?
- 4) If it is, is that program better than others?
- 5) Can any of them be moved to another time period as well?
- 6) Would the replacement of a program cause a public relations problem?
- 7) Would changes adversely affect adjacent programs?
- 8) What are the consequences if the program is delayed to a more convenient time?
- 9) Would switching the time of an already established audience adversely affect the building of an audience for that program?

These are some of the questions asked in determining acceptability and possible broadcast times.

Factors which limit programs

Certain factors tend to limit program acceptability or the amount of time and position in the broadcast schedule given it. Value judgments as to subject importance must be made as well as the degree to which it will be utilized by the public the station serves. These were factors in the

placement of "P.S. 4" in an early morning time period, six days a week, for example. The subject matter was important enough, KMOX-TV felt, to warrant its being carried so frequently. Representation of those who would utilize the program was considered to be somewhat small and therefore helped to influence the position in the broadcast schedule. This is a type of limiting factor affecting programs which are accepted for broadcast, but there are other factors which even go so far as to preclude any broadcasts at all. These factors are discussed below.

Program depth

Some programs, KMOX-TV feels, would be better suited to another medium if they propose to probe deeply into a subject demanding continued analysis. The station considers itself responsible to a wide number of viewers and requires sponsors which a particular type of program could not conceivably attract. This is an economic requirement previously discussed, yet it does not mean that programs which are not popular or require a study in depth could not under any circumstance be carried.

To offset the economic requirements in this area, KMOX-TV's General Manager Wilkey outlined a policy in 1959 to be effective the following year whereby at least four hour-long special programs would be broadcast each year. To the station's credit it must be noted that those plans have been exceeded each year. In 1960, the station carried

five hour-long specials. The following year there were six hour-long specials and one half-hour special in addition. Four hour-long and six half-hour specials were presented in 1962 and in the first five months of the current year, five half-hour and one full-hour special programs were carried.

The most interesting in-depth study was produced in 1959 under the title "The Changing Mind" which dealt with mental illness. This study was unique in that it became the theme in fifteen regularly scheduled programs over a one week period. It began on the sixth of December with the evening "Sunday News Special." Topics and the method of presentation varied with the intended audience and standard format of each of the regularly scheduled programs. For example, "Montage" devoted its time to the exploration of the values of psychodrama, while a children's program took a short trip via film to the children's psychiatric section of a leading general hospital with an explanation geared to the understanding of young minds. Other programs offered documentary reports from various hospitals and other institutions throughout the area and interviews with hospital personnel, patients, medical authorities, and government leaders. Wilkey called it "the most complete and comprehensive public service series assigned to the station's News and Public Affairs Departments."¹⁵

¹⁵"The Changing Mind," KMOX-TV publicity release, dated December 4, 1959, p. 1. (Mimeographed.)

Fund raising

Fund raising appeals are absent from regularly scheduled programs to avoid the vast number of campaigns continually presented and the complexity of developing a formula to distribute equal amounts of time to the many organizations staging appeals.

Provision is made, however, for appeals to be made. Regularly scheduled programs allow agencies to demonstrate their services and benefits. Then appeals can be made in spot announcements and in larger inclusive efforts such as the 1963 United Fund Drive, featuring a program produced jointly by one community and four commercial television stations. This effort helped to surpass the goal of the United Fund Drive.

Rating services

Commercial polls, to a certain extent, influenced the status of public affairs programs though they do not dictate their existence. "P.S. 4" has already been mentioned as receiving a small rating, but the program's 5,000 or so viewers were considered a sufficient number to justify the program's existence because of the values it carries in the minds of the station's management and the enthusiastic mail response to the program.

Lack of an expected audience was a contributing factor in the cancellation of at least one program, however, and promotes efforts to improve programs when ratings are

felt to be insufficient.

Promoting Interesting Formats

The promotion of formats compatible with and stimulating to the purpose of a program heightens viewer appreciation of both the program and its subject claims Parker Wheatley. Let us consider some examples.

"Montage" uses alternating narration and demonstration to explain and then illustrate art forms in our culture.

"Close Up" presents an important local, national, or international figure who is questioned by local attorneys and knowledgeable authorities.

"Sunday," a religious program, offered a magazine format bringing religious viewpoints on literature, theater, art, music, etc., interviews with significant religious themes, religious news, and direct messages of churches associated with the Metropolitan Church Federation.

"Quiz-a-Catholic" relies on a question and answer format similar to the old network "Twenty Questions" program. The competition of participants as they race against the clock to provide the correct answers to questions heightens the viewer's interest. The questions and answers concern Roman Catholic interpretations of the Bible, historical and religious events and objects, and Catholic writing and philosophy.

"P.S. 4," an instructional program with the avowed intention of providing instruction, used a straight lecture format with numerous visual aids.

"Eye on St. Louis" has evolved over the years into a near debate on controversial issues in the community. Thus the viewer is better able to understand and resolve the issues in his own mind.

Each format, of course, has its own problems, but there are some problems common to nearly any format and are therefore worth discussing. These will be discussed in two sections: one involving problems that generally appear while preparing the program, the second group which arise while the program is on the air.

Producing the Program

Complex problems come into play as the programs head into production. Tests of policy and practice arise from head-on meetings with the human element: the staff interpreting and applying these sections for convenience, and because the problems differ somewhat with the type of program. The sections are divided into scripted programs, unscripted interview programs, and controversial programs.

Scripted Programs

Advantages

Greater production quality control is generally a result of the scripted program because each segment of the

program is predetermined. The director and performers should know precisely what is to happen. Specific points in logical sequence can be carefully prepared and made with all of them pointing toward a desired end. The result should be good communication between the producer and the audience. If properly prepared, the scripted programs should take on a smooth professional lustre heightening the station's image.

A good writer and producer can bring together the best qualities of stage setting, lighting, music, action, and space for television to enhance the meaning of the script and the aesthetic qualities of the program. Variety in production styles and modes of expression can be incorporated to capture the imagination of the community. The end result should be a highly satisfying response from the viewer. This has been done at KMOX-TV on "specials," "Montage," and "Repertoire Workshop."

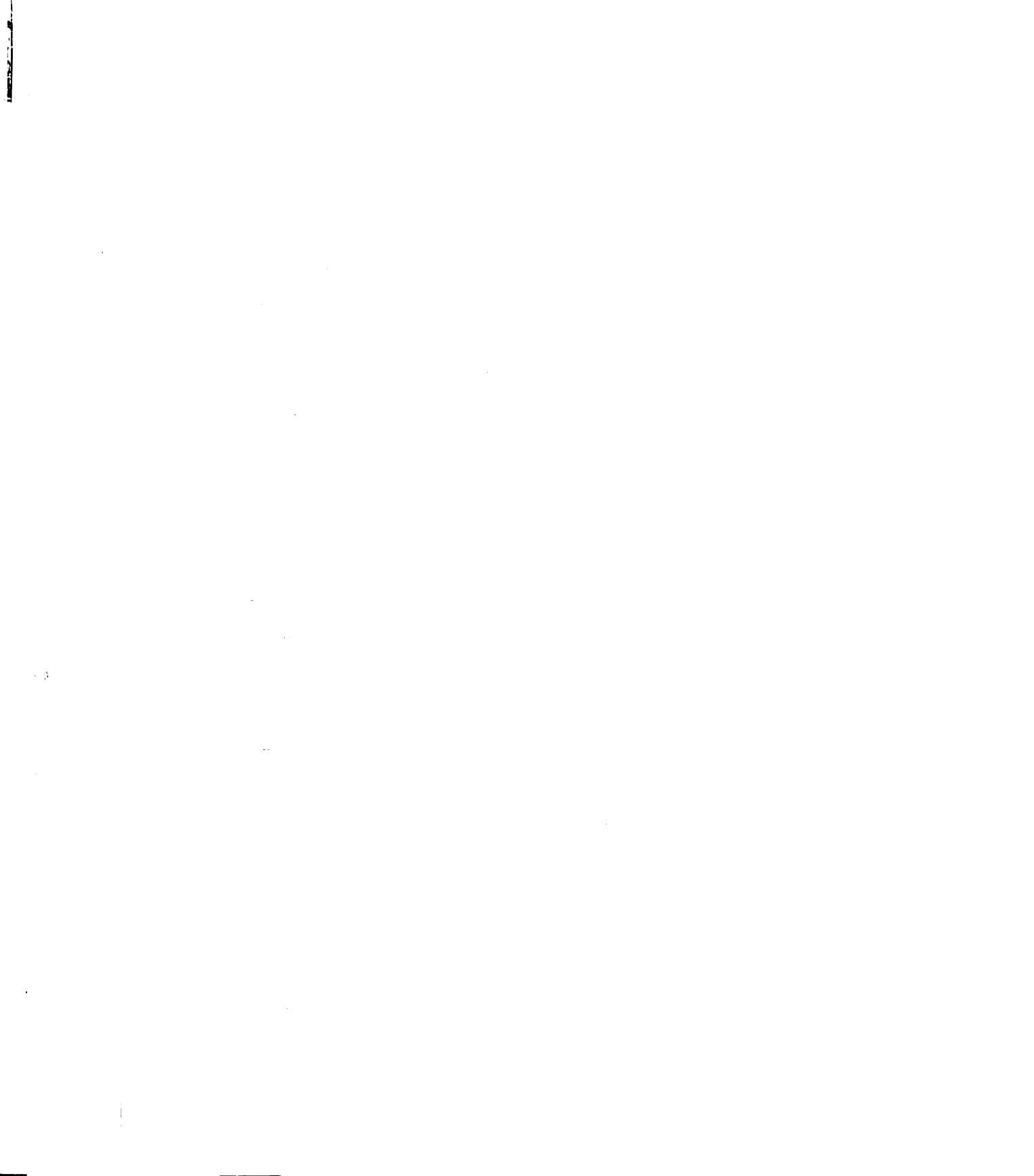
In some cases, it is an advantage to work with cooperating agencies in the development of scripted programs. The common religious service is largely a scripted program since the ritual of the church nearly dictates the sequence of events, and is one example of an outside organization contributing a smooth production. Other groups may be willing to write and rehearse the body of a program and thus relieve the local station from that particular chore, but there are some dangers involved which shall be discussed shortly.

Problems

High costs are the most acute drawbacks to the scripted program. Some types require a researcher, writer, film crew, and editor. In addition to personnel there may be costs of film and transportation to special locations in the case of a documentary program. Scripted programs generally require studio rehearsals which take time and money. Even the use of amateurs in "Montage," for example, require station personnel and studio time beyond that of an unscripted program.

To keep these costs within what the station feels are reasonable limits, KMOX-TV does not resort to the scripted program unless the purpose of the program can be most effectively served in that way. "Montage" is one program which is generally scripted. Its purpose of illustrating various artistic expressions in the St. Louis area is best met by actual demonstration as in the drama, music, and dance. "Repertoire Workshop" is also scripted to display fresh local talent in a dramatic setting. Other programs such as "Inside KMOX-TV" are scripted to insure that specific points are brought forward in a logical sequence that might otherwise be overlooked or be made less effectively. Most special programs are scripted for all the reasons listed above.

As previously stated, there are some dangers involved in accepting scripted programs from outside



co-operating organizations. Many organizations, which might co-operate with a television station, have no professional writers and may be generally unaware of television writing and production principles. Many "Montage" productions which are prescribed in the sense of a drama or dance routine must be scaled down to the acceptable limits of television. Amateur writers tend to overlook the need to consider camera space and other physical limitations. They may not be aware of the economic feasibility of complicated productions. Rewrites to correct those errors may sometimes be difficult in terms of public relations.

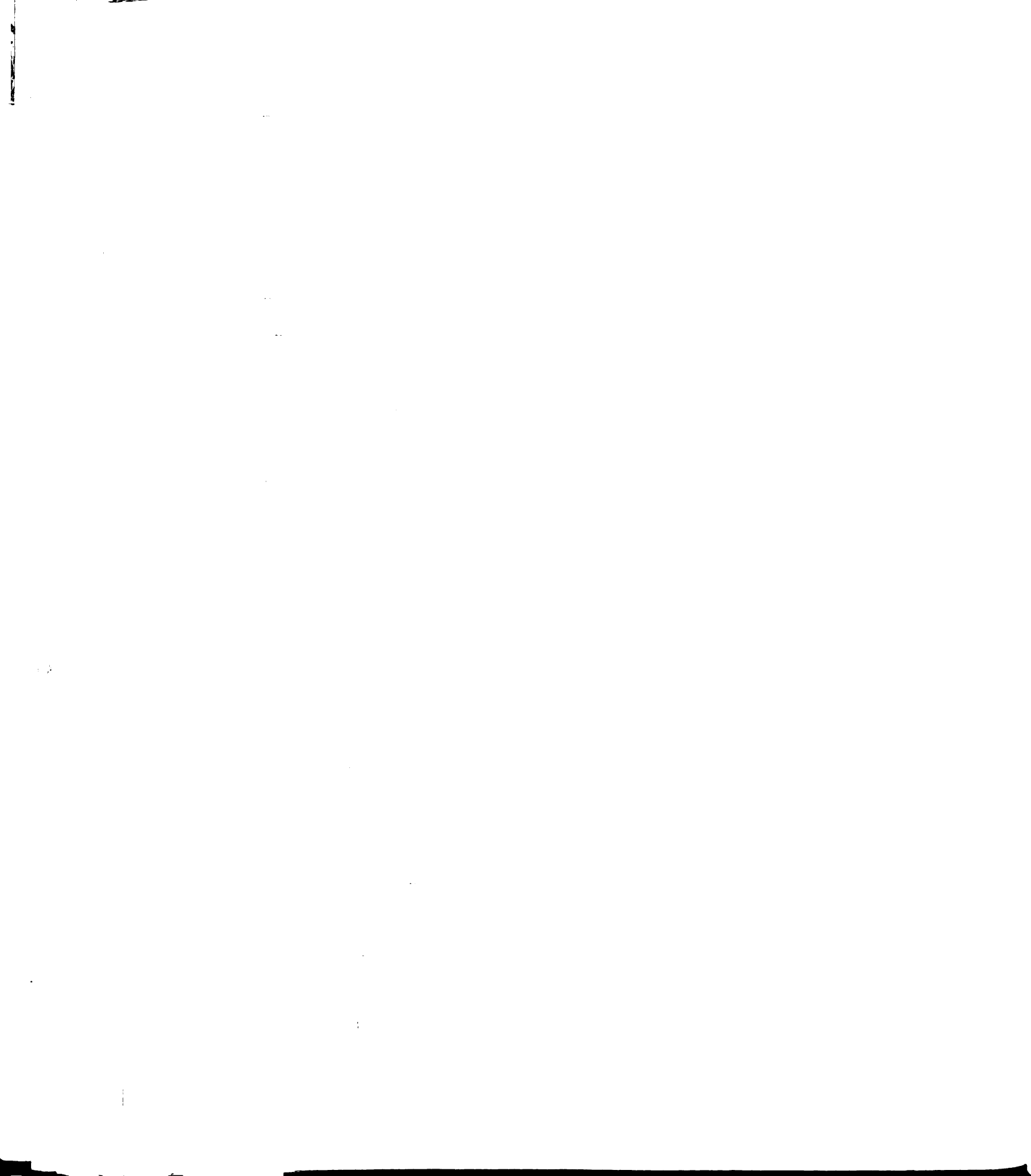
To avoid these dangers, KMOX-TV avoids scripted programs from outside organizations unless they have and are willing to use professionally trained personnel. Two religious organizations are the only groups meeting these qualifications. One is the Catholic Radio and Television Apostolate of the Archdiocese of St. Louis which is responsible for the partially scripted "Quiz-a-Catholic" and at one time scripted part of its programs on the "Challenge" series on education. The second group is the Television Board of the St. Louis Lutheran Pastoral Conference which is responsible for "Way of Life." Both of their current programs demonstrate a professional smoothness attesting to the care they receive in planning and preparing for broadcast.

Lecture or teaching series such as "P.S. 4" or "People and Politics" are prepared by outside sources and

for all practical purposes are scripted because the teaching talent has carefully planned and prepared the lesson, his stage position and visual aids are fairly constant or easily predictable. The programs do not require careful rehearsal to be fully effective and may, in fact, lack spontaneity if overrehearsed. In these programs, the station does not concern itself with how points are made because it is felt that the teacher-performer is competent and able to carry through the purpose within the limits of the production facilities assigned to him.

Another religious program presents a similar problem, but one which is more complex and harder to solve. It is programmed under the auspices of a religious association in St. Louis. The association has agreed that since the program represents both the Orthodox and Reformed faith, each association member should take turns producing it independently. As a result, the only sense of continuity is an approach to their particular ethic. There is no common format, no continuity in design, no particular level of expectation of performance. The program suffers in its inconsistency.

Some suggestions have come from KMOX-TV to bolster the program by strengthening the television committee of the association. The station has reservations, however, about its prerogative of forcefully edging the organization in a direction contrary to the association member's concept



of the program's independent purpose. Movement in this direction has been slow.

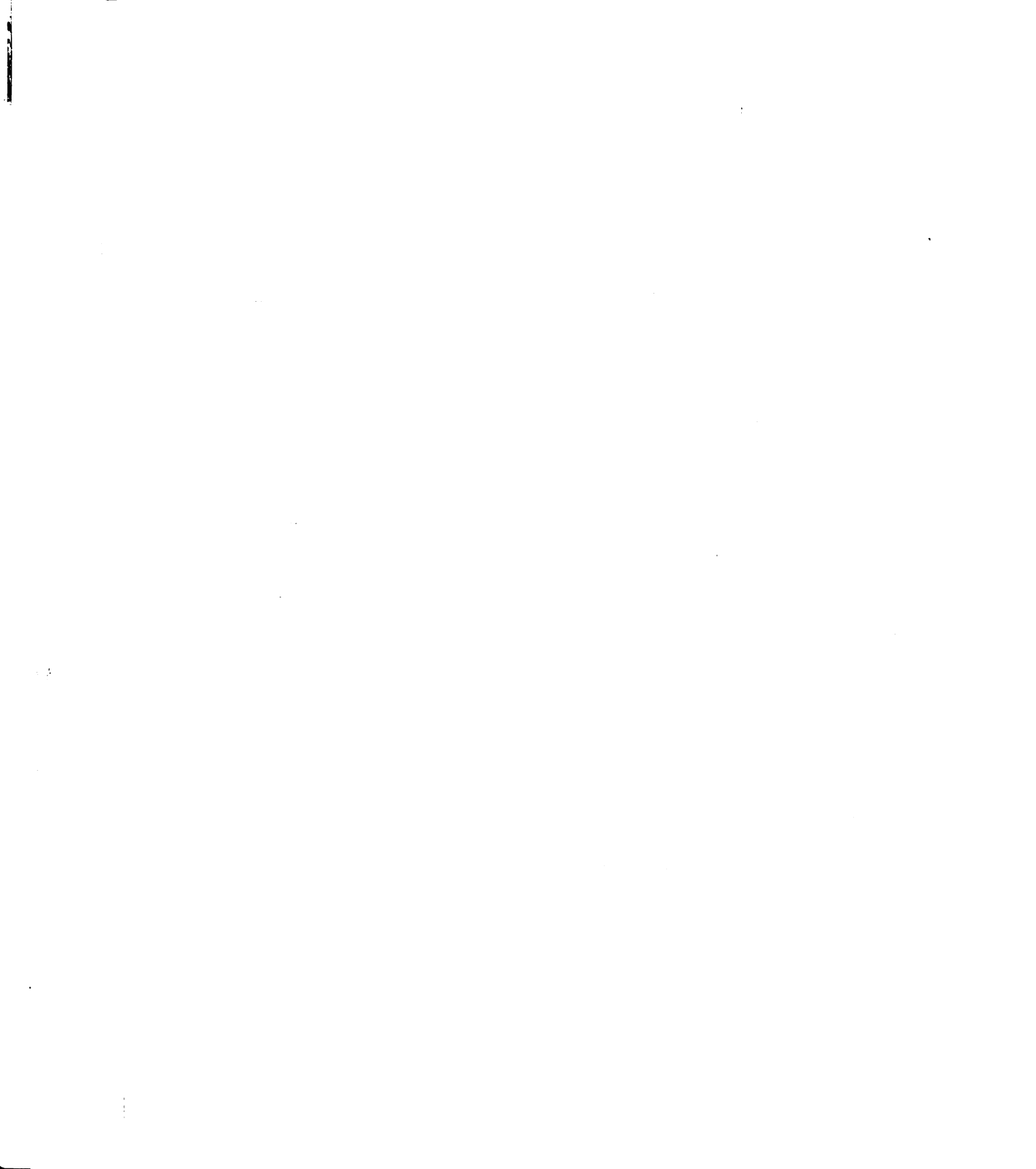
One other problem of the scripted program bears mentioning and that is the element of rehearsal time and its scheduling. Many programs require the use of amateur talent and the station's producer must consider their working hours and their own rehearsal schedules for productions which they must attend. Programs like "Montage" are an extra show, to their way of thinking, which must be squeezed between prior commitments. Therefore, the television rehearsals must be scheduled far enough in advance to provide time for developing and adapting their material to television. Scanning the community for possible subjects in the future is an important aspect for programs like "Montage" and "Repertoire Workshop."

There is an awareness that the audience has higher expectations of scripted and rehearsed productions than those that are not scripted, so a substantial effort to avoid these problems is considered most important at KMOX-TV.

Unscripted Interview Programs

Advantages

The disadvantages of the scripted program are largely overcome in the unscripted interview. Low cost, comparative ease, and the moderate time needed to put a



program together are certainly advantages in themselves. In addition, a co-operating outside production unit needs but a few skills to participate effectively.

All of these advantages, however, lead up to what may be even more important advantages to both broadcaster and community: (1) a greater variety of subject matter may be efficiently handled, (2) in greater numbers, and (3) with a greater part of the community involved in it.

Outside organizations appreciate these advantages too, though some think that their message might be more effective if dramatized or handled in a style with more aesthetic appeal. For the majority of organizations served, though, the interview programs mean less preparation for them and less time taken from their principal work.

Problems

There are, of course, problems other than the loss of aesthetic appeal in the unscripted interview program. Let us discuss those problems which arise in the preparatory stages first. The problems discussed have been witnessed in "Eye on St. Louis," "Close Up," or "Challenge."

Preparation

One of the most time consuming tasks is probably the administrative work involved in securing topics and participants of current interest. "Eye on St. Louis" especially requires an alert staff to keep abreast of community

interests for it is broadcast five times during the week. The steady cultivation of area-wide contacts and the program's reputation produce a great many possible topics and participants.

Once a contact is made with a particular spokesman to take part in a production, there may be a problem of agreeing on the program's purpose. For example, the producer contacts a political figure involved in an important policy making decision. KMOX-TV's purpose in securing this particular guest is to explore the policy, its importance to the community, and the possible action being considered. The guests, however, may be concerned only with defending his personal actions and use the program to expound his own views and nothing else. Thus, the station and guest may have different objectives which the host representing both the station and the community interest, must attempt to resolve in order to achieve fairness and balance.

Not all such differences are quite so dramatic. The "Challenge" program has as its theme: "education is our greatest American challenge."¹⁶ A weekly half-hour program, "Challenge" is coproduced by five different school systems. Spokesmen for these systems are not always as concerned with the broad purpose and methods of education

¹⁶"KMOX-TV to Present 'Challenge'--New Educational Series Beginning Sunday, September 28," KMOX-TV publicity release, dated September 19, 1958, p. 1. (Mimeographed.)

in our country as with illustrating their own particular programs of education. Spokesmen for three of the five groups felt that some challenges put them in a defensive and somewhat awkward position by implying that something was wrong with the present school system and needed changing. These groups consider "Challenge" primarily a public relations program to show viewers what they are doing. KMOX-TV, however, minimizes this conception through the moderator, the parents panel, and questions from viewers at home which are anonymous and presented without editing unless there should be a violation of the NAB Code and station responsibility.

This problem of divergent purposes is resolved at KMOX-TV by a tactful outline of the program's proposed theme at the time of contact. Careful handling has brought some reluctant participants into agreement with the objectives of the program and left them with satisfaction at its conclusion. The resultant reputation of the program and its apparent lack of dedication to exposé have instilled a degree of confidence in the participants receiving treatment, and therefore greater acceptance among prospective participants.¹⁷

In some programs there will be times when a participant will cancel his appearance. A public official,

¹⁷Interview with John Kirby, Chairman of the "Close Up" Committee for the Bar Association of St. Louis, January 27, 1960.

for example, was under considerable pressure to explain alleged inefficiencies in his office. Scheduled for an appearance on "Eye on St. Louis," he called the station just hours before air time to declare he was sick and unable to go on. In other circumstances, the station may have to cancel a proposed program, as happened when it was discovered that a Japanese Trade Fair delegation's English was too limited to make the program worthwhile.

To avoid being suddenly without a program, the producers of "Eye on St. Louis" have a number of reserve programs or personalities. The programs are on videotape or on film and the personalities understand that they may be called upon short notice. As a matter of fact, however, resourcefulness has made it possible to secure a significant subject or appropriate guest without resort to reserve programs or personalities except in less than a half-dozen instances during the series' five years on the air.¹⁸

Organizations that are contacted to supply a spokesman for appearance on a program sometimes unintentionally hurt themselves and the station as well as bore the public. This may happen when an organization sends an "authority" without consideration of his having or lacking showmanship qualities. The "authority" was not able to communicate to the public, was vague in his answers, lacked a sense of perspective about the topic at hand, and added little color

¹⁸Wheatley, July 19, 1963.

to the program. The result is a dull, meaningless program.

Overcoming this problem is not always easy, for a play in "politics" is sometimes in progress. A wide knowledge of the community and the people who work directly with the topic to be discussed can sidestep these personal issues by making a request for a particular member of the organization. Otherwise, the program's moderator must use his greatest skills to overcome the handicap.

Unscripted interview programs are especially vulnerable to unexpected remarks including slander. One participant appearing on KMOX-TV had the misfortune to refer to mentally handicapped children as "dummies," not a slanderous remark, but certainly an embarrassing one. There was little chance for the station to foresee such an event and little the moderator could do other than try to correct the possible impression made by challenging the use of the word or by passing off the word as a familiar or mistaken usage.

Currently, to avoid association of the participants' remarks either with the point of view of the sponsor or the station, a slide is shown at the end of the broadcast disclaiming responsibility for statements of the guests.

Preparation and rehearsal

Lack of preparation in fundamental television procedures for amateur talent caused a shaky production debut

of the "P.S. 4" program. Teachers of the public schools were to take part in the series as qualified authorities and prepare their own lessons for the program. They were given nearly the total burden of on-the-air responsibility, but in the process were not prepared for many of the commonly expected problems of television production. The volume of production at the station and the consequent limited time for briefing and rehearsal resulted in a certain amount of unavoidable tension and minor errors.

The station's producers and directors chose to give a minimum of technical instruction to avoid loss of spontaneity and to make the teacher as relaxed and comfortable as possible. The emphasis, so far as KMOX-TV is concerned, should be on direct person to person communication even if some technical skills are learned only through continued experience before the cameras. Minor errors, such as those that occurred on this program, can even contribute to the "humanity" of the performer and to a closer relationship to the viewers.¹⁹

When briefings or rehearsals are held, a meeting of thirty minutes to an hour is usually considered sufficient. If needed, a short fifteen minute rehearsal of pertinent points is taken inside the studio. If guests are held in longer rehearsals to go over their material, they generally

¹⁹Ibid.

lose detail in the retelling of their story when on the air. These meetings do have the advantage, however, of channeling the participant's thought in the direction of the program topic beforehand, and to acquaint him with other participants so that all may feel more at ease.

Wheatley uses this meeting to quickly go over the purpose of the program, the main areas to be considered, proper statement of the problem in precise terms intelligible to the lay viewer, either in question or declarative form, correct introductions and perhaps, but not always or completely, possible questions he may ask. If there is more than one guest, specific areas of knowledge among the guests are clarified so that questions can be directed to the proper party without confusion or loss of time. If there is to be a panel to ask questions as on "Close Up," each panel member becomes aware of the general areas of discussion planned by the members so they will not unwittingly monopolize the discussion.

Wheatley also concentrates his attention on the language participants use by engaging them in short topical discussions. Besides warming up the participants, it often reveals any tendency to use technical language unfamiliar to the layman. If the tendency exists, Wheatley can point this out and perhaps help the participant realize how to make it clear to the audience.

The use of visuals is also covered in this meeting.

Without an understanding of exactly how participants will make their transition from discussion to demonstration by visuals, the production crew may be caught with cameras out of position. Wheatley runs through the transition going into and coming away from the visuals to ascertain the complexity of the situation, and if necessary has cue sheets drawn up for the production crew.

In-studio rehearsals are limited to lining up the cameras, rehearsing the opening and closing sequences, and perhaps running through the sequences in which visuals are planned. Every effort is made to heighten communication and reduce the layman's concern about technical television details. These latter are primarily the responsibility of the station staff.

To follow through on efforts which would ease the burden on the guests, Wheatley actually says:

Please don't look at the cameras excepting when you are first introduced, although it isn't necessary even then. Try to talk with me or with the panelists and pretend you are at home in your living room. Forget about the lights and television cameras. And for heaven's sake, don't read a question or answer unless you must directly quote a document or individual.

Let's all relax, say what we think, and have a good time. We'll be ready in a minute.

Aesthetic appeal

Directors, having established nearly stationary positions for interview programs in the interests of efficiency, have all but eliminated the television camera as a creative tool able to punctuate points made in the debate.

Thus, programs seldom achieve a uniqueness because of television, but in spite of it.

Special Problems in Controversial Programming

Two policies have been reserved for discussion at this point because they are most adequately realized in the extreme conditions of controversial programming. One is a policy of CBS, Inc., the other a policy of Parker Wheatley's.

Choice of subject is inviolable

The first of these is a policy which holds that the choice of programs and subject matter is KMOX-TV's and that that choice is inviolable. That clear understanding is important as illustrated in a controversial subject which was the center of a disagreement in the preparation of a "Close Up" program. Harold J. Gibbons, a Teamsters Union officer, had been asked to appear for a second time on the program by KMOX-TV. Because of his experience in St. Louis and his close relationship with the controversial Teamsters President, James R. Hoffa, Gibbons was very unpopular among many St. Louisans. The Bar Association which had arranged for the panelists when Gibbons had first appeared, balked at what they considered to be giving undue exposure to the presence of the union leader by a second appearance. The

group feared adverse publicity.²⁰

The station, nevertheless, proceeded to invite panelists as individuals, and in fact, succeeded in securing attorneys. Subsequently, however, the Bar Association's "Close Up" Committee asked to meet with Wilkey and Wheatley to request a veto power over guests on the program. They were turned down, both for reasons of principle and the expectations of the FCC, although it was agreed that the Association could bow out and avoid participating as an organization if a particular guest was unacceptable.

The Bar Association accepted the broadcaster's position in good faith, however, because they felt the station had considered its policy of inviolability in this matter carefully. Those experiences have promoted respect for the station's position and relations are considered "excellent."²¹

Paid sponsorship is no exception to the rule of inviolability. Occasionally, sponsors have withdrawn their support as did one when it objected to a program on birth control.²² The advertiser was not long in returning his support to the series, however.

²⁰Kirby.

²¹Ibid.

²²Wheatley, April 19, 1960.

Respect for participant,
content, and audience

Interviews can be very misleading. A guest before the questions of a hostile panel is at a distinct disadvantage. Another before a friendly panel can do no wrong. A man's concern over the community may be made to appear silly. Shallow or flip answers may be given as solutions to very complex problems. To protect the parties and material presented on a program from distortion, Wheatley exercises a philosophy of "respect for participant, content, and audience," a "personal policy of attitude."²³

Wheatley feels his role is to move the interview program as close as possible to a state of honest and full communication. This means protection from distortion and oversimplification and he tries to offer that protection in each of the public affairs programs.²⁴

In preparation

Care is taken to provide this protection against distortion in the first stages of preparing the program. For example, if a controversial question is to be discussed, an effort is made to have both sides of the question presented. "Eye on St. Louis" might therefore have opposing spokesmen in debate form on one program, or arrange to have opposing sides on consecutive evenings. This arrangement

²³Ibid., May 17, 1961.

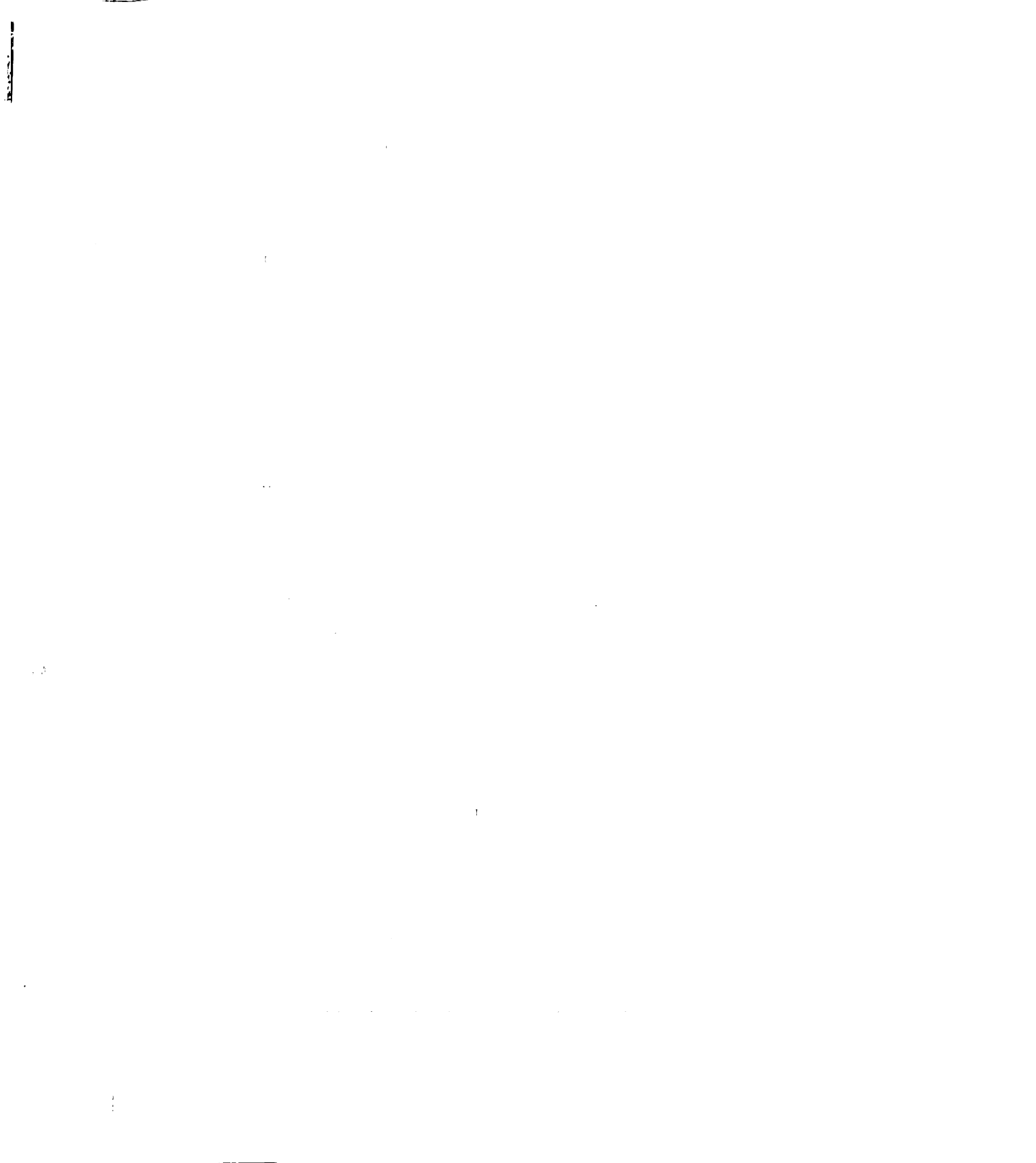
²⁴Ibid.

helps to protect the audience, content, and participant for the opponents are quick to point out the other's distortions.

The Bar Association applies this philosophy on "Close Up." As soon as the guest is established, the Bar's Chairman of the "Close Up" committee writes three people to interview him. In choosing panelists he attempts to balance strength. For example, if the featured guest was a conservative, the panel would consist of one other conservative and two liberals, although a more recent practice is to choose three clear-cut liberals and eliminate a "friend-of-the court" panelist. Each of the panelists prepares his own questions. The only restriction is that they do not ask questions to purposely disparage the guest.²⁵ Thus, guest, content, and audience are protected from one-sided views.

Another reason for informing the guest of areas to be discussed is that surprise questions can be misleading. A participant caught unprepared may give a confused, and incomplete answer. Thus, the audience's understanding of the problem is impaired. Therefore, going over the areas of possible questioning first allows participants time to prepare their thoughts, to give a considered answer. If answered truthfully, it will probably be more informative

²⁵Kirby.



of the participant's position. It is possible, of course, that the participant will have to contrive an answer, but a clever opponent can then follow up with another question exposing the answer for what it is.

A participant's action is sometimes designed to avoid the issue at hand by seeking to limit questions before the program begins. The moderator who asks questions will have to decide whether or not the request is justifiable. The request does not necessarily imply that this is a device for deception. Consider Lord Attlee's reasoning for limiting questions on "Close Up." As an ex-prime minister, he can no longer speak for the British Government on matters of future policy and official views of the government.²⁶ Requesting participants to avoid questions in those areas was certainly justified.

On the air

Despite precautions taken prior to a program's production, the need to further develop and maintain full and honest communication exists. The interviewer must rely on the skills of his art to approach this state of communication in penetrating the veneer of politically expedient answers, in reaching a balanced exposure of ideas and positions, in staying with important issues in spite of evasion,

²⁶Statement made by Lord Clement Attlee during preparations for "Close Up," November 28, 1959.

and insisting the participant hold to his own responsibility of honesty and clarity in expressing his position. He must maintain the participant's willingness to be challenged.

While these skills are often personal and vary with the circumstances, the general rules may be recorded. A previous discussion covered the necessity of preparation of the participants beforehand. Once on the air, the moderator must be able to detect methods which deny the public information or distort the issue. Some of those methods seen on "Eye on St. Louis" or "Close Up" have been:

(1) withholding pertinent and related facts through failure to mention them, (2) withholding facts even after a direct question, (3) evading the question through a plea of ignorance or claiming lack of authority to comment, (4) refusing to go beyond general statements, (5) directing the question to a completely different thought, (6) turning the question about to make the questioner appear ridiculously cheap and unfair, perhaps even reprimand the questioner for being impertinent.

Wheatley overcomes these evasions by insisting on asking questions from the audience's point of view to avoid a personal clash. Perhaps the question would be phrased: "Some community groups seem to feel that this plan is unfair because. . . . How do you react to this charge?" The question having been presented in a fair and impartial

manner is hard to avoid and generally brings forth a direct answer. The answer, of course, may not satisfy the viewer; but the viewer is, at least, in a better position to judge a specific argument rather than a vague statement. It is also often satisfying to a guest when he is able to answer public charges which are put to him squarely and without emotional overtones.

Another practice is to introduce the participants by identifying them with organizations which they represent. With direct questions, Wheatley establishes their position on the issue to be discussed. Through this technique, the audience is in a better position to judge statements which reflect vested interests and for judging the participant's authority for a given statement. Probing questions then help to establish and even change the direction of the conversation or discussion.

This lucidness, perhaps, is the key to the popularity of "Eye on St. Louis" and "Close Up." Participants are equally pleased with the handling of the program. They feel at ease and secure in their faith that the questions are not conceived in sensationalism or trickery, but in a sincere effort to get the story told clearly and with fairness to all parties. As one person cooperating with KMOX-TV put it, "I haven't heard any guest who hasn't commented that he had a good time."²⁷

²⁷Kirby.

It should be emphasized, however, that KMOX-TV does not abdicate its responsibility to the viewer by any advance preparation. Each participant is told that it is impossible to decide upon every question in advance and detail; that his answers may change any planned course of questioning and that both he and the questioner are free to act spontaneously and candidly in unrehearsed interview, discussion, or debate.

In Retrospect

Parker Wheatley and Gene Wilkey are generally pleased with the acceptance of KMOX-TV's public affairs programming by the advertisers and audiences alike. They are justly proud of the important awards they have received.²⁸ These men also feel that the broad "television audience" is becoming more discriminating in its taste, at least in St. Louis. As evidence, they point to their program's sizable audiences today which would have been unimaginable some years ago.²⁹

²⁸Typical of Wheatley's and KMOX-TV's honors is a citation recognizing the station as "producing the caliber of programming . . . that has had a wholesome impact on the total community. Through the intelligent and judicious use of this influential medium of television, he [Wheatley] is aiding the development of a better community through fair and objective presentations." This citation was presented by the St. Louis Argus, a Negro community paper, dated April 8, 1963.

²⁹Interview with Don Markley, KMOX-TV Program Director, March 19, 1963.

Growing Public Acceptance
of Television

Educators, often thought of as hard to please regarding television, have accepted KMOX-TV in a show of confidence through combining efforts for mutual benefits. This is not only true in their efforts of programming, but in less spectacular ways as well. For example, a Television Reading Service was established in October, 1961 with the cooperation of public and parochial schools, and city and county libraries in the metropolitan area.

Five school consultants and four librarians developed a bibliography of recommended books which supplement KMOX-TV television programs of interest to elementary and high school boys and girls. Oversized sheets list programs and recommended books for appropriate grade levels. These lists are periodically reordered by over eight hundred schools in the cities and near-by counties of both Missouri and Illinois.

All cooperating parties see the purpose of this service as one way to promote student selectivity in television programs and an interest in returning to the reading of good literature. A newspaper report on the program indicated that the service is having a strong influence on the student's viewing reading habits.³⁰

³⁰Olivia Skinner, "Using TV to Encourage Children to Read," The Everyday Magazine, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, December 29, 1961. Reprints available from KMOX-TV.

Churches are also becoming concerned with their showing on television. Wheatley has noted that many religious leaders are questioning the churches' meaning and very survival in today's mobile and materialistic society. One solution, Wheatley points out, is to go beyond the "church service" to programs which more specifically draw religion and church to the everyday life of the community. While a few nationally syndicated or network religious programs are attempting such an approach with some success, practical ideas and resources are still largely lacking on the local level.

Wheatley also suggests programs having religious comment on news of the week, on issues of the community, and bringing in all races and creeds on individual and social problems common to the community.

Broadcasters' Interest Growing

The outcry of a few years ago which renewed interest in public affairs programming was centered largely on the quantity of offerings. Wheatley feels that broadcasters are now coming to realize that public affairs programming needs emphasis on quality and must seek it in new methods of production and more effective means of communicating ideas.

The present offerings, he feels, have become routine in the eyes of both producer and viewer. There has been little deviation from panel discussions and

interviews at the local level because of the economic limitations of commercial television. Documentaries, good or bad, are out of reach of many stations because of the large cost and time required in their production and they, too, tend to stereotyped forms.

To help solve this problem, Wheatley feels that new research is needed on how to effectively reach and communicate with the live commercial television audience as distinguished from the more captive classroom audiences or smaller special publics of educational television.

Importance to Democracy

With our citizenry faced with growing responsibilities and problems in urbanization, automation, education, international relations, the changing economic scene, and shifting population age groupings, Wheatley is convinced that public affairs programming needs to continue and constantly improve its mission of informing the public about the issues and possible solutions. He feels that our democratic form of government continues to rely on an informed citizenry and as the complexity and difficulty of these problems grow, the more difficult it is for the citizen to be aware of issues that affect him. The mass media, including television, must provide the means to insure that the audience has access to that information.

The difficulties of such programming, in conjunction with the system's need for operating at a profit,

demand an extended look on the relationship of television's parts by those who govern and support television, says Wheatley. Research is needed in this area, too.

Sponsors need a more detailed understanding than present ratings have been able to give about an audience. Broadcasters must discover the character of their individual audiences and their status in the community to provide them with a more meaningful service. Public thought must be given on the extent to which responsibility reaches into the community in support of good public affairs programming. How much can be expected of the business community? Of public institutions? Of religious organizations? Of the general public?

"Inside KMOX-TV" has stimulated some citizen groups into studying television operations more closely. Their questions sent to the program demonstrate a growing understanding of broadcasting's problems. The public must continue to further its understanding of television's practical aspect; but it cannot afford to forget the part television is capable of playing in what the NAB President Leroy Collins calls "building a more literate populace in an expanding and increasingly complex world."³¹

³¹Arthur Perles, "Industry Battle Cry: The Public Interest 'Our Responsibility,'" Radio-Television Daily, April 2, 1963, p. 4.

CHAPTER V

DEVELOPING COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS FOR LOCAL PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROGRAMMING

"If only we could get on television to tell our story," is a widespread feeling among many community groups. If that group is truly responsible and is representative of the community, there is little reason why it should not realize its goal. Broadcasters welcome the support of community organizations if they are ready and willing to assume the responsibilities inherent in broadcasting. The purpose of this chapter is to outline the steps a community organization may take to earn itself a position on the air and then follow through responsibly. The outline is based on the experiences and practices of those organizations in St. Louis which appear on or aid in the production of public affairs programming at KMOX-TV.

Broadcasters Welcome Support

Much has been said in recent years about television "drying up" for lack of material to fill the countless hours of programming. Local broadcasters, as well as the networks find difficulty in filling the public affairs schedule. They are, therefore, most happy to receive

outside help to alleviate the problem.

This does not mean that broadcasters will accept any offering or group. Community organizations should realize that many broadcasters have a sincere desire to be a part of the community and to do what they can to make their service area a better place to live. Therefore, organizations will find greater acceptance, generally, if they are themselves working toward bettering the entire community and are not limited to exclusive interests.

These factors, and a growing feeling that public affairs programming can be a good business investment, move the station into the good graces of the Federal Communications Commission and encourage a broadcaster's desire to enter into long range planning to utilize the talent and ideas responsible and representative community organizations have to offer.

From this point, the discussion will assume organizations as being representative.

A Community Organization's Road to Air Time

"Responsible" should be the key word describing organizations seeking air time as far as this chapter is concerned. At this stage of development in the television industry a proposed series will generally replace an already existing program and is therefore expected to equal or surpass past standards. A discussion of the basic

requirements for coproducing a series and ways in which organizations solve their problems will follow.

Requires Idea Beneficial to Community

The organization seeking to "get on the air" must first have a concrete idea of how it intends to produce a program with a minimum of self-interest ingrained in the program. No matter how representative an organization may be, it cannot expect to win a place if it only seeks self-glorification or profit. The program idea must be based on the broad needs of the community, both in content and interest.

An organization of downtown merchants approached KMOX-TV with an idea which clearly reflected little interest in the community at large, but a great deal of interest in getting customers into their downtown stores. The idea was quickly turned down. They may have done better had they intended to demonstrate problems in the downtown area and efforts of citizens to correct them, or perhaps, they may have dealt with social and historic aspects of the city's downtown area.

Requires Able Staff

Ability to demonstrate that a staff will assume responsibility to prepare and guide the series is a strong point in favor of an organization. That staff should also be willing to co-operate and to compromise with the

broadcaster in matters of production and presentation. The organization's staff should finally be willing to assume full liability of content for which they are responsible.

The staffs working with KMOX-TV vary in size, ability, and effectiveness; but all have met the qualifications required by KMOX-TV. Here is a brief survey of those staff structures.

Three organizations have staffs serving without special funds for their television work. In consultation with upper echelon officials, the manager of KSLH, an FM radio station owned by the St. Louis Public Schools, coordinates all activities from determining subject matter to securing panelists for the public schools' "Challenge" program. In another arrangement a twelve man committee under the chairman of the "Close Up" committee for the Bar Association of St. Louis rotates the assumption of responsibilities of securing panelists for the "Close Up" program. A similar committee of thirteen members under a chairman rotates the responsibility of preparation and organization for the Rabbinical Association's "Faith of Our Fathers" series.

A paid, part-time staff member heads a Superintendent's Public Relations TV Committee for the St. Louis County Public Schools. Under this plan, the Acting Director of the Audio-Visual Department of the St. Louis County Public Schools also serves as Director of Television Activities

and devotes one-fifth of his time to the county school's portion of "Challenge."

Broadcasting assignments are handled by paid full-time staff members of the Catholic Radio and Television Apostolate of St. Louis for "Challenge" and "Quiz-a-Catholic," and of the Television Board of the St. Louis Lutheran Pastoral Conference for their portion of "Challenge" and "Way of Life."

All these organizational structures have proved effective in meeting a schedule of productions and apparently serve the needs of the parent organization. Those positive factors which seem most successful in organization and production will be emphasized.

Requires Practical Production

The enormous cost of producing even a fifteen minute discussion program behooves the co-operating organization to devise the simplest means of production suitable to its basic needs. If the program will involve definite camera movement, speeches, or sequence of events, the producers should see to it that scripts are prepared in an orderly and precise manner so that there is no doubt of what must be done with a minimum of needed rehearsal. Talent acquired by the organization should be well-rehearsed and know exactly what to do at all times so as not to waste limited assigned time.

Methods of production
at KMOX-TV

Most all programs co-produced by outside organizations at KMOX-TV use a presentation, discussion, or debate format. These are easily prepared and involve a minimum amount of the station's production and engineering crews. In the case of "Quiz-a-Catholic" and "Way of Life" which are more complex, the sponsoring organizations have a trained staff to prepare and organize the program and rehearse the talent to such a fine state that it can go into formal production with little demand on the station's production staff. This arrangement is better for both parties; the station is able to offer time to an organization at a minimum cost and loss of time, and the organization is able to produce a program and meet its needs of maintaining control over its direction up to air time.

A decision as to what is practical rightly belongs to the station's staff for they are trained and experienced in making such judgments. Most broadcasters are willing to take time to explain why they feel the way they do and to offer some suggestions on how the organization's proposals may be met.

Understanding use
of videotape

Videotape was thought to be one answer to solving some production problems facing co-producing organizations in St. Louis. The organizations made a mistake, however,



in assuming that videotape was similar to audiotape although, perhaps, being a little more expensive. Some felt that they might record outstanding personalities when they were available and hold them for later broadcast. In this manner, they would also have been able to build up a backlog of programs for the dull summer months. Two main factors prevented such use--cost and the broadcaster's purpose in using videotape.

In the first place, a standard half-hour of videotape costs nearly \$125.00. Typing up a huge investment in stored programs is an unreasonable burden on the broadcaster. Furthermore, an organization holding one program on tape over several weeks prevents that tape's use by several groups which could record, broadcast and dispose of it for reuse.

Secondly, broadcasters usually turn to videotape for reasons of economy and convenience. Utilizing slack hours during the day to record programs reduces the need for expensive crews to be held over long hours. It also enables the station to spread out production chores at pre-planned intervals which alleviate last minute rushes into the studio before air time.

Those organizations which come to understand the broadcaster's limitations, and who develop a concrete idea for a program which will benefit the entire community under a practical plan of production will have gone a long way

toward gaining air time from one of the local stations.

Developing Professional Attitudes

While many St. Louis organizations have convinced the broadcaster of their ability to produce a series, each varies in its ability to come up with meaningful programs. Some series move vigorously forward with subjects of real concern to the community; others have little direction and suffer for it. Organizations producing meaningful programs with consistency also have a more highly developed sense of professional attitudes. Consider some problems organizations face and how they are solved through developing such attitudes.

Establish Authority

The producer of "Challenge" for the St. Louis Public Schools faces a problem of undefined authority, caused by a "temporary" appointment which has not been changed since 1958; there is no definite understanding of where final approval of the proposed program topic and talent selection lies.¹ In effect, the producer must seek general approval from several sources for each program as it is scheduled. Concrete plans are forestalled from a lack of concern by the producer's superiors. This places some

¹Personal interview with E. Marguerite Fleming, General Manager of KSLH-FM, St. Louis Public Schools, November 16, 1959.

unnecessary anxieties and pressures on the producer and the talent.

Other organizations delegate authority to a specific group. The Bar Association of St. Louis, for example, appoints a twelve man "Close Up" committee with a chairman able to call upon its members to aid in the fulfillment of program responsibilities. Another plan by the St. Louis County Schools is the arrangement whereby the Acting Director of the Audio-Visual Education Department is authorized to use one-fifth of his time in the production of "Challenge" and "Coffee Break," the latter program being carried on the educational television station, KETC-TV. The director handles administrative affairs and produces the program after the Superintendent's Public Relations TV Committee has established the topic and suggested the talent.² The Lutheran and Catholic organizations, as mentioned earlier, have a professional production unit with full authority.

Establishing authority in a professional manner can be an important factor in motivating individuals within the organization. It promotes co-operation with program plans and seems to promote professional attitudes.

Another measure of the effectiveness of organizational authority is in its ability to plan ahead. Lack of

²Personal interview with Hugo Beck, Chairman of the Superintendents Public Relations Committee, St. Louis County, January 26, 1960.

a comprehensive plan often results in a series of disorganized topics conceived as an individual unit. The shaping of public opinion, for which most organizations claim to strive, is forfeited through a lack of co-ordinated effort.

Lack of such foresight permitted a school system to face a tax crisis in 1960 with only one program designed to inform the public of this significant event. By 1962, a new attitude was evident within the same organization. A few months before a new tax election was to be held, the producer and school administrators made detailed plans to give the "Challenge" program direction toward interpreting the schools' needs and had arranged for other programs on other city radio and television outlets. In 1963, because of the extreme need for public understanding and support, the school combined a similar line-up of programs concurrent with paid announcements.

Some organizations prefer to spread out production responsibility to ease the burden. The St. Louis Rabbinical Association, for example, rotates production responsibilities among thirteen members. Each plans his own topic and format independently of the others. Some programs are aimed at a non-Jewish audience; others are sermons for those accepting the faith.³ The producers lose an opportunity to provide over-all direction to their programming

³Personal interview with Rabbi Abraham Halpern, St. Louis Rabbinical Association, February 9, 1960.

so the burden is transferred to the viewer who must organize his impressions from a rather random sampling of social and ethical ideals held by members of the Jewish faith.

One way to unify rotating responsibilities is demonstrated by the Television Board of the St. Louis Lutheran Pastoral Conference. This unit grew with the realization that pastors, though having considerable public speaking experience, were not prepared for producing their own television programs. The Board first established a format based on the traditional Lutheran worship service. They then issued oral instructions on preparations for broadcasts which proved inadequate. Now, a letter of instruction directs the activity of planning and preparing a program. It also serves as an important check list for the pastors. This method, coupled with a visit by a Board member at rehearsal appears to have greatly reduced confusion and increased efficiency of preparation, confidence in participants, and smoothness in final production.⁴

Provision of Funds

The amount and kind of publicity, access to visuals and other aids, ability to cover nominal costs of mailing, and transportation vary with each organization's budget.

⁴Personal interview with Dr. Eugene R. Bertermann, Chairman of the Television Board, and Executive Director of the Lutheran Church Foundation, Missouri Synod, St. Louis, Missouri, January 27, 1960.

Many must use a general fund, but others do have a definite budget allowing them to plan financial support for their television program to their best advantage. While most of these differences can be overcome by budget organizations, it is interesting to note what those organizations having money are able to do with it.

One use of such funds is tied to publicity efforts which go beyond house organs and KMOX-TV spot promotion of their program.

Few groups ask two basic questions of their promotion: (1) At whom should the publicity be aimed? and (2) How extensive should the promotion be? These groups seem to expect a "general" audience to tune to their program.

The St. Louis County Schools have explored the problems of publicity perhaps further than the others but no concrete results of their publicity efforts are available. Their most notable effort has been in the form of "hot off the press" circulars complete with a reprinted picture of the program as it was being videotaped and a resume of questions actually discussed on the program. Prompt distribution to co-operating county school systems and other interested organizations promoted some excitement among those receiving the circular.

Funds also permitted the purchase of videotape by the county schools so programs might be saved for a period

of time without tying up KMOX-TV tapes.

The professional organizations, of course, had budgets large enough to support a full time staff, part of which devoted its time to KMOX-TV productions. The principal advantage these organizations held over other groups was manpower with time to carefully prepare and rehearse a program before going into final production. The result was that participants were more thoroughly prepared for their role on television.

The provision of specific funds in itself does little to increase the significance of programs produced. Keeping television costs separate from general funds gives a more accurate accounting of expense, however, and permits the recovery of personal expense by participants.

Importance of Outside Rehearsal

A gentleman practiced in making public addresses was observed arriving at the television studio in preparation for a "Challenge" program. Another participant asked him if he'd studied the problem to be discussed on the program. The gentleman's reply was to the effect that he'd been much too busy preparing a speech for a school group. It had probably not occurred to the gentleman that in the single appearance on television he'd reach more people than he would in more than a dozen appearances at school functions.

The vast audience size available to co-operating organizations behooves them to insure in whatever ways they can that participants are fully prepared to make the most of the opportunity. Organizations vary in their methods of preparing participants and some participants and topics need less preparation than others. Let us see how the various organizations prepare their representatives prior to reaching KMOX-TV.

A few producers or unit heads tend to let participants do their own preparation and offer themselves as consultants only. Unless the participant has had experience in organizing and preparing himself for television programs, the chances are that much important information will be left unsaid to the detriment of the organization. Better results may be had if a meeting is arranged to have all participants and other interested parties explore the significant possibilities together. Shaping thoughts and effective means of expressing them orally or with visual aids will tend to give cohesion to the program and a sense of direction the viewer can appreciate.

Where a great many visuals are used, time should be spent in carefully rehearsing the sequence and the salient points of the individual picture, graph, chart, etc.

Content is always left to the authorities. The television committee's function is to aid in organization and expression of ideas to achieve clarity and

effectiveness. The committee also strives to focus attention on meeting the purpose of the program.

Occasionally outside production units forget that the station's purpose goes beyond simple promotion of the organization. Therefore, some time and thought should be given to meeting unexpected questions which force the participant to justify the organization's position.

The Lutheran organization's Television Board takes steps to overcome these problems. At one meeting, participants discuss opposing sides of the question as they understand them. They are then asked to conduct their own research on both sides of the issue at hand and they return about a week later for a second meeting. Here they test and challenge each other on their statements and significance of thought to reveal weaknesses in each's preparation. Participants are then expected to take remedial steps to correct those weaknesses before appearing on the program.

The most elaborate form of rehearsal is used in preparation for "Quiz-a-Catholic," a panel quiz show using three regular panelists and one guest. Besides receiving basic television instruction, panelists are carefully coached on how to ask questions and are given practice in logically following up answers.

A different priest appears each week as the authority. He offers a one minute explanation about the object

of the quiz in relation to the teachings and beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church. Like the guest panelist, he is also indoctrinated in television procedures and techniques.

Three program rehearsals for a total of six to twelve hours are spent on each program. Special emphasis is given to developing a relaxed informal approach in the priest's explanations. The Director of the Radio and Television Apostolate claims that even a high ranking bishop would be required to take the course before appearing on the program.⁵

Similar care was taken in an older format the Catholic organization used in the "Challenge" series. Called "On Trial," the program featured an exchange of views by opposing attorneys in a trial setting with perhaps a teacher as witness. Meticulous control over the program's direction and the revelation of views was built up through rehearsals of this unscripted production.

It is the rehearsal stage in which most organizations can effectively demonstrate the need for professional attitudes. Here the participant can begin to understand the significance of representing the parent organization before the large audience of television.

⁵Personal interview with Rev. Francis J. Mathews, Director of the Catholic Radio and Television Apostolate of St. Louis, January 27, 1960.

Attitudes toward Controversy

Co-operating organizational production units vary in their reaction to controversial subject matter. For some, controversy spells danger and is considered unmanageable; for others it evokes a challenge and is considered an opportunity to clarify the controversy and the alternative actions.

For the viewer, controversial programs can be most rewarding and can stimulate real thought if handled without a strident emotional overtone.

It is not the subject that requires so much concern as the need for preparing the participants to handle it. Of the organizations handling emotional subjects, the Lutheran's Television Board appears to most consciously prepare its participants to be knowledgeable of and to resolve the implications of the subject outside the emotional sphere.

Organizations as well as broadcasters sometimes need reminding that the Federal Communications Commission looks to the broadcasting of controversial issues in the public interest as a part of balanced programming.

These production units which do not avoid controversy claim there is nothing to fear and a great deal to be gained in careful explanation of the organization's position on the controversial issue.

The Packaged Program

Once the organization has established a television production unit capable of meeting the problems discussed in this chapter, the packaging of a meaningful program is a matter of applying imagination to the basic steps of the building process.

Selecting the topic

Participating organizations at KMOX-TV first select a topic based on current events or other interests the organization feels may have broad and timely viewer appeal. Organizations tending to have production units of make-shift quality and lacking authority are forced into a complicated procedure to secure a topic. Various officials of the organization must be consulted about possible topics. Then general approval must be won for a single topic. As organizations tend toward support of a more professional structure, the selection is more easily made. A few leave the entire choice with the production unit.

Selecting participants

The same procedure in the selection of topics is generally followed in determining the participants.

There is some difference in the qualities organizations seek from a participant. While all believe that the basic criteria are knowledge and experience applicable to the subject, some also stress a facility to communicate



effectively and reflection of assurance and composure on behalf of the organization.

If precautions are not made in determining a balance of qualities beforehand, the organization may have found itself committed to using an unacceptable participant with no face saving way to replace him. One technique used to prevent such a problem is to establish a topic far enough in advance to allow the producer time to talk with and observe potential participants, selecting those best fitting the program's needs. A kind of talent scout is used to do this by the producers of "Quiz-a-Catholic" in securing guest panelists from various parishes of the church. The results of such efforts appear to be rewarding.

Heavy demands on producers' time curtail a more widespread use of such techniques among other organizations.

Insuring participant's preparedness

Aside from scheduled meetings and rehearsals which have been previously discussed, production units are concerned with making clear the organization's purpose in producing the specific program. Without such an understanding, unit heads claim that participants are prone to wander from the point of the program.

The County School's unit uses a three point system to insure understanding, beginning their first contact by telephone or letter. The program's purpose and the

participant's relation to the discussion are discussed orally. Second, a follow-up letter is sent detailing the purpose and the specific contributions the participant can make to the program. Background information on the other participants is included to provide a further picture of what might be expected. Finally, a simple outline script detailing the open, close, and general content of the program is presented at a "warm-up" meeting prior to production. The County School's Director of Television Activities suggests that this procedure "insures a running start into the discussion" and helps the participants to pace themselves.⁶

Meeting technical requirements

Broadcasters usually prefer that visuals, especially pictures or drawings planned for use in the program, be submitted to the station some days in advance of the production date. This is a precautionary measure to insure that visuals are properly mounted, identified, and reproduced with sufficient quality to meet broadcast standards. If the visual is not adequate, there is time to rectify the situation and both parties are saved the embarrassment of last minute adjustment or rejection.

⁶Personal interview with Paul Andereck, Audio-Visual Department of the St. Louis County Schools, January 26, 1960.

This requirement tends to be waived when it is apparent that the production unit is aware of technical standards and demonstrates full responsibility in meeting them.

A script of clear explanation of just when and how the visuals are to be used should accompany the aids. Any special arrangements for projection units, picture holders, cue sheets, special sets, etc. can then be made before the participants arrive.

Submitting a script

If scripts are used, about ten clearly reproduced copies should be sent to the station several days before use. These scripts should meet accepted television standards of form and should include information about the set, audio, visual, and lighting equipment needed, as well as a list of participants, time of rehearsals, and production.

If a station moderator is expected to pull the story out of participants in a discussion type program, questions which the organization wishes to have raised should be written simply and directly. The moderator will phrase those questions in his own style with regard to the situation as it will be at the moment. KMOX-TV, however, makes clear to co-operating organizations that its representative, the moderator, will and must necessarily function in the station's and viewer's interest.

Promoting efforts

Solutions to the aforementioned problems vary with the organization's needs and abilities. Careful preparation to overcome these problems, production unit heads agree, tends to promote cordial relations with the broadcaster, more meaningful programs for the viewer, and a more successful fulfillment of purpose for the organization.

While significant production steps have been discussed in this chapter, they have been largely mechanical steps--the machinery of production. Equally important is the spirit of professionalism which instills a spirit of vitality and liveness in the program. This is sometimes called showmanship which seems, to some persons, to be apart from lofty purposes.

Yet, most organizations participating in public affairs programming with KMOX-TV would agree with the professional broadcaster who said:

No one has the right to expect anyone to watch or listen to tedious programming of any kind, no matter how enlightening or inspirational the theme. . . . Radio and television are not substitutes for a teacher. They can encourage, titillate, stir, motivate, and provide a launching platform for the rockets that are ideas.⁷

This same speaker outlined what he considered necessary steps of handling public affairs programming. First among these steps was "inventive originality and

⁷"Put Show Biz into Pubserv Programming--Santangelo," Radio-Television Daily, April 28, 1961, p. 3.

entertainment" within the program product. He then emphasized the importance of following up with "old fashioned tub-thumping," . . . "materials for the press," . . . and "seizing as many public platforms as possible."

These promotional steps would be more feasible with the broadcasters to whom the talk was addressed than general community organizations; but St. Louis organizations tend to agree that more promotion would be advantageous.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions about KMOX-TV's public affairs programming are largely derived from interviews with the station's management staff, including General Manager Eugene Wilkey, past and present Program Directors Leon Drew and Don Markley, General Sales Manager Charles McAbee, Jr., and Public Affairs Director Parker Wheatley. Although their opinions are naturally subjective, they are overwhelmingly compatible with one another and carry the conviction of successful practice, attested by advertiser support of the station and by audience interest as measured by A. C. Nielsen, Pulse, the American Research Bureau, and mail response to specific programs.

Other evaluations have been drawn from interviews and correspondence with school officials, religious leaders, businessmen, and other local leaders who head the television production units of organizations which have supplied program material to the station.

General Conclusions

KMOX-TV Serves Community Needs

Both in its creed and in its management's public statements, KMOX-TV has proclaimed an aim to supplement its network schedule of news and public affairs with local programs designed to serve the specific needs of its community. Accordingly, it provides:

- 1) A regular schedule of offerings devoted to religion, education, public issues and problems.
- 2) A platform accessible to both organizations and individuals, and to both majority and minority interests.
- 3) A forum for highly controversial issues.
- 4) Broadcast hours, both daytime and prime time, which are favorable for public viewing and compatible with the program content.
- 5) Special programs which pre-empt regular schedules, both in local and network time.

Its public affairs programs are provided in addition to and are complementary to its news, editorials, and related types of material.

Audience Response to Public
Affairs Programs

Shortly after its inception in March, 1958, KMOX-TV captured the largest over-all audience and has maintained it against the competition of three other St. Louis stations. According to the General Manager, a good part of

the increased audience can be attributed to public affairs programming. One program in particular has been outstanding: "Eye on St. Louis," carried in prime time, 10:15 to 10:30 P.M., each weekday. As previously mentioned, this program has been able to attract up to half the available audience against syndicated action dramas, the Jack Paar, Johnny Carson, and Steve Allen shows.

Although lower in ratings, other public affairs programs have captured a majority of the audience available in their time periods and, more important, have been appreciated for the service they render. Chief among these is "P.S. 4," dedicated to reducing illiteracy in the metropolitan area. Letters and cards from relatives of those following this program carry high praise for its results.

As far as local polls and mail response can indicate, the audience for KMOX-TV public affairs offerings comes from all socio-economic groups.

Public Affairs Programs and Profits

No accurate statement can be made about the amount of profit to the station from its public affairs programming. The management is convinced, however, that the prestige accrued from this programming has been valuable and that its high ratings have boosted the station's over-all audience and thus attracted new sponsors.

The only sponsored local public affairs program at

KMOX-TV is "Eye on St. Louis." Because local public affairs programming in prime time was without precedent in St. Louis, most broadcasting and advertising professionals foresaw little success for the program at 10:15 P.M. To help attract sponsors, it was offered at Class "B" rates, which are lower than those for other prime time offerings. Sold either as a package or by participating spot advertisements, it is now fully sponsored and booked several months in advance. Sponsors are attracted by its large audience, its sales results, and its ability to make subjects meaningful without extreme emotionalism, even when they are controversial.

KMOX-TV Policies and Practices:
A Guide for Others

The ability to consistently produce what is termed meaningful public affairs programming may stem in part from KMOX-TV's position in a large market, but much of it results from policies and practices which might serve any station as a general guide. The guide can be summarized as follows:

- 1) Concentrate efforts at building a station image in the area of news and public affairs programming.
- 2) Couple the station's over-all programming with good business practices.
- 3) Give those responsible for news and public affairs a voice in the general management of the station.

Giving them second rate positions weakens the effort to build a station image of public service and leadership in the community.

4) If possible, provide an administrator to bring the news and public affairs departments close together. Coordination of efforts to supply depth to news and timeliness to public affairs programs will do much to make both types of offerings more meaningful. Furthermore, the presence of a person to handle administrative procedure can free the directors of the departments to concentrate their efforts on the programs.

5) Provide these departments with adequate staff and facilities to produce good programs.

6) Give them ample time in the program schedule. Half-hearted attempts at public service (limited, for example, to spot announcements) do little to build a reputation for community leadership. KMOX-TV has effectively devoted 25 per cent (thirty-three to thirty-five hours) or more of its weekly broadcast hours to news and public affairs. Of this, approximately 14 or 15 per cent (about twenty hours) consists of public affairs programs, about 9 per cent (thirteen hours) of which are produced locally.

7) Schedule these programs regularly, at times when they can be attended by most families. (KMOX-TV uses its regularly scheduled programs to open up issues to public thought. It schedules special programs or series for

depth studies.)

8) Cover as broad a range of subject matter as possible, so that no issue of public concern may be neglected.

9) By continuously analyzing the community and consulting with its organizations, encourage creativity and an active search for new ideas, new formats, and new program material.

10) Maintain inviolable against possible pressures by special interests, commercial or political, the station's control over choice of subject matter and program participants.

11) Seek full and honest communication between participants and audience. Show respect for the participants, not editing or staging their performance in a manner which will misrepresent or hamper their expression. Show respect for the content, not destroying its essential nature by ill-advised editing, or violating it by sensationalism or oversimplification. Show respect for the audience, not talking down to it or attempting to influence it with "hard sell" or propagandizing.

12) Insist on high production standards from all personnel. Do not allow crews to let down on their own standards just because the program does not sell a commercial product. All programs on the station influence the public's attitude towards it.

Production Guide for Community
Organizations

A variety of community groups have participated in the production of KMOX-TV programs. School systems of the city and county, both public and parochial, have regularly produced programs on educational problems. Six mornings a week for more than two years, the city public schools have produced an instructional series for illiterates. Colleges in the area have provided series in higher education. Representatives of the Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish faiths have contributed religious programming. These and various other civic organizations have come to realize that good programs do not just happen, but, rather, require competent and conscientious preparation.

From interviews with those responsible for building the programs has come the following list of principles, which may profitably be followed by any organization that wishes to prepare effective broadcast material:

1) The organization should designate one or more qualified persons as a production unit, with authority to direct the over-all planning of its programs, including selection of topics and participants, structuring of the content material, procurement of material ingredients, and rehearsal of the presentation.

2) Subjects should be of interest to the entire community (although religious programs may be more limited in this respect).

3) Controversial subjects are commendable. So say most organizations, although many shy from controversy in practice.

4) Care must be taken to select participants who can communicate effectively.

5) Professional attitudes should be instilled in all participants--and in members of the production unit.

6) A knowledge of broadcasting's technical requirements is needed for preparing visuals and scripts.

7) Program formats should be chosen to enhance the subject and communicate it effectively. For example, cultural subjects may be expressed best by dramatic or musical sequences, while public issues may be explored in debate. Although the format should be capable of execution, practicality should not be equated with the timidity or lack of imagination which force programs into the strictly radio format of a man, a desk, and a microphone.

8) The production unit must have adequate funds to pay for whatever the program requires to make it effective.

9) Having invested funds and effort in preparing a program, the organization should not neglect to promote an audience for it.

These are the principles to which most organizations subscribe. In practice, of course, each organization has had to adapt them to its ability, greater or smaller,

to supply the resources of money, manpower, and specialized knowledge required to accomplish its program goals.

Personal Conclusions

While gathering the data presented in this study, the author could not escape reaching some personal conclusions regarding the significance of KMOX-TV's public affairs programming to broadcasters and organizations in other communities. What he observed was commendable and worthy of emulation.

KMOX-TV's Contributions

Most impressive were:

1) The breadth of subjects covered, giving expression to the many parts of its community, and the depth which gave ample treatment to these subjects.

2) The demonstration that public affairs programs need not be dull, as shown by the remarkable audience record of "Eye on St. Louis."

3) The indication that public affairs programming can play a substantial role in bringing financial success to the broadcaster.

The station's management, led by Eugene Wilkey and Leon Drew, deserves commendation for its dedicated support of public affairs programming in general, its courageous innovations such as the introduction of a local public affairs program into five week nights of prime time, its

meaningful contributions beyond programming such as a metropolitan reading service, and for its continuing attention to the changing needs of the community.

For its implementation of program policy, commendation is also due the public affairs department, headed by Parker Wheatley. His department has performed with enthusiasm and inventiveness, developed a climate of open and meaningful expression, widened its scope of service with fresh program ideas and topics, striven to keep aware of viewpoints within the community, and continued to develop policies and practices which increase the value of its program.

This is not to contend that the KMOX-TV staff is the epitome of the industry, but that the positive steps it has taken to overcome problems in the area of public affairs are most deserving of attention.

Application to Other Stations

While most stations can adapt KMOX-TV policies and practices to their use, it is obvious that they cannot all achieve the same results. Small-market stations and weak large-market stations would have difficulty in meeting the expense of so extensive a schedule of public affairs programming as that offered by KMOX-TV. In these stations, time and talent are often a premium commodity invested only in commercially productive programs. Yet perhaps the risk of building programs which truly meet the needs of their

communities will deliver more income over a period of time than a schedule of entertainment varied only by public service material so scanty or so poorly produced that it does nothing to establish the stations as leaders in local affairs.

Trade observers foresee continued pressure for public affairs programming by the Federal Communications Commission.¹ Profits of broadcasters are expected to continue upwards, providing larger capabilities than they have had in the past,² and many stations indicate that they will be concentrating more heavily in public affairs. Competition in this area will apparently be heavier. The best prepared and most meaningful efforts may win increased prestige and thereby greater income.

Application to Community Organizations

St. Louis organizations have demonstrated their ability to make meaningful contributions to KMOX-TV programming. Without their special skills, knowledge, and involvement in community activities, the station would require a larger staff to provide its public service--if, indeed, it could continue to provide the service at all.

¹"FCC Weather: No Change in Temperature," Broadcasting, February 18, 1963, pp. 80, 82, 85.

²"Perspective 1963: Radio-TV Outlook Good, No Matter What," Broadcasting, February 18, 1963, pp. 67-71.

Station and organizations are both needed. Effective public affairs programming depends upon the willingness of both. If broadcasters have a legal obligation to seek out the needs and spokesmen of the community, does it not seem that the organizations which can speak to these needs should be morally obligated to aid the broadcasters?

Furthermore, when organizations agree to cooperate with the broadcaster in producing a program, they should realize that, by virtue of that agreement, they have taken on serious professional responsibilities. Organization and broadcaster are equally responsible for the success or failure of the program. Since the prestige of the organization will tend to rise or fall with the program's quality, it behooves that organization to devote sufficient time and effort to ensure the program's success.

Areas for Further Study

Because of the increasing interest in public affairs programming which is forecast in the industry, many further studies are needed in this area of activity. Research might be devoted to:

- 1) Techniques which can increase the ability of this programming to attract viewers and sponsors.
- 2) The relationship between public affairs programming and profits.
- 3) The issue of whether each broadcaster must have balanced programming, or whether that balance should be

effected by the complementary efforts of all stations within the community.

4) The question of whether a marginally operating station which is incapable of meeting its public service responsibilities should be granted a license at all. Perhaps the FCC should consider withholding a license until the station has demonstrated its ability to meet such responsibilities.

When stations do attempt to meet these responsibilities, they might profit from the precedent of KMOX-TV. By reporting the experience of that station, the author hopes that he has helped in some small way to clarify the role of public affairs programming in television and in our society.

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